Travelling Players, Travelling Civil Wars:

Theatrical exchange between Spain and the former Yugoslavia

Alma Prelec

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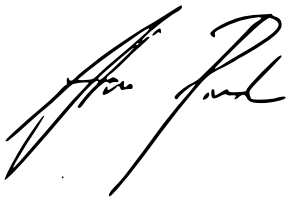
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Declaration of Originality

I confirm this work is my own.

It has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

Any research that is not mine has been properly cited.



Alma Prelec

20 May 2024

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the theatrical enactment of civil war beyond its original context, taking Spain and the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) as regional case studies. I propose the concept of the 'travelling player' as a way of theorising the director, actor, or character who facilitates memory's movement across borders and time periods. Drawing from the 'travelling turn' in Memory Studies – frameworks that accentuate links between memory and movement – I discuss a range of productions from the 1990s onwards. In each, travel is revealed to play a paramount role in triggering comparative – though not necessarily competitive – approaches to memory.

The opening chapter defends the proposed concept through its logical inverse: paralysis. Through a focus on Yugoslav engagement with stasis in Spanish Golden Age plays, I show abandoned voyages to be indicative of an attitude towards the past that negates the possibility of progress. Chapter II uncovers a series of productions on the Spanish Civil War in 1990s Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, situating these within a long history of commemoration of Yugoslav International Brigade veterans. Turning to Catalan and Valencian stages, Chapter III compares productions featuring Bosnian artistic directors: reading these as staged travelogues, I show that the productions' treatment of space represents a paradigm shift within Spain's theatrical output on the Yugoslav wars. The final chapter explores how travelling characters can destabilise the perpetrator/victim divide, with focus on productions comparing legacies of the Spanish and Croatian ultra-right.

Many of the productions discussed here have not yet been the subject of academic study. Employing a hybrid methodology that includes archival work, oral history interviews, on-site visits, and close reading, this thesis offers a theoretical intervention alongside a novel corpus of study. Following Hermes, the messenger-god, the travelling player is shown to be a conduit for memory out-of-context, uniquely positioned to employ distant histories to address urgent, local issues.

Table of Contents

Figures 6
Notes on Spelling 8
Acknowledgements 9

Introduction 11
I. Theorising the Travelling Player 15
II. The traveller's heritage 16
II.i. In visual art 19
II.ii. In dialogue and on-stage 21
III. The terrain 22
III.i. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 23
III.ii. Spain 26
IV. Entangled Histories 28
V. Theatrical entanglements: 'activities of exchange' 32
V.i. Spanish artists at BITEF 33
V.ii. Mirror-images 36
V.iii. Staging Yugoslavia in Spain: a revised survey 37
VI. The path: chapters, method, and position 39

Chapter I
Travel, interrupted: Frustrated voyages at the 1993 Yu Fest and BITEF
I. Introduction 43
I.i. Atmospheres of Darkness: BITEF and Yu-Fest in 1992/93 46
II. From high expectations to 'nonhappenings' 51
III.i. *Don Kihot*: Lost in transit 54
III.ii. *Kristofor Kolumbo*: Abandoned Voyages 61
III.iii. *Fuenteovehuna*: The Eternal Return of the Same 70
III.iii.*i.* Background 71
III.iii.*ii. Fuenteovehuna* in 1993 74
IV. Conclusion 79

Chapter II
Stages of Spain in Yugoslavia: 'Naši Španci' and *¡Ay, Carmela!* (1996-2020)
I. Introduction 82
II. Radical Nostalgia 83
II.i. Remembering the Spanish Civil War in the former Yugoslavia 85
III. First steps: *¡Ay, Carmela!* in Belgrade 90
IV. Carmela in Croatia: A Letter to my Co-Citizens 100
V. Sarajevo: Carmela looks ahead 110
V.i. Carmela as *partizanka*? Commemoration in Sarajevo's Historijski muzej 116
VI. Conclusion: *¡Ay, Carmela!* takes to the street(s) 119

Chapter III
From Sarajevo to Spain: Staging autobiographical travel
I. Introduction 124
II. Hadi Kurich and Teatro de la Resistencia 126
III. True or False? Hyper-authenticity and the audience as mediator 129
IV. Slobodan 'Boban' Minic and La Conquesta del Pol Sud 140
V. Deifying authenticity 144

VI. Conclusion 150

Chapter IV
Shifting Spaces: Travel and Transformation in *Donde el bosque se espesa* (2017)
I. Introduction 153
II. Historical Context: The Valley of the Fallen 154
III. *Donde el bosque se espesa* 158
IV. Movement and the establishment of liminal spaces 161
V. Movement and form 167
VI. Conclusion 175

Conclusion 178
Bibliography 185

Figures

Figure 1: 'Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue' by Dosso Dossi (1524), oil on canvas, Lanckoroński Collection, Wawel Castle, Kraków, Poland
Figure 2: Front cover, *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* (NDIO), Volume 3 Issue 2 (1932), Avantgarde Museum, Zagreb, Croatia
***Figure 3*:** 'Homme et femme' by Joan Miró, *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* (NDIO), Volume 3 Issue 2 (1932), Avantgarde Museum, Zagreb, Croatia
Figure 4: Front cover, *Amistad*: *Boletín de la cooperación cultural ibero-yugoeslava*, Volume 1 Issue 3 (1954), CRAI Pavelló de la República, Barcelona, Spain
***Figure 5*:** 'Nuria Espert, "Artista predilecta de Yugoslavia"', *Ya, Crónica de teatro*, 13 September (1977), Archivo Linz de la Transición española, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain
***Figure 6*:** Yu Fest 1993 Programme, Kazalište Pozorište Gledališče Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
***Figure 7*:** Promotional image, *Don Kihot* (1993), Kazalište Pozorište Gledališče Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
***Figure 8*:** Promotional image, *Kristofor Kolumbo* (1993), Kazalište Pozorište Gledališče Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
***Figure 9*:** 'Tristan und Isolde' by Adolphe Appia (1923), sketch and design for *Tristan und Isolde*, Teatro alia Scala, Milan, Italy
***Figure 10*:** Production still (00:16:08), *Fuenteovehuna* (1993), Kazalište Pozorište Gledališče Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
***Figure 11*:** 'El tres de mayo de 1808' by Francisco de Goya (1814), oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain
***Figure 12*:** Production still (00:40:12), *Fuenteovehuna* (1993), Kazalište Pozorište Gledališče Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
Figure 13: Production still (00:32:50), *Joj, Karmela* (1996), Kult Teatar, Belgrade, Serbia
***Figure 14*:** Poster, *¡Ay, Carmela!*, (1998), Teatar Rugantino, Zagreb, Croatia
Figure 15: Production still (00:02:09), *¡Ay, Carmela!* (2001), Sarajevski Ratni Teatar, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Figure 16: Production still (01:26:28), *¡Ay, Carmela!* (2001), Sarajevski Ratni Teatar, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
***Figure 17*:** Production still (00:01:30), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia, Vila-Real, Spain
Figure 18: Production still (00:02:38), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia, Vila-Real, Spain
***Figure 19*:** Production still (00:03:22), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia, Vila-Real, Spain

***Figure 19*:** Marlene Dietrich in *A Touch of Evil* by Orson Welles (1958), USA
***Figure 20*:** Production still (00:17:09), *Donde el bosque se espesa* (2017), Teatro Mimicón, Móstoles, Spain

Notes on Spelling

Diacritics

I use diacritics in this thesis. Please note that there are authors who choose to spell their name without diacritics in international contexts. With such cases, the surname of the relevant author is followed by an asterisk (first in-text citation only).

Citations

I use a modified Chicago referencing style in this thesis.

When citing news articles, I provide the headline and full publication date in the in-text citation.

Where a source is over fifty years old and I am citing a modern edition, I provide the original publication date in brackets.

Language

I refer to the language of Yugoslavia as Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, or Serbo-Croatian, depending on the context in which the relevant artist is working. These languages are mutually intelligible, and their differences comparable to those between Australian, British, and North American English.

Other official languages of the former Yugoslavia (Slovenian and Macedonian) are referred to as such.

Unless noted, all translations are my own.

Pronunciation

š = sh, as in shawl
đ = dj, as in jewel
ž = zh, as in the French name, *Jacques*
č = hard ch, as in charm
ć = soft ch, as in bench

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This is a thesis about travel. And like the travellers it follows, it has relied throughout on the wisdom of its guides.

I first read Maria Delgado's work when I was an undergraduate, long before we eventually met, and I remember that initial literary encounter well. I could not have known then the years of close collaboration that would follow. Maria's wisdom, clarity of thought, and generosity have been a lighthouse in even the most distant of waters. For this and more, I am immensely grateful.

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Introduction

In November 1949, *Newsweek* published an article provocatively entitled 'Don Juan Tito' (1949: 37-38). The piece covered a recent Soviet-instigated smear campaign, which had framed the Yugoslav President, Josip Broz Tito, as a modern-day lothario.[1] *Newsweek* condemned and satirised the rumours. But while Tito may have had little in common with Tirso de Molina's protagonist in romantic terms, his refusal to die – he escaped numerous assassination-attempts by the Soviets alone – was one characteristic they shared.[2]

Tito did eventually pass, of old age in May 1980. When the Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište [Yugoslav Drama Theatre] reopened for its 1980/1981 season, the first after his death, the season was inaugurated with Ödön von Horvath's *Don Žuan se vraća iz rata* [Don Juan Comes Back from the War] (1936).[3] Was this incidental? No feisty *burlador*, von Horvath's Don Juan is a disillusioned man; a soldier who has returned from World War II having lost his ideals. And when the Yugoslav project truly began to collapse in the 1990s, the famous seducer grew older, and sicklier. In 1992, Kokan Mladenović – now a major figure within the Serbian theatre scene, then a final-year student – resurrected Aleksandar Obrenović's long-forgotten radio drama, *Povratak don Žuana* [The Return of Don Juan], first published in 1968. In Obrenović's rendition, Don Juan is eighty years old and on the run from a care home, obsessed with the idea of turning back the clock. This was an appropriate image for a country on its last legs, hurdling towards the future while clinging to an unreachable past.

For all his transmutations in Spanish history, Don Juan is also an international symbol; it is not my intention to suggest that these portrayals were necessarily indicative of a particular relationship with the Spanish canon and much less Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* [The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest] of 1630 (although Mladenović attempted to stage Tirso's version the following year, in a limited run

[1] The previous year Tito had infamously broken with Stalin; Yugoslavia was subsequently expelled from Cominform in June of 1948. For a further analysis of the *Newsweek* clip and its context, see Kurtović 2010: 178-180.

[2] This was not much of a secret. The American diplomat Robert B. Reams wrote in 1948: 'Tito's assassination is probably the most concrete political option for the Cominform' (in Pirjevec 2018: 202). As for Tirso's Don Juan – the charactered is heavily associated with his trademark refrain, 'tan largo me lo fiáis', a comment on how long of a life awaits him.

[3] The author, born in Rijeka (what was then Fiume in Austro Hungary), was a significant influence on Danilo Kiš. Kiš saw in von Horvath a shared nomadism and fictionalised him in *Apatrid* (Zorić 2014).

interrupted by political and economic upheaval).[4] In any case, von Horvath and Obrenović's interpretations share more in common with Albert Camus' Don Juan of 1942 than any other, as rendered in his *Myth of Sisyphus* – an aged man who sees himself reflected in a soulless land ([1942] 2013: 14). Still, the transformation of the figure of Don Juan in the twilight of Yugoslavia from a man of action into a man paralysed nonetheless offers a window into the central relationship explored in this thesis – namely, that between travel, theatre, and memory – and to its geographic context. Through a focus on productions that overlay histories of modern Spain with those of the former Yugoslavia, I propose the concept of the 'travelling player' as a way of theorising the director, actor, or character who facilitates memory's movement across borders and time periods. A long history of collaboration between Spanish and Yugoslav artists in the twentieth century has resulted in a rich corpus of such productions; however, many of these have yet to be the subject of academic study. This research represents an attempt to address this gap, and in doing so, to also offer a theoretical intervention concerning the dynamic relationship between memory and movement.

My focus on the traveller as an agent for memory transmission is in part a reaction to recent developments within the field of Memory Studies, in which invocations of travel currently proliferate. The field is at present experiencing what Astrid Erll has termed a 'travelling turn' (2011a).[5] Memory might be seen as multidirectional, prosthetic, or palimpsestic; it might transcend generations and spaces and media; it might even resemble a boomerang. Far removed from the fixed *lieux de mémoire* proposed by Pierre Nora or even the connective mnemonic structures invoked by Maurice Halbwachs, memory is perceived by the twenty-first century scholar as a volatile, kinetic force that is in 'constant, unceasing motion' (Erll 2011a: 12).[6]

Such a lexical feast was bound to become overwhelming. By 2016, a special issue edited by major figures working in the domain of Memory Studies called for a shift within a

[4] For an extensive analysis of the transformations of Don Juan in contemporary Spain, see Wright 2007.
[5] Though the study of memory dates back to the Greeks (Grethlein 2010: 1-12), it was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that Memory Studies was consolidated as a field. Erll proposes that as a discipline, Memory Studies has evolved over three distinct phases: the first, pioneered by Maurice Halbwachs and focused on social structures; the second, by Pierre Nora and focused on space, and the third by a group of contemporary scholars developing theories on how memory moves (2011a: 4-18; 2011b: 1-37; 172-175).
[6] The annual conference of the MSA (Memory Studies Association) perhaps best encompasses this shift, with its 2024 theme set to be *Memories in Transit*.

shift. '[T]he recent preoccupation with memory as *travelling*' warned the authors, 'entails the need to account for the concomitant aspect of memory's *locatedness'* (Dorr et al 2019: 2, emphasis in original). A few years prior, Aleida Assman had foreshadowed this change in mood in an article which delineated the various ways in which 'transnational memories [were] still blocked' (2014: 552), calling the transnational turn 'often celebratory and somewhat hyperbolic' (2014: 547). It is not my intention to enter this debate. Rather, I am interested in the fact that these references to travel and the 'travelling turn' arose in the first place, and what it would mean to take them seriously. Alain Robbe-Grillet reminds us that no metaphor is entirely innocent (1963: 48).[7] If, as scholars such as Marianne Hirsch, Alison Landsberg, and Michael Rothberg have argued, memory 'moves', to what extent might the literal traveller-figure on stage be seen as a guide for underscoring memory's kinetic qualities? How might a focus on travel, in the theatre and its immediate peripheries, open opportunities for reflecting on memory transmission within and across transnational contexts?

This 'literal' approach to a hermeneutics of stage travel shares affinities with the work of Fiona Wilkie (2014; but also 2017; 2023), though with the caveat that my focus is on the on-stage traveller as indicative of a politics of memory, rather than of mobility.[8] I will return to these distinctions in due course, but they might be broadly summed up as an attempt to understand how theatre might be at once 'a map of the world' (Ball in Wilkie 2017: 10) and a 'memory machine' (Carlson 2001) – and the role of the traveller in bridging these two concepts.

While travellers appear across genres, the realm of the theatre is particularly suited for an exploration of the relationship between movement and memory. As an exercise, the reconstruction of a play of which there exists no filmed footage is not so dissimilar from the reconstruction of the memory of a voyage. Pieces may come together, they may

[7] Robbe-Grillet is a French writer, filmmaker, and literary theorist. He writes: 'la metaphore, en effet, n'est jamais une figure innocente' [in effect, memory is never an innocent figure] (1963: 48).
[8] The politics of mobility also underscore Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink's work on theatre and travel. Intervening in the 'spatial turn' in Performance Studies, Groot Nibbelink's theoretically orientated approach builds on a Deleuzian idea of nomadism. The differences in focus between this work and Groot Nibbelink's can be appreciated through the choice of case studies: Groot Nibbelink's corpus includes performances that involve walking spectators, plays that take place across different cities, and long-durée performances in multiple spaces. From these case studies, the spatial focus is clear. My subject, by contrast, is the on-stage traveller as both motif and memory mediator. On a semantic level, the traveller has a home; the nomad does not. See *Nomadic Theatre: Mobilizing Theory and Practice on the European Stage* (2019).

overlap or even contradict each other. Greta Hawes has argued that it is this shaky relationship with the past that links theatre to travel, with both contingent on transient experiences:[9]

> The 'presentness' of travel – the immediacy, subjectivity, and, often, incommunicability of direct experience, the bodily intimacy that is central to it – makes it a fascinating analogy for theatrical performance, where corporality and vision are likewise the conduits to knowledge […] Travel shares with tragedy an unpredictable ephemerality quite apart from the communality of its scripted conventions. (Hawes 2017: 64–65; 75)

David McInnis, in turn, has suggested that '[p]laygoing, like sightseeing, is essentially an act of deviance, or a "departure" from ordinary life' (2013: 1). If viewing voyage on stage represents a 'vicarious travel experience' (2013: 1), as McInnis argues, then it would follow that transnational stagings of entwined histories might pave the way towards a mobile, and vicarious, understanding of the past.

Spain and the Former Yugoslavia offer a rich interconnected history to explore this dialogic relationship. Linguistic connections between the two regions date back to the fifteenth century, when Sephardic Jews settled in the Balkans following expulsion from Spain in 1492. The language of the Sephardim, Ladino, is of Old-Castilian origin, and has retained links with Spanish culture across the centuries. An entire genre of Spanish medieval ballads, transmitted in both Ladino and Serbo-Croatian, circulated in small pockets of the region, predominantly in Bosnia (Jovanović 2020).[10] These ballads, which were originally transmitted orally and predominantly by women, can be considered a form of performance, if not theatre as we know it today.[11]

Building on this history, in this thesis I explore the artistic links that grew out of the socio-political circumstances of the twentieth century; I will return to these more recent

[9] The notion of ephemerality as central to the theatrical experience has been criticised, notably by Rebecca Schneider in her analysis of the role of the archive. Schneider suggests that archives ignore the corporeal 'remains' of performances in audience members who were present (2001: 100-108). I follow Helen Freshwater in understanding that a performances' lingering after-affects may indeed remain embodied in spectators of the original event, while also acknowledging that this original event does, in fact, disappear (Freshwater 2002: 50-58).

[10] One study has demonstrated that Haim Davičo's Sephardic folktale, *Ženske Šale* [Women's Jokes] (1885) is in fact a reworking of Tirso de Molina's short story, *Los tres maridos burladores* [Three Trickster Husbands] (Jovanović 2014).

[11] Note that scholarship on the classification of the ballad form has frequently drawn on both Spanish and Yugoslav cases as comparative examples. See, for example, Deyermond 1965: 1-8.

historical connections in brief. The remainder of this introduction is composed of three separate sections. I begin with a theoretical intervention on the figure of the traveller, substantiating my arguments with a literature review of studies on Hermes and Mercury, the Greco-Roman traveller-gods. My aim here is to demonstrate how this classical legacy provides insight into the modern-day traveller's central behaviours and characteristics. Following a condensed history of both the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Spain, I then present what are in my view the most salient examples of artistic collaboration that occurred between the two regions in the twentieth century. In the final section, I provide an analysis of the extant academic studies of Ibero-Yugoslav theatre and intervene where there are omissions in this domain. This review is followed by a discussion of my case studies, which themselves follow a chronological order (1990-2020).

I. Theorising the travelling-player

My domain of inquiry is the transfer of enacted experience from one culture to another, in a way that does not just highlight commonalities between cultures, but that throws each culture into a relief that is only visible through the other. It is possible to think of this as an extension of the metaphor – in bringing both together, both are transformed. The traveller is the vehicle of this transfer; he or she is moreover the *agent* of this transfer because with an agent it is implied that there is a single point of view and, furthermore, that the perspective thrown is an exploratory, active one.

The traveller therefore belongs naturally to the realm of a dynamic memory discourse.[12] Consider, for example, Michael Rothberg's reaction to the zero-sum memory model he perceives as dominant in his field, one marked by the jealous guarding of mnemonic 'space':

[12] Scholars whose work constitutes the 'travelling turn' in Memory Studies have proposed that memory may persist across generations, only to emerge in belated form (Hirsch 1996; 1997; 2001); that it may resemble Freud's mystic writing pad, in that it is constantly being erased and reinscribed, yet always carries traces of what came before (Silverman 2015); that it may be transmitted through mass media and subsequently experienced, erroneously, as one's own (Landsberg 2018), and that it can be productively reappropriated in new – foreign – cultural contexts, through the use of historical analogy and comparison (Rothberg 2009). The four aforementioned scholars propose the concepts of postmemory, palimpsestic memory, prosthetic memory, and multidirectional memory, respectively.

> Fundamental to the conception of competitive memory is a notion of the public sphere as a pregiven, limited space in which already-established groups engage in a life-and-death struggle. In contrast, pursuing memory's multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established *positions* but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction (2009: 5).

The reason travel is important here is not merely because Rothberg discusses memory moving from one geographic context to another, but because the act of recall is in itself dynamic. Remembering is dynamic and is informed by what the subject remembers. It is for this reason that I refer in this thesis to journeys, rather than to trips. The difference between a journey and a trip is that the journey is one whose destination is informed by the points along the way: it is exploratory and the path is not known *a priori*. The Spanish poet Antonio Machado has written of this already: 'caminante, no hay camino/ se hace camino al andar' [traveller, there is no path/ the path is made as you go].

The figure of the traveller is not simple. It is not a disembodied viewpoint that can be taken in the abstract, but rather requires consideration of the specificities of a dynamic exploratory perspective. What is it that we should look at, and what next? I have thus far framed the characteristics of the traveller in an abstract and reductive way, but in fact they are much finer and require further examination.

II. The traveller's heritage

> And Hermes, the son of Zeus,
> slipped through the keyhole of the dwelling sideways,
> like autumnal breeze in outer form, or airy mist.[13]

Reading Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* (1951) as a palimpsest upon which several epic travellers (Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante) are superimposed, Rubin Rabinovitz argues that archetypal significance emerges 'where similar elements in a number of myths coalesce' (1979: 32).[14] In what follows, I will introduce the mythical heritage of the modern-day traveller. As in *Molloy,* this is a heritage that underscores and informs each of the productions that will

[13] *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* vv. 145-7. Cited from the translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (2004: 30).
[14] Following Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, I understand the notion of the archetype as broadly encompassing images, myths, and narratives that repeat across time and cultures, often in surprisingly similar ways (2005: xvi).

be discussed in this thesis.[15] Given that these productions engage predominantly with a European theatrical canon, I focus my discussion below on the characteristics of the Greco-Roman iteration of the ultimate traveller, Hermes (Mercury). However, many of these characteristics are also shared with mythical figures from geographic contexts further removed from the domain of this thesis.[16]

Represented with winged feet, Hermes is the Greek god of commerce, voyage, thieves, and roads. He is a liminal deity (or *psychopomp*), as he occupies transitional spaces: between life and death, leading souls to the underworld, and between the human and the divine, as he is messenger to the gods. His name has an etymological relationship to *herma*, the Greek word for stone-heap, which Norman Brown has noted is itself a signifier of liminality and transition, a 'sort of boundary stone, marking a point of communication between strangers' (1969: 33). In philosophy, Hermes has given name to hermeneutics, to the search for meaning and truth – the study of interpretation itself. Heidegger makes this observation in *A Dialogue on Language* [1954], emphasising that the god is the utmost figure of transmission: 'Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny' (1982: 29). For Luis Garagalza, Hermes can be employed as a 'guide' in the process of interpretation, as he mediates between opposing forces: 'the tragic and the comic, good and evil, meaning and meaninglessness, mania and melancholia […] between a good life and a good death' (2013: 2). Sarah Iles Johnson writes that for the Ancients, Hermes was 'a guide for the perplexed', whether the perplexed be traveller, soul, or mystic (2002: 109).

Alongside travel, Hermes is also associated with trickery: in the article *A Trickster's Oaths in The Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, Judith Fletcher explores how the god manipulates oaths to make them appear truthful, thereby deceiving within a framework of honesty (2008: 19-46). This is a literary trope that would later be reappropriated by Spanish Golden Age playwrights with the concept of *engañar con la verdad* or 'paltering' — lying by telling the truth. In the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, the figure of Harlequin (the trickster and pre-emptor of change), too, draws from Hermes. Centuries later, Hermes was to be adopted by Carl Jung in his study of archetypes, again as representative as the trickster, due to what Jungian analyst Edward Edinger has termed the deity's 'ability to cross boundaries [...] between the human and the divine realm, or in psychological terms,

[15] Paul Radin considered the trickster – the category to whom Hermes belongs, by Jung's classification – *the* foundational archetype of mankind (1956).
[16] For example, Ganesha – the Hindu traveller-god – and the Japanese Dosojin.

between the personal psyche and the unconscious' (1994: 30-31). As with many literary tricksters, Hermes' deceptions can often reveal truths. For Jung, ultimately, this enigma suggests that 'Hermes is a god of thieves and cheats, but also a god of revelation' ([1967] 2014: 233). However, it is important to note that Hermes differs from the standard trickster archetype in that he has self-control. Consider, for example, that after roasting two cows – as described in *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes* – Hermes hungers, but does not eat. William Ashton writes that 'at this point, most Tricksters would be overwhelmed with their hunger and eat the meat. […] Hermes is relatively unique among tricksters in that he was able to *not* get caught in his own trap' (Ashton 2019: 242, emphasis in original).

If a defining feature of the trickster archetype is his constant oscillation between deceiver and deceived, between creator and destroyer (Radin 1956), or as 'the simpleton who is fooled and yet at the same time engineers malicious pranks' (Wright 2000: 3), the results of Hermes' actions, if not the actions themselves, are less volatile – inevitably, he forges a road to success. Even when he appears to be on a clear route to failure, he manages to turn the events to his favour – as, for example, when he is brought to Apollo and uses double-speak to tell the truth through a lie. In analysing the preceding event in the *Hymns*, Brown compares him to Heracles, emphasising that Hermes *steals* rather than robs, a lexical change which shifts the emphasis from strength to ingenuity. While the bulky Heracles, who in robbing cattle becomes the 'embodiment of carrying a big stick and talking loudly', Hermes, by contrast 'is just the opposite type; the whole emphasis in [his] mythology […] is on mental skill or cunning, as opposed to physical prowess' (Brown 1967: 7). Differentiating further between the trickster and Hermes, Karl Kerényi notes that '[t]he trickster hero may perhaps be the source of a literature, naïve and picaresque at first, then extremely refined and consciously artistic. The trickster god, on the other hand, is the transpersonal source of a particular life-style and way of experiencing the world' (1956: 189-190).[17]

The main scholars, principally classicists and philosophers, to trace Hermes' origin have included Karl Kerényi (1944; 1956), Norman O. Brown (1947), Michel Serres (several

[17] This essay forms part of Paul Radin's seminal study on the trickster (1956); Radin's study concludes with two external contributions ('commentaries'), the first by Karényi, and the second by Jung. Karényi's contribution is primarily concerned with the distinction between Hermes and the trickster (1956: 188-191).

volumes, 1968 onwards), Arlene Allan (1998; 2018), and Dominque Jaillard (2007).[18] Kerényi, in particular, has focused on how Hermes follows a unique sort of journey: 'at home while underway, at home on the road itself, the road being understood not as a connection between two definite points on the earth's surface, *but as a particular world*' ([1942] 1987: 14, my emphasis). For Leslie Allan Combs, this means that '[w]hereas ordinary traveling simply involves physical movement from one place to another, the Hermetic voyager enters a boundary zone, a liminal space between states of experience' (Combs 2021). Ultimately, Hermes is a traveller who connects three zones: life and death, as he leads souls to the underworld; the divine and the human, as he is the messenger of the gods; and between physical frontiers, given his relationship to the boundary-stone, *herma*.

II.i. In visual art

Visual representations of mythical figures offer insights into these figures' central characteristics, but also of how these developed across time; the study of such images and their permutations is called iconography. I will not detain myself too much here, but I want to discuss briefly how Early Modern depictions of Hermes hint at some of his more paradoxical qualities.

Across the Renaissance, Hermes appears in Roman form (as Mercury) in the work of Botticelli, Rubens, Raphael, and Velázquez, among other major figures, though not usually as the painting's protagonist. But like the exceptions that prove the rule, the artistic representation of the traveller and messenger god is particularly revealing when it appears to go against type. Dosso Dossi (c. 1489-1542), a lesser-known painter of the Renaissance era, gives the god central status in his unusual *Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue* (1524) (figure 1). Reminiscent of Velázquez's *Las meninas*, the artist (here, Jupiter) is present, painting three butterflies that flutter beyond the canvas. In the centre, a near-naked Mercury turns his head toward Virtue at lower left, bringing his finger to his lips and instructing her to keep silent. Mercury's caduceus is uncharacteristically horizontal, indicative of a moment frozen in time. The image draws on a fifteenth-century dialogue by Leon Battista Alberti, which sees Virtue tell Mercury of the maltreatment she has faced at the hands of Fortune,

[18] The edited volume, *Tracking Hermes, Pursuing Mercury* (Miller and Clay 2019), is an important addition to this field. See also the extensive section on Hermes in Walter F. Otto's landmark *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion* ([1929] 1954: 104-124).

her central rival (Whitfield 1966: 17).[19] Whitfield reads Dossi's painting as a judgement on the frivolous behaviour of Mercury and Jupiter – an indictment of the gods and their indifference to Virtue's suffering. Another possible interpretation, however, might frame Dossi as commenting on the timeless debate on the relationship between art and utility, in which Mercury prioritises the act of painting.[20] Either way, the messenger-god here rejects the message.

Dossi's image is a useful reminder that Hermes, the god of communication, is also fond of silences and *mis*communications. It is of note that in Ancient Greece, the phrase 'Hermes has come in' was uttered when sudden silence fell upon a group (Allan 1998: 6). Ruth Padel describes this apparent paradox evocatively, noting that 'Hermes is two-way in all his roles, present in the change from silence to speech, and in the swivel back from language to silence' (1992: 8). Brown, in a similar vein, notes that Hermes is associated with oaths and curses alike, as both *bind* – 'an oath is a curse, a magic formula that binds parties to a given action' ([1947] 1969: 14). Extant lead tablets from the classical era, which were forged expressly to provoke curses, reinforce this reading, as they refer in their etchings to Hermes by epithet (ibid: 12-13).



Figure 1: Jupiter, Mercury, and Virtue by Dosso Dossi (1524)

[19] The dialogue was erroneously attributed in the Renaissance to Lucian (Whitfield 1966: 16).
[20] For a discussion on the academic analyses and disagreements surrounding this painting, see Humfrey, Lucco and Rothe 1998: 170-174.

II.ii. In dialogue and on-stage

Perhaps more than any other genre, the theatrical event is marked by Hermes' presence. Daniel Gerould writes:

> No image is more evocative of the special place that theatre holds among the arts than that of travelling players and their wagon. Whether it be Harlequin's family in Picasso's painting or the wandering minstrels in Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal*, the strong feelings and complex associations triggered by these artistic depictions attest to the power of travelling players to stir the imagination. (2013: 167-168)

The travellers in the peripheries of the theatre – the itinerant actors – are mirrored fictionally on-stage, traditionally at the start of a drama. Within Classical drama, Mercury's role in introducing performances is frequent, and dates to the earliest of its iterations (Allan 1998).[21] Poliziano's *Orfeo* (est. 1471), considered to be the first example of Italian secular drama (Greg 1906: 157), begins with a prelude in which 'Mercurio annunzia la festa' [Mercury announces the festivities] (ibid: 158). Juan del Encina (1468-1529), who straddled the Medieval and Renaissance period and is considered one of the founders of Spanish drama, also peppered references to Mercury in his proto-theatrical eclogues.[22]

The most famous Mercury of the Spanish Golden Age appeared in dialogue form. Here he traversed the underworld alongside Charon [ferryman of the Styx] in Alfonso de Valdés viciously ironic *Diálogo de Mercurio y Caronte* [Dialogue of Mercury and Charon] (est. 1528-1529), an Erasmian commentary on the lack of mores in the Roman Church and among its adherents. At the beginning of this journey, Mercury has had enough: the god of travel wishes to stay still. Having traversed the entire world, and explored the lives of the supposedly pious, he has seen only horrors:

> Tomóme el otro día un ferventísimo deseo de ver muy particularmente todas las tierras del mundo y las leyes y usos y costumbres, ceremonias, religiones y trajes de cada una dellas. Y después de todo ello con los ojos bien mirado, con el entendimiento bien considerado y comprehendido, no hallé en todo él sino vanidad, maldad, aflicción y locura.
>
> [The other day I was struck by a fervent desire to closely observe all the lands of the world, and the laws and uses and customs, ceremonies, religions, and clothes

[21] Sarah Wright traces a relationship between the trickster and the *prologuista* in Federico García Lorca's theatre; see Wright 2000: 9; 13-35.
[22] For example, in the *Égloga de Plácida y Vitoriano* [Eglogue of Placido and Vitoriano] (first presented in 1497).

> of each one of them. And after having done all this with the utmost care, having considered and examined my position, I found nothing but vanity, wickedness, affliction, and madness.] (Valdés 1996: 369)

In my view, Valdés presents a distorted god (a static Mercury) as a mirror for a corrupted world and its distorted faith-system. It is in fact only in the act of travel – movement; the soul's journey – to the underworld that Mercury, and by extension the reader, will find a framework for genuine repentance (though, in the process, a few souls will be damned). Physical and mental movement interact; both are linked to development.[23] Valdés' dialogue echoes Gil Vicente's *Auto da Barca do Inferno* (1517), which though tonally distinct, follows the same narrative structure of souls travelling across the Sytx.[24] Though in Vicente's *auto sacramental* Mercury is presented as an angel, these figures are nonetheless related: Classicist Walter F. Otto compares the treatment of Hermes with that of an angel, with particular reference to the use of the aforementioned phrase, 'Hermes has come in' ([1929] 1954: 115; see also, von Heyking 2013: 142).

The central characteristics of Hermes – an ability to cross between the world of the dead and the living, to interpret and to send messages, to bridge the divine and the mortal, to invoke speech and yet to command silence – all these are echoed in the travellers of this thesis, who travel across time and to countries that no longer exist. In what follows, I detail the terrain explored by these travellers, which might profitably be read as an imaginary border between Spain and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

III. The terrain

In the section that follows, I will discuss the historical context relevant to this thesis, context which will be necessary for an analysis of the productions that emerged out of it. I first approach these separately, by offering a condensed overview of the development of Spain and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the modern era. I then turn to the ways in which these histories interacted and overlapped: my aim will be to demonstrate, through a literature review of extant analyses and my own archival research,

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[23] Consider, in this vein, the spiritual journey that takes place in San Juan de la Cruz' *Noche oscura del alma* [Dark Night of the Soul] (est. 1578), where the soul literally goes out to explore, personified through the allegory of a woman in love. It is worth here noting that Hermes is also associated with night (Otto [1929] 1954: 113-120; Kerényi [1944] 1987 44-52; Jaillard 2007: 71-72).

[24] Unlike Dossi's painting, these representations of Mercury do in fact draw from Lucian of Samosata's *Dialogues of the Dead* (Hart 2004).

that the connections between these two regions are much more significant that is commonly appreciated.

III.i. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was a state formed in 1943 in South-Eastern Europe and which officially ceased to exist in 1992. The country is strongly associated with Josip Broz Tito, famous for his break with Stalin in 1948 and for the cult of personality which enveloped him in later years, the wars of the 1990s which led to the country's dissolution, and the present-day states of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.[25]

There was, however, more than one Yugoslavia. This region of Europe was for centuries divided between two empires, the Hapsburg (Austro-Hungarian) and the Ottoman. The Ottomans were displaced by the second half of the nineteenth century, yielding territory to a new Serbia and (in Bosnia) to its old antagonist, Austria-Hungary. Following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire at the close of World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established in 1918 under the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. The country was conceived as a nation state of all South Slavic people, but was from the outset an uneasy mixture of religions – Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Bosnian Muslims – and long-frustrated national projects and ambitions. Still, its cultural and religious pluralism was referenced as a point of pride in Alexander Karađorđević's opening proclamation on 1 December 1918, which envisioned a union between 'all three faiths, all three names, on both sides of the Danube, Sava and Drina rivers' (Petranović and Zecević in Nikolić and Dobrivojević 2017: 243).

In 1929, following increasing tension between centralising tendencies of the Serbian political establishment and regional demands for autonomy, the country was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as it had already informally been known, and it would retain this identity until 1941. Following the assassination of King Alexander in 1934 by Croatian émigré extremists, political repression increased further, targeting not just nationalists but

[25] As of 2024, Kosovo's independence is recognised by most EU states, with the notable exception of Spain (along with Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania and Greece). Spain has been reluctant to recognise Kosovo due to potential implications for the secession of Catalunya from its borders. In January 2024, however, Spain announced it would henceforth recognise Kosovo passports as legitimate (i.e. for travel and identity purposes), though still without formally recognising its statehood.

also the democratic opposition and, especially, all left-wing movements and organisations. Attempting to preserve the country and throne in the late 1930s, the Serbian-led government compromised on all fronts, reaching a power-and-territory sharing agreement with the Croats, and yielding to German pressure and joining the Axis powers. Dragiša Cvetković, then Prime Minister (1939-41), signed this agreement in Vienna on 25 March 1941. Neutrality was replaced with support of the Germany-Italy-Japan coalition outlined in the document, otherwise known as the Berlin Pact.[26]

Cvetković's predecessor, Milan Stojadinović (1935-39), had promised Yugoslavs in 1939 that there would be 'ni rat ni pakt' [neither a war nor a pact].[27] The political switch from a firm neutrality to outright support for the Axis powers provoked further regional fragmentation and, crucially for what was to become the SFRY, a rise in oppositional movements. As a result of mass protests in the capital Belgrade, the Yugoslav government was briefly overthrown in a coup d'état on 27 March 1941. Hitler invaded on April 6 and quickly subdued the entire country, dividing it into the Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (NDH) [Independent State of Croatia], under the fascist 'Poglavnik' [Honourable leader] Ante Pavelić, and a rump Serbia under the ultra-nationalist Milan Nedić, who would occupy the post of Prime Minister until 1944.

Meanwhile, resistance efforts grew. The horrific depredations of the Croat Ustaša regime against Serbs, Jews and Roma, the violence of the Serbian nationalist chetniks in areas under their control, and the self-imposed exile of the Royal family to Britain in 1941 created a moral vacuum in which communist efforts could gain traction.[28] Initially formed in 1919, the Komunistička partija Jugoslavije (KPJ) [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] was one of the first branches to be recognised by the Comintern (Perović 2015: 21). Briefly tolerated by the state, the party was banned in 1921 as a result of 'subversive activities' (Nikolić and Dobrivojević 2017: 244). Through underground meetings the branch was kept alive for two decades, emerging to public view with the outbreak of World War II (ibid).

[26] According to some, this was a calculated move. During this period, the Yugoslav government was in covert communication with the UK, Turkey, and Great Britain (Zalar 1961: 62).
[27] Stojadinović later published a memoir by the same name; it was printed from his exile in Argentina in 1963.
[28] There were other resistance movements. Crucially for the communists' success, their political-military force represented all nationalities, consistently rejected collaboration with the occupiers, and represented itself as an inclusive movement (though this would later change) that could include non-communists.

Among other resistance movements, only the Communist-led forces appealed to all nationalities across Yugoslavia. Avoiding collaboration with the occupiers, they represented themselves, at least initially, as an inclusive anti-fascist front, accepting all comers (though leadership was reserved for the Party). Following the Soviet Union national model, the Communists promoted national (i.e., Serbian, Croatian, etc.) identities, but combined them with a universalist, international ideology. This proved an attractive message to a country traumatised by murderous ethnic violence. Tito emerged victorious from the war and the country was born for a third time, this time as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (renamed the SFRY in 1963). The break with Stalin in 1948 helped loosen the heavy hand of Party dictatorship and stimulated a period of cultural, agricultural, and economic reform, during which literacy rates skyrocketed and the republic transitioned from an agrarian to industrial society, which would outlive – but just barely – Tito's death in 1980.

The Yugoslav wars were comprised of several separate conflicts which took place between 1991 and 1999. Slobodan Milošević was elected President of Serbia on 8 May 1989, in fraudulent elections that resulted in mass protests, particularly in Belgrade. Within two years, the republics of Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia declared their independence, followed soon by Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the fighting in Slovenia ended after ten days in 1991, the wars in Croatia and Bosnia continued until 1995. A signal event of the wars was the Siege of Sarajevo by Serbian forces, from 1992 through to 1995, and the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995. Though the Dayton Accords began a process of peace-building, the region remained unstable. With Serbia ruled by Milošević, abuses and tensions in Kosovo grew extreme, culminating in the Kosovo war of independence from 1998-1999. In retaliation, Belgrade was bombed by NATO forces in 2001.[29] Zoran Dinđič (who became Prime Minister of Serbia in 2001), Milošević's central opponent and figure of hope for Serbia and its neighbours, was assassinated on 12 March 2003.

The republics have each since followed an uneasy process towards democratisation. Slovenia and Croatia have been EU member states since 2004 and 2013, respectively. Following a state referendum, Montenegro seceded from Serbia in 2006. Serbia, Bosnia, and Montenegro continue to face significant democratic issues such as voter suppression,

[29] Spain's Javier Solana, then-Secretary General of NATO, commandeered the bombing.

corruption, and historical revisionism. With at least 200,000 Russian refugees currently in Serbia in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Džankić in Bell Davis and Dubois 2023), and a pro-Orthodox Serb government currently in power in Montenegro, the situation in this region of the Balkans remains delicate.

III.ii. Spain

With the exception of two brief Republics (1873-1874 and 1931-1936), the history of modern Spain has been marked by extraordinary ideological oscillation set against a near-constant backdrop of Bourbon reign. The late-nineteenth century was punctuated by the Spanish colonies' increasing desire for independence, a source of significant national anxiety. The Spanish-American war in 1898 foresaw the loss of Spain's last remaining colonies (the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico), which in turn shifted focus to occupied North Africa. Morocco became the site of a continual struggle: in 1912, Spain took control of the North, while France retained the South. The Spanish suffered a humiliating defeat in Northeast Morocco in 1921 which in turn lead to turmoil on the mainland, partially instigated by central-agitator, General Primo de Rivera.[30] Following a coup d'état in 1923, Primo de Rivera took control of the country, and would remain de-facto dictator until 1930. Though initially supportive of Rivera, King Alfonso XIII forced his resignation in 1930 in response to growing dissent across the country and a burgeoning economic crisis (Moreno-Luzón 2020: 107-108). Years of oppressive rule under Rivera bolstered by the Bourbons' support had led to a surge in anti-monarchical feeling. Though King Alfonso XIII arranged democratic elections in 1931, his loss was monumental. He left in voluntary exile and the Secord Republic was proclaimed on 14 April 1931, after which Spain lived an illustrious period of cultural reform, intellectual vibrancy, and literary exchange with Europe.

The Second Republic came to a catastrophic halt on 17 July 1936, faced with a Nationalist coup led by Francisco Franco and Antonio Mola. The onset of the Spanish Civil War reverberated across the world unlike any other previous regional conflict, drawing international participation in the form of the International Brigades. Though broadly perceived as a fight between two ideologies, the Republican faction, in particular, was

[30]The Rif War from 1921 to 1926 set the stones for Franco's eventual dictatorship, as it was there that he initially rose in ranks, as well as that of General Primo de Rivera. Franco was also based in Morocco at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

comprised of various leftist groups (e.g. anarchists, workers, communists) and was weakened by internal fighting. In tandem, support for the proto-fascist *Falange* – founded and led by Primo de Rivera – metastasized (though it had been a minority party during the Second Republic). After three years of conflict and the loss of an estimated half a million citizens, the Nationalists won the war and Franco took control of the country. In the immediate aftermath of the war's end, hundreds of thousands of Republican soldiers were sent to concentration camps, of which there were over 180 and which followed a punishing labour interment model (Rodrigo 2012: 553). Over subsequent decades, the state pursued an agenda that involved the stifling of regional difference (especially linguistic) and a broad regime of censorship and repression in the name of a unified, Catholic Spain.

Franco presided over Spain until his death on 20 November 1975, after which a period of transition began. The *Ley de Amnistía* [Amnesty Law] was passed on 15 October 1977 and, though intended to ease the path to democracy by pardoning the crimes of all camps, was profoundly ineffective and translated into further supressed trauma. These issues were addressed in belated form through the establishment in 2000 of the AHRC (Asociación de la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica) [The Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory] and the later *Ley de Memoria Histórica* [Historical Memory Law] of 2007. Both emerge within the context of Spain's 'memory-boom' as defined and described by Jo Labanyi (2007: 89-116), a reaction to the mnemonic repression imposed by the Amnesty Law. The long-term effects of the Amnesty Law, the Historical Memory Law of 2007, and the politics of Franco's recent exhumation are discussed in further detail in Chapter IV.

Spain is today a parliamentary monarchy, divided into seventeen autonomous communities, six of which are bilingual (Catalunya, Valencia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Navarra, and the Balearic Islands). The country also maintains control over Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa. Since the Socialist victory in 1982, two parties have been dominant: the *PP* (The Partido Popular) [Popular Party] and the *PSOE* (Partido Socialista de España) [Socialist Party of Spain]. The election cycle of 2016 marked a watershed moment: for the first time, the *PP* and *PSOE* did not achieve a majority and the bipartisan system collapsed, at the general elections of 20 December 2015. Although the newcomers, left-wing *Podemos* and its right counterpart, *Ciudadanos,* have not been particularly effective – faced with the same charges of corruption that uncomfortably

mirror the dominant parties they had positioned themselves against – their arrival radically changed the political landscape of Spain, now indisputably a multi-party state.

IV. Entangled Histories

Yugoslav veterans of the International Brigades, who numbered over 1,900 (Lemesle 2017: 51), were crucial to Tito's eventual victory and to the consolidation of a new Yugoslavia. Koca Popović, Peko Dapčević, Kosta Nađ, and Peter Drapšin – all veterans of the Spanish Civil War – led Tito's four major armies in World War II. I discuss in depth the veterans and their influence on the arts in Chapter II, so will refrain from going into further detail here.

I would like to return momentarily to the late 1940s, the period with which I opened, and to a more obvious connection between the two regions than the somewhat tenuous invocation of Don Juan. In 1948 Pablo Picasso provided the illustrations for one of the most canonical anti-war poems in Yugoslav history, Ivan Goran Kovačić's *Jama* [The Pit]. Rendered in French as *La fosse commune*, the volume commemorated Kovačić, who had been murdered by Serbian nationalists in 1941. The volume was formally arranged by the Yugoslav surrealist, Marko Ristić, who also provided the translation (Mladenović 2020: 33).

The constellation of forces that led to this collaboration illustrate the intimate links between Spaniards and Yugoslavs in the first half of the twentieth century. Ristić at the time was the Yugoslav Ambassador to France, a post he held from 1945 to 1951. However, his connection to France dated back to the 1920s, bolstered by his correspondence with André Breton and later involvement in the Parisian surrealist scene.[31] He had come from Belgrade and its literary circle; in the 1920s, the Serbian capital was 'arguably one of the most vibrant early-surrealist strongholds in Europe' (Bahun-Radunović 2005: 37-38). Ristić would go on to become one of the founders of the Belgrade-printed (and bilingual Serbian-French) magazine of the 1930s, *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* (*NDIO*) [Surrealism here and now].[32] Some of the main contributors to *NDIO* were

[31] Ristić was one of those invited to Bréton's 1929 landmark gathering in Paris' café Prophet (Kolaković 2020: 169). It is likely that Paul Éluard, close with both Picasso and Ristić, introduced the two. (Stimac 2019: 107).
[32] See Sanja Bahun-Radunović, *When the margin cries: Surrealism in Yugoslavia* (2005: 37-52).

Spaniards who had passed through Paris, including Joan Miró and Salvador Dalí (figures 3, 4) (Todić 2021: 6).[33] The illustrations and photographs provided by visual artists for *NDIO* were originals, not reproductions (Bahun-Radunović 2005: 45).

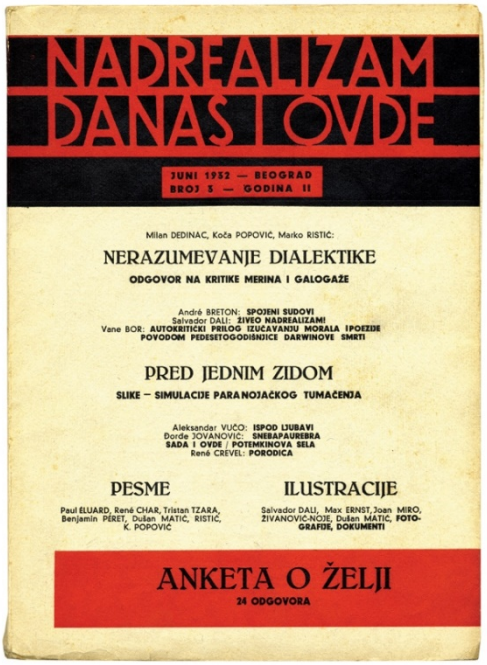


Figure 2: Front cover*, Nadrealizam danas i ovde,* Volume 3 Issue 2 (1932)

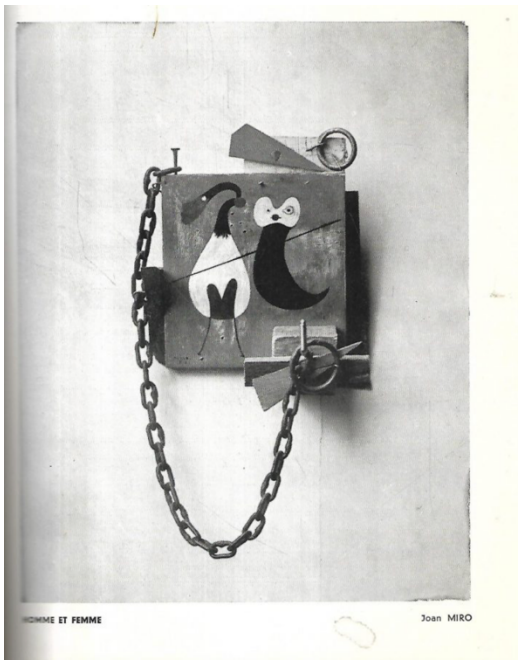


Figure 3: 'Homme et femme' by Joan Miró, *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*, Volume 3 Issue 2 (1932)

Paris would continue to be a critical nexus point over the following years, as it had been in the 1930s when the KPJ exile headquarters arranged for Yugoslavs to travel clandestinely into Spain as volunteers in the International Brigades. Emblematic of this relationship is the little-known Paris-based initiative, the *Cooperación cultural ibero-yugoeslava* [Ibero-Yugoslav Cultural Cooperation]. It was founded in 1953, with Spanish exiles Artugo Ortega (President) and Rafael Font (secretary) at the helm. The CCIY organised cultural activities, fundraisers for maimed veterans, and a newsletter, *Amistad* [Friendship] which published regularly from 1953-1954. Among these activities was a month-long holiday on the Adriatic coast organised for a small group of Spanish children, fifteen in total, in August of 1954.

[33] As Bahun-Radunović notes, '[e]ven though Paris served as an indisputable (if self-assigned) center, this site of desire was, quite "surrealistically", infused and indeed formed by the periphery' (2005: 37).

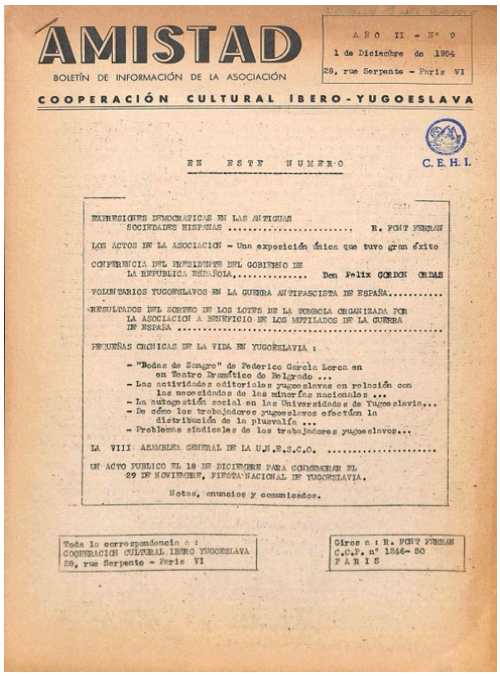
In Winter 1954, *Amistad* ran a series of clips outlining the outcomes of the stay (*Amistad*, I.5: 8). It had concluded with a day of festivities in Rijeka, the Croatian coastal town and leftist hub, co-organised by the CCIY, the Yugoslav Red Cross, and the Organisation of Yugoslav veterans. Radio Yugoslavia recorded the speech of coronal Boro Leontich, addressed to these young visitors. A brief excerpt transcribed in *Amistad* reads:

> *Queridos niños españoles:*
>
> *Casi ninguno de vosotros había nacido cuando 1.400 yugoeslavos,*[34] *voluntarios en las Brigadas Internacionales, lucharon en España, codo a codo con vuestros padres, contra los fascistas, por la libertad de la España Republicana. […]*
>
> *Los que hemos sobrevivido a la guerra en tierras de España no podemos olvidar nunca los días, los meses, y los años pasados en vuestro país, y este hecho constituye un fuerte y eterno lazo entre nosotros, yugoeslavos, y los republicanos españoles.*
>
> *Consideramos a España como nuestra segunda patria y nosotros os pedimos – queridos niños españoles – que consideréis a Yugoeslavia como vuestra propia tierra.*
>
> *Al volver a Paris decid a vuestros padres, a vuestros familiares, y a todos los amigos españoles, que Yugoeslavia tiene siempre los brazos abiertos para recibirles como a sus propios hijos.*
>
> [Dear young Spaniards,
>
> Barely any of you were born when 1,400 Yugoslavs, volunteers of the International Brigades, fought in Spain, shoulder to shoulder with your fathers, against the fascists and for the freedom of the Spanish Republic. […]
>
> Those of us who survived the war in Spain's lands will never be able to forget the days, months, and years spent in your country, forging a strong and eternal link between us, the Yugoslavs, and Spanish Republicans.
>
> We see Spain as our second home and we ask that you – dear children of Spain – see Yugoslavia as your own land.
>
> When you return to Paris, tell your parents, your family members, and all your Spanish friends, that Yugoslavia will always welcome you with open arms, as its own children.]
>
> (*Amistad*, I.5: 9)

Today the extant archives of *Amistad* (nine volumes) are held at the Barcelona Pavelló de la República CRAI Archives and the institution seems to be largely forgotten; I have, to date, been unable to find any relevant scholarship on the organisation. Still, the CCIY

[34] The number is now considered to be 1,910.

offers a striking window into a moment of historic transnational solidary and cultural exchange. Apart from political commentary, the articles included in the *boletín* included such cultural references as a review of Federico García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* in Belgrade in 1954 (II.9: 8), a profile on the Croatian High-Modernist Miroslav Krleža (1.5: 4), and news from Radio Belgrade, which at the time provided thirty minutes of Spanish coverage every day (II.9: 8) (figure 4).


AMISTAD

BOLETÍN DE INFORMACIÓN DE LA ASOCIACIÓN

AÑO II - Nº 9

1 de Diciembre de 1954

28, rue Serpente - Paris VI

COOPERACIÓN CULTURAL IBERO-YUGOESLAVA

C.E.H.I.

EN ESTE NUMERO

EXPRESIONES DEMOCRATICAS EN LAS ANTIGUAS SOCIEDADES HISPANAS ..... R. PONT PERNAS

LOS ACTOS DE LA ASOCIACION - Una exposición única que tuvo gran éxito

CONFERENCIA DEL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO DE LA REPUBLICA ESPAÑOLA..... Don Felix GORDON ORDAS

VOLUNTARIOS YUGOSLAVOS EN LA GUERRA ANTIFASCISTA DE ESPAÑA.....

RESULTADOS DEL SORTEO DE LOS LOTES DE LA TOMBOLA ORGANIZADA POR LA ASOCIACION A BENEFICIO DE LOS MUTILADOS DE LA GUERRA DE ESPAÑA .....

PEQUEÑAS CRONICAS DE LA VIDA EN YUGOSLAVIA :

- "Bodas de Sangre" de Federico García Lorca en en Teatro Dramático de Belgrado ...
- Las actividades editoriales yugoeslavas en relación con las necesidades de las minorías nacionales ...
- La autogestión social en las Universidades de Yugoeslavia...
- De cómo los trabajadores yugoeslavos afectúan la distribución de la plusvalía ...
- Problemas sindicales de los trabajadores yugoeslavos...

LA VIII ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LA U.N.E.S.C.O. .....

UN ACTO PUBLICO EL 29 DE DICIEMBRE PARA CONMEMORAR EL 29 DE NOVIEMBRE, FIESTA NACIONAL DE YUGOESLAVIA.

Notas, anuncios y comunicados.

Toda la correspondencia a : COOPERACION CULTURAL IBERO YUGOESLAVA 28, rue Serpente - Paris VI

Giros a : R. PONT PERNAS C.C.P. nº 1246-50 PARIS

Figure 4: Front cover*, Amistad: Boletín de información de la asociación Cooperación cultural ibero-yugoeslava,* Volume 1, Issue 3 (1954)

Spain continued to live on in the Yugoslav cultural imaginary.[35] Though there were no formal relations between the countries – alongside Mexico, Yugoslavia was the only country to never recognise Franco's government as legitimate (Alba and Schwartz 1988: 215) – Tito had established a quasi-embassy for the Republic in 1946 (Bajin 2023: 117-38). Federico Rodríguez Minyana, a Valencian playwright, journalist, and politician, was named the first Ambassador, and came to Yugoslavia via France, where he had left as an exile following the Spanish Civil War. In his post in Belgrade, he was hosted by the famous diplomat Ivo Vejvoda, and indeed by Tito, and helped arrange the radio programmes in Spanish cited above (ibid).[36] Prior to his arrival, the announcement of this

[35] Following Winfried Fluck, I understand cultural imaginary to be 'a repertory of images, affects, and yearnings which stimulate the individual imaginary ever newly' (in Frank 2017: 17-18).

[36] Minyana is a mysterious figure. He died in 1955 in Belgrade, but it is not known where he was buried. He had frustrated ambitions as a playwright. Max Aub wrote of him evocatively in *La gallina ciega* (1971). For further details, see (in Serbian): Bajin 2023: 117-38 and (in Spanish): Marosi 2007: 71-80.

new embassy had been made by Marko Ristić himself, in a letter sent from Paris and addressed to Spain's exiles (Marosi 2007: 74).[37]

'Nowhere in Europe', wrote a *New York Times* columnist in 1957, 'is the memory of the Spanish Civil War kept fresh with more official reverence than in Communist Yugoslavia' (in Pavlavković 2010: 1179). Rich links between Yugoslavia and Latin America, exemplified by the Yu-Mex phenomenon (a musical hybrid that grew out of the popularity Mexican Golden Age cinema in the SFRY [see Irwin 2010: 151-166]), further fostered an affinity – and understanding – for the Castilian language, and Hispanic culture more broadly.

Picasso's relationship with the region would endure; among other collaborations, he would famously make the poster for Veljko Bulajić's film *Bitka na Neretvi* [The Battle of Neretva] in 1969 and a stamp for the country in 1986. Relations were softening; a new dawn was ahead. When a young Emir Kusturica travelled in the seventies to Prague to embark on film studies at FAMU, he could not have known that his graduation film, *Guernica* (1978), would be chronologically closer to a civil war in his own country than that of Spain, and as had been rendered in Picasso's emblematic painting.

V. Theatrical entanglements: 'activities of exchange'

Robert Parker, historian of Ancient Greece, suggests that while Hermes' qualities cannot be reduced to a single phrase, they might be paraphrased as 'transition/ communication/ exchange' (2005: 39). The author further points to how in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, Apollo 'describes [Hermes'] sphere of activity, in a strikingly modern-sounding phrase found here only, as "the activities of exchange"' (ibid).

Such 'activities of exchange' are the focus of this next section. Drawing on existing scholarship and supplementing it with my own analysis of Yugoslav festival programmes

[37] Transmitted by letter to José Giral, former Prime Minister of the Second Republic. Ristić wrote: "J'ai le grand honneur de porter à votre connaisance, et sur son ordre, que le Gouvernement de la République Fédérative Populaire de Yougoslavie a pris la décision de reconnaître le Gouvernement Républicain dont vous assumez les fonctions de Président, comme seul légitime d'Espagne" [I have the great honour to inform that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has taken the decision to recognise the Republican Government of Spain, of whose functions you form part, as the only legitimate one.] (in Marosi 2007: 74).

and Spain's theatrical output, I offer below a contextual survey that elucidates how a transnational theatrical relationship between Spain and Yugoslavia developed in the twentieth century. This section is comprised of both empirical and analytical elements: apart from addressing the gaps in extant theatrical surveys, I discuss the unequal distribution of artistic travel between the regions. Until the 1990s, this was largely a unidirectional relationship, favouring Yugoslavia. This relationship fundamentally shifted towards Spain following Yugoslavia's dissolution.

V.i. Spanish artists at BITEF

In the aftermath of Franco's victory, Spain became increasingly isolated. Theatre offered an alternative avenue for maintaining links between Spaniards and Yugoslavs, especially within the context of the Belgrade-based international festival, BITEF, founded in 1967. It is here relevant that the 1960s and '70s in Yugoslavia constituted a fertile period of cultural growth and international artistic collaboration. This was a Golden Age not only for arts and sports, but also economically, with the country housing one of the top three fastest growing economies worldwide (Neal in Liotta: 2001). In this period, the SFRY passport was also widely considered one of the most powerful in the world (Rajak in Elzas 2009) 'as it was one of the few with which a person could travel freely through both the East and West' (Van Dijk et al 2008: 898).[38] As a consequence, these 'red' passports[39] were also among the most frequently falsified on the black market (Rajak in Elzas 2009). Writing in 1977, American academic Dennison Rusinow described this phenomenon not without a certain level of perplexity, and with a tone characteristic of the balkanist trope described by Maria Todorova: 'For more than three decades Yugoslavia has attracted and sustained a level of international interest disproportionate to the size and economic and military importance of a backwater Balkan state with a population of 20 million' (1977: vii).[40] If the late 1960s and early '70s constituted the central point of Yugoslavia's cultural renovation, this was in large part due to the opening of the country's borders and its

[38] Silvija Jestrovic notes this paradox: '[a]rguably, of all so-called communist regimes the Yugoslavian was the most permissive […] Yet of all communist regimes in Europe it broke apart most brutally' (2019: 241).
[39] Colloquially known as such (the 'crveni pasoš').
[40] For further details on the 'backwater' trope associated with the Balkans, see Todorova 1996: 7-24.

open-door policy – in effect a mirror-image to Spain's policies and attitude of the period. The country also benefited from generous foreign loans (Avbelj and Černič 2020).[41]

Economic prosperity had changed the role of theatre in the region. As early as 1952, a census revealed that 4.3 million Yugoslavs attended the theatre annually (Calic* 2019: 210).[42] By 1991, the SFRY housed 88 state-subsidised theatres (Panovski 1996: 2) and over 30 festivals (Nagy, Rouyer and Rubin 2013: 952). It should be noted that major operating houses such as the Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian National Theatres, founded in 1860, 1861, and 1867, respectively, had existed long prior to SFRY's foundation. Still, and even in established National Theatres, the early sixties saw a changing trend towards an increased interest in the neo-avant-garde (Šuvaković 2003: 26-31). This was in some part a natural consequence of the fact that during the interwar period a modernist movement in Serbia had boomed (Vejvoda in Radulović 2017: 147). Drawing on these earlier movements of the modernists and surrealists, practitioners began to envision the possible forms of fostering radical, provocative theatre in the SFRY. 1964 marked a pivotal moment, as this was the year Mira Trailović[43] first spoke of her concept of an international theatre festival that would take place in Belgrade (Dragićević Šešić 2017: 23). This was to become BITEF, which has been held annually since 1967 and which came to be seen as a connecting point between East and West (Dasgupta 1989: 219-225), hosting works by directors such as Jerzy Grotowski, Samuel Beckett, Peter Weiss, Pina Bausch and Eugenio Barba.

The openness of the festival held particular appeal to incoming Spanish artists considering Spain's relative cultural isolation at the time and Franco's policies of artistic censorship (O'Connor 1969: 282-288). The festival functioned as an alternative form of maintaining

[41] Calic offers further elucidation*:* 'Urban cultural life was also cosmopolitan with strong inclinations toward France, Great Britain, and Germany—in part the result of changing political alliances in the interwar period. American influences also had an impact. German and Austrian musicians, conductors, and directors often performed on the theater stages of Yugoslavia's major cities, exhibitions of European art were shown, and foreign literature was translated and published. In turn, Yugoslav orchestras and artists performed abroad. The magazine Nova Literatura (New literature) impressively illustrates this multifaceted interconnectedness. Among those on its editorial staff of thirty-five were Albert Einstein, Maxim Gorky, George Grosz, Sergei Eisenstein, Hugo Kersten, and Upton Sinclair' (2019: 97)

[42] For scale, the population of Yugoslavia in 1952 was roughly 16 million (Myers and Campbell 1954: 155).

[43] Trailović (1924-1989) was a dramaturg, director, and critical figure in the Yugoslav theatre scene. Apart from founding BITEF, she was also the manager of the Belgrade-based avant-garde collective Atelje 212, a theatre which brought international works, such as Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and James Joyce's *Exiles* to the SFRY as early as 1956 and 1962, respectively. Her efforts modernised and revolutionised theatre in the region. For further details, see Dragićević Šešić 2013: 19-34.

links with the country, and it was thanks to BITEF that a diverse selection of Spanish performers and directors came to Belgrade, including Núria Espert (1969, 1972, 1976, 1983),[44] Fernando Arrabal (1968, 1970, 1971), Távora Triano (1972, 1986), Semola Teatro/Joan Grau (1994) and the experimental Catalan companies Fura dels Baus (1988) and Els Comediants (1997).[45] BITEF became a launchpad for many of these artists: Núria Espert, for example, has credited BITEF and Mira Trailović for paving the way for the success of her later international career (Delgado 2003: 145). In speaking of her first visit to BITEF in 1969, which was with an acclaimed version of Jean Genet's *Las criadas* [The Maids, in original, *Les Bonnes*] (1947), Espert suggested that: 'el éxito de *Las criadas*, tanto en Belgrado como en Madrid, se debe a que es un espectáculo profundamente español' [the success of *Las criadas* in *both* Belgrade and Madrid was due to its profoundly Spanish nature] (Espert in Delgado 2003: 140). In 1977, Espert was awarded a Gold Star directly from Tito for her work (figure 5), thereby cementing her status as a key figure on the Yugoslav theatrical stage.



YA — Pág. 42 ESPECTACULO:

CRONICA DE TEATRO

NURIA ESPERT, "ARTISTA PREDILECTA DE YUGOSLAVIA"

El Presidente Tito le impondrá la más alta condecoración del país próximamente

BARCELONA.—La actriz española Nuria Espert va a recibir la más alta condecoración cultural de Yugoslavia de manos del Presidente Tito, en el curso del próximo Festival Internacional de Belgrado (BITEF), según informa Efra.

Tal distinción alcanzará también al director teatral británico Peter Brook, quien con Nuria Espert ha sido considerado "artista predilecto de Yugoslavia". Nuria Espert ha actuado varias veces en el citado Festival Internacional de Belgrado, donde presentó sucesivamente a us montajes de "Las criadas", de Genet, y "Yerma", de García Lorca, en ambas ocasiones con dirección del argentino Víctor García.

Por otra parte, se ha sabido que Nuria Espert ha firmado ya numerosos contratos internacionales para la presentación del nuevo espectáculo que prepara en París, Londres y varias ciudades de Estados Unidos. Este nuevo espectáculo, que sustituye en su programación a "Divinas palabras", de Valle-Inclán, es una nueva versión del mito clásico "Fedra", que ha escrito para la actriz el poeta catalán Salvador Espriu.

Concurso de textos teatrales convocado por Standard

La sección de teatro del grupo de empresa y el departamento de relaciones públicas de Standard Eléctrica, S. A., ha convocado el primer Concurso de Textos Teatrales, en el que se otorgarán dos premios de 50.000 pesetas para la mejor obra de arte dramático y para la mejor obra de humor.

Cualquier información sobre las bases puede obtenerse en el departamento de relaciones públicas, calle de José Ortega y Gasset, 22, en Madrid.

"Pijama de seda", en el Arlequín

"Pijama de seda" es el título que se ha asomado al Arlequín. De autor norteamericano—Summer Arthur Long—, nos viene de Argentina y se desarrolla—por supuesto—en un dormitorio, con grande cama, aunque, por fortuna, la grosería está ausente y casi se puede decir que no es una comedia de cama, en contra de lo que el mobiliario hace creer.

Variante de las relaciones hombre-mujer, esta vez desde la perspectiva del mecenazgo femenino de una dama medio abandonada por su marido, que recibe con los brazos abiertos a un viejo tante, al que acaba protegiendo con desinterés y amor. Es fino el estudio que se hace de los personajes en esta pieza, sin mayores honduras, pero viva y ágil.

Es excelente la interpretación de Susana Campos, que dice con medida, fuerza, a medida vos y escucha y da la réplica exacta. Rudy Carrie, muy bien con su desparpajo y soltura, aunque, para nuestro gusto, llega un momento en que se recrea excesivamente en la suerte y le imprime un ritmo, un tempo a su trabajo como si de una obra de Shakespeare se tratase, cuando estamos ante una comedia ligera y no una tragedia. No confundamos algunos trazos y situaciones sentimentales con otra cosa. Esta moroseidad pesa y alarga la pieza, al menos en su segunda parte; ésa es la impresión que se percibe.

Manuel GOMEZ ORTIZ

Figure 5: 'Nuria Espert, "Artista predilecta de Yugoslavia"', *Ya, Crónica de teatro,* 13 September 1977

BITEF continued to flourish in the twenty-five years following its inaugural edition. However, the outbreak of the war in the summer of 1991 altered the festival's course. In 1992, BITEF was held for the first time without international participation and entitled

[44] Víctor García was also a frequent visitor of BITEF (1968, 1969, 1972, 1976). García was Argentine, but established close links with Spain following his collaboration with Núria Espert (Breden 2014: 47).
[45] Data from the BITEF Digital Archive (Bogunović and Sofronjević 2018).

Bitef por embargom [Bitef Under Embargo]. The following year, the festival re-opened to international artists and was symbolically called the season of wanderers and dreamers, but this start was shaky and plagued by last-minute changes. Spanish drama in translation figured predominantly in the 1993 edition, including versions of Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* [Life is a Dream], Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna* and an adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote*.

V.ii. Mirror-images

As I have intimated, across most of the twentieth century, Spanish theatre travelled almost unidirectionally to the SFRY.[46] During and in the aftermath of the Yugoslav dissolution of the 1990s, this direction of cultural travel shifted. The aforementioned 1993 edition of BITEF, which included three Spanish plays but no Spanish artists, illustrates this change well. By the millennium, the *New York Times* comment of 1957 had appeared in mirror-image form, when Hispanist Antonio Monegal argued that no foreign conflict had inspired as much literature within Spain as the Yugoslav wars (Monegal 2002: 29).

This was, to be sure, a different form of remembering. If the Spanish Civil War was rehabilitated as a foundational, quasi-romatic myth within Yugoslavia, the latter's dissolution had the opposite effect within Spain, where the wars generally provoked a combination of horror and recoil. Though the atrocities of the 1990s caused international outrage, the live coverage of Bosnia – perceived by some as 'the first true TV war' (Moorcraft in McKenna 2000: 68) – was particularly distressing in Spain, opening old wounds. The Siege of Sarajevo, in particular, refracted memories of the Spanish Civil War; an effect studied in detail by Marije Hristova-Dijkstra (2016: 89-136).[47] In spite of – or perhaps precisely because of – this 'haunting' effect, striking acts of solidarity emanated from Spain. Barcelona, for example, established a twin-city arrangement with Sarajevo and created a '13th district' dedicated to the city.[48]

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[46] Under Franco's politically repressive system, few Yugoslavs wished to move to Spain. War criminals were a notable exception (for example, Maks Luburić, Ante Pavelić).

[47] Hristova-Dijkstra's doctoral thesis explores how three conflicts – World War II, the *desaparecidos* in Argentina, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s – were portrayed in Spanish media. In the chapter on Yugoslavia, she covers both journalistic and novelistic accounts of the wars, noting that they evoked a 'boomerang effect', where coverage of Yugoslavia was in some cases able to obliquely address still-taboo areas of the Spanish Civil War (2016: 89-136).

[48] In can be argued that in light of Spain's complicated but still bloodless transition, Sarajevo functioned as a disturbing reminder of what could have gone wrong.

The literature inspired by the Yugoslav wars (fiction, poetry, drama, film, journalistic outputs, documentary films, historical studies) is rich. As within the context of this thesis I focus on theatrical output, this is the area I will now go on to discuss. Marco Kunz' study on this output (novels and theatre) is the most extensive to-date (2021: 315-369); I address it, and a few theatrical omissions, in the next section.

However, for an initial point of reference on socio-historical analyses of the two regions, Andrea Maura Castilla's survey is wide in scope. Maura Castilla offers an overview of Spanish-authored studies of the Balkans wars, beginning with *Ex-Yugoslavia: De la Guerra a la paz* (1993) and ending with *Hesperia, Culturas del Medirráneo –Los Balcanes* (2016) (Maura Castilla 2013: 185). To her list, I would add that a bourgeoning group of young scholars (Spanish *balconólogos*, or balkanists), who also work as journalists and translators, have in recent years disseminated important work on Balkan culture and politics within Spain. These include Miguel Roán (b. 1981), Jordi Cumplido (b. 1986), and Marc Casals (b. 1980). All are active on X, formerly known as twitter, and employ the site to share news and happenings from the Balkans to a Spanish audience. Roán directs the cultural portal *Balcanismos* [Balkanisms] and is the author of several books, including *Maratón balcánico* [Balkan Marathon], *Balcanismos* [Balkanisms], and most recently, *Belgrado brut* [Belgrade brut] (2023).[49] Cumplido is a historian and journalist, and in 2023 published *El sueño de Yugoslavia* [The Dream of Yugoslavia], covering crucial moments in the country's formation and history. Casals is a journalist who has lived in the Balkans for over fifteen years, and alongside his journalistic output, has also published a collection of stories inspired by his time in Bosnia, *La piedra permanece* [The Stone Endures] (2021).

V.iii. Staging Yugoslavia in Spain

In her study on Spanish theatre about the Yugoslav wars, Luisa García-Manso's central aim is to demonstrate that sexual violence was a common theme in these works, and that the plays tended to represent Yugoslavia as a nebulous space (2014: 146-147). The plays covered in García-Manso's study are Itziar Pascual's *Fuga* (1994), Eva Hibernia's *Los días*

[49] Note that Roán publishes as both Miguel Rodríguez Andreu and Miguel Roán.

perdidos (1997) and *laSal* [sic] (2012), Laila Ripoll's *La ciudad sitiada* (1997), Gracia Morales's *Un lugar estratégico* (2003) and Angélica Liddel's *Belgrado* (2008) (García-Manso 2013).[50]

García-Manso's research is referenced in Marco Kunz's 2021 chapter on the Yugoslav wars in the transnational study, *De Tlatelolco al 11-M: La productividad cultural de cinco acontecimientos en México y España* (Kunz, Schultheiss, Pilet-Bornet, and Girbes 2021).[51] Kunz's chapter offers an extensive introduction to Yugoslavia's history and closes with a discussion on its reverberations in Spanish culture and media (2021: 315-369). His survey includes sections on literature, theatre, and film. To García-Manso's list he also adds Juan Mayorga's playlet, *Una carta de Sarajevo* (2001), though, interestingly, not Mayorga's later play, *Los yugoslavos* (2013). Kunz does not include Hadi Kurich's first play, *Opus primum: conte de guerra* (1993), nor his most recent, *GRAD* (2020), nor La conquesta del pol sud's *Mivion Radio Sarajavo* (2021). These are discussed in Chapter III of this thesis. At the time of writing, my understanding is that the complete list would be as follows; plays marked with an asterisk have not been referenced to-date in any academic work:

Fuga by Itziar Pascual (1994)
Los días perdidos by Eva Hibernia (1997)
La ciudad sititada by Laila Ripoll (1997)
Un lugar estratégico by Gracia Morales (2003)
Belgrado by Angélica Liddel (2008)
**Guerra de identidade* by Deborah Vukusic (2008)
LaSal by Eva Hibernia (2012)
Los yugoslavos by Juan Mayorga (2013)
Donde el bosque se espesa by Laila Ripoll and Mariano Llorente (2017)
**GRAD* by Hadi Kurich (2020)
**Mivion Radio Sarajevo* by Slobodan "Boban" Minic, Azra Suljic, Marc Soler, and La Conquesta del Pol Sud (2021)
**El eclipse* by Antonio Travieso (2022)
**Hay alguien en el bosque* by Anna Maria Ricart (2022)
**La filla de l'est* by Gemma Brío and Norbert Martínez, after Clara Usón (2024)[52]

[50] Title translations, in consecutive order: The Escape, The Lost Days, theSalt, The Besieged City, A Strategic Place, and Belgrade.
[51] Written for a Spanish audience, this edited volume shares some characteristics with Hristova-Dijkstra's aforementioned study in its transnational orientation. The authors here examine how five moments in history have been narrativized within Spain: three events in Mexican history (the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, and the 1993 femicides in Juaréz), the wars of Yugoslavia; and the 2004 terrorist bombing in Madrid.
[52] Clara Usón's novel *La hija del este* [The Daughter of the East] (2012) offers a fictionalised account of the life of war criminal Ratko Mladić's daughter, Ana Mladić, who committed suicide at the age of twenty-three. In January and February 2024, the *Teatro Nacional de Catalunya* adapted Usón's text for the stage, in a production directed by Gemma Brío.

VI. The path: chapters, method, and position

> 'People travel a long distance to be able to say: This reminds me of some other place'
>
> - Yehuda Amichai[53]

I have established the terrain – the borderland between Spain and Yugoslavia – and the travelling player as the guide. What remains is to consider the path. This thesis is composed of two sections of two chapters each. Chapters I and II examine the representation of Spain's civil wars – ranging from the Granada War of 1482-1492 to the Civil War of 1936-39 – in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia from the 1990s onwards. The second section explores the opposite phenomenon; namely, the staging of the Yugoslav wars in Spain. Across all chapters the treatment of enacted travel forms the analytical focus.

Chapter I defends the central hypothesis through its logical inverse: interrupted travel. I take as case study the eighth edition of Yu Fest, a (once) pan-Yugoslav festival dedicated in 1993 to the Spanish Golden Age. I argue that despite an ostensible focus on voyage and discovery, this edition of the festival was defined instead by paralysis, both on and off the stage. Frustrated travel underscored the programming – which saw many plays abandoned during rehearsals – as well as the dramaturgy of the productions that remained. Drawing from Mark Fisher's notion of the eerie, I argue that 'phantom productions' (productions abandoned before and during the run, but which nevertheless remained in the festival programme) haunted the festival as a whole and rendered the accompanying pamphlet, designed to resemble a map, as indicative of an incomplete spatial system that unintentionally reflected the fractioning Yugoslav state. I read the productions that survived the cull through John Culbert's writing on paralysis and propose that – in contrast to the travelling player – on-stage paralysis acts as a memory stifler, or block.

José Sanchis Sinisterra's play about the Spanish Civil War, *¡Ay, Carmela!* (1987) was performed hundreds of times by travelling troupes in 1990s Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

[53] Isreali poet, cited in Bruce Krajewski's study on Hermes and Hermeneutics (Krajewski 1988: 1).

The play would go on to become the longest production in modern Bosnian history (1999-2020). This unusual phenomenon is the focus of Chapter II. Through a reading informed by Peter Glazer's notion of radical nostalgia, I situate all three versions within the long history of Yugoslav engagement with the Spanish Civil War and the cultural afterlife of the International Brigade veterans. Paying particular attention to the representation of the veterans in Yugoslav rock music, I show that memories of the brigades travelled through songs, ultimately creating a fertile environment for a play about the Spanish conflict to become a surprise hit. I demonstrate that each production would not have been possible without the previous one: a domino-cultural effect that ultimately led to the eponymous song, in a version by rock artist Darko Rundek, living a life of its own.[54]

Turning to Spain, parallels between travel writing and autobiography form the basis of Chapter III. I here compare two productions that stage the Siege of Sarajevo. On surface level, *GRAD* (2020) and *Mivion Radio Sarajevo* (2021) share many thematic parallels. Both take as inspiration the autobiographies of Bosnian artists who left Sarajevo for Spain, both were performed in bilingual autonomous communities, and both bring to the fore the relationship between refugees and their host communities. However, I here suggest that viewing these productions as an enacted form of travel writing reveals their distinct approach to memory mediation. Comparing the use of direct address, multilingual dialogue, and archival footage – dramaturgical techniques the productions share – I demonstrate that in one production, the traveller is presented as a trickster; while in the other, as a witness. Placing my analysis in dialogue with Silvija Jestrovic's* notion of hyper-authenticity, I argue that this distinction offers a framework for considering how audience mediation can be subverted (or bolstered) through autobiographical performance.

In the final chapter, I examine how, in travelling, characters may blur the perpetrator-victim divide, taking as case study Laila Ripoll and Mariano Llorente's 2017 production, *Donde el bosque se espesa* [Where the Forest Thickens]. I focus on the character Charlatana and her limbo-like tavern; both character and space have been curiously neglected in prior academic interpretations of this production. Through a reading informed by Primo Levi's

[54] This is an expanded version of my chapter included Maria del Pilar Chouza-Calo, Esther Fernández and Jonathan Thacker's edited volume, *Daring Adaptations, Creative Failures and Experimental Performances in Iberian and Transnational Contexts* (2023: 202-222).

notion of the grey zone and Katherine Stafford's writing on perpetrator postmemory, I posit that the character's serial shape-shifting establishes her tavern as a palimpsestic memory site upon which multiple histories are inscribed. Through the establishment of such a site, the production is able to draw parallels between the Spanish and Croatian ultra-right and, particularly, between Franco and Ante Pavelic. I show that these parallels forge a mnemonic space in which implication (following Levi) is shown to evade the strict geographical confines of national genealogies.

The artistic relationships between Spaniards and Yugoslavs are rich yet understudied, and no comparative analysis of their theatrical production has yet been pursued. In dialogue with a diverse array of scholars coming from Hispanism, Theatre, Memory, and Slavonic Studies, this thesis attempts to address this gap. However, and to borrow Duncan Wheeler's phrasing, while a study may be the first of its nature, that 'does not thereby imply that it has emerged in a vacuum' (Wheeler 2012: 2). I have discussed above several prominent figures who feature in this study; further academic contextualisation is interwoven throughout the thesis. As the range of historical contexts and artists discussed here is by necessity large, and the relevant scholarship not defined to one discipline, it has seemed to me appropriate to also include a focused literature review within each chapter.

My methodology combines historical contextualisation with close-reading and, where possible, close-watching.[55] As a framework focused on a single, repeating motif, this approach draws from the model proposed by Sarah Wright in her analysis of the trickster-function in the theatre of Federico García Lorca (Wright 2000), and in her later work on Don Juan's transmutations in Spain (Wright 2007). In reconstructing and analysing each production, I employ a range of material, including archival documents, oral history interviews, journalistic texts, production reviews, and academic scholarship. This range of sources reflects Rothberg's argument that the study of transnational memory requires that a new sort of archive be formed, one which establishes 'links between dispersed documents' and looks for meaning 'in marginalized texts or in marginal moments of well-known texts' (2009: 18). Hristova-Dijkstra adapts Rothberg's approach in her framework of reading together-apart, an approach from which I also draw. Hristova-Dijkstra highlights the need to balance literary analysis with historical documentation whilst also

[55] By which I mean, when I have either seen a production live, or have archival footage at hand.

acknowledging that the fictive text creates its own, new, realities (2016: 9-26).[56] Following Laura Lonsdale, I attempt to steer clear of the 'idiom of subversion' that tends to accompany the reading of texts (here, productions) authored by marginalised voices; and, like Lonsdale and Silvija Jestrovic, see form as an expression of the political, though not necessarily its best instrument (Lonsdale 2008; Jestrovic 2002).[57,58]

In analysing nine productions, seven of which are being academically discussed for the first time, this thesis offers a wide-ranging new corpus for the study of transnational memory. Through its specific focus on works that blend the histories of Spain and the former Yugoslavia, this research builds on the work of historians, sociologists, literary comparativists, and theatre scholars who have explored relations between the two regions. Homing in on the multifaceted, and at times paradoxical, role of the traveller and this figure's mythical antecedents, this study takes a practical approach to the 'travelling turn' in Memory Studies, positing that this metaphorical shorthand can be extended into the domain of the literal and the embodied. The travellers who are the focus of this thesis all inhabit a liminal space that might be imagined as the space between Spain and the former Yugoslavia, but also between life and death, truthfulness and confabulation, speech and silence, and memory and oblivion. As such, they are uniquely positioned to harness memory's multidirectional and palimpsestic qualities, and yet also to pass unnoticed. It is by crossing borders and inhabiting marginal spaces that the traveller

[56] For Hristova-Dijkstra, to read-together apart is to 'critically engage with the entangled exclusions that are created in the production of transnational memory at various levels'; this represents 'a critical exercise that wishes to deconstruct ideas of "uniqueness" that lie at the heart of a competitive understanding of cultural memory' (2016: 19).

[57] Despite not sharing a subject matter, this thesis shares affinities with both studies. Lonsdale here argues that feminist readings of female-authored Spanish texts have tended to ignore, misunderstand, or distort the role of form in their analyses, providing instead a flattening discourse of subversion that 'makes exaggerated claims for the political efficacy of certain narrative devices' (2008: 87). Jestrovic addresses a lack of study on the distinction between Brecht's distancing effect and the mode of 'making the familiar strange' used by Russian Formalists in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Like Lonsdale above, Jestrovic writes that 'it is important to resist a militant approach to aesthetics […that] presupposes that certain formal choices bring about fixed ideological views regardless of the content and context of the work' (2002: 282). Further, and following Victor Erlich, Jestrovic notes that a focus on form 'does not reduce [one's] approach to a strictly technical analysis' (2002: 5); it can be 'viewed as a crux where aesthetic form and ideology intersect' (2002: 8).

[58] Insofar as possible, I have endeavoured not to overtly impose my own politics on the works, but instead to situate these works within a political environment and leave the act of judgement to the reader (Weber [1917] 2020: 26-29). Still, there is no 'view from nowhere' (Nagel 1989). As a first-generation diaspora with familial roots in the former Yugoslavia, I consider my position as sitting uneasily between what Jestrovic terms the 'intimate outsider' and 'insider-who-has-left', though here with relation to countries, rather than cities. As Jestrovic notes, '[t]he *intimate outsider* speaks the language of the city, has favourite city haunts, and understands local jokes, yet she has always been a visitor to the city rather than a citizen'; the insider-who-has-left, by contrast 'claims the attitude of intimacy shaped by sharp, critical distance' (2013: 3).

mediates across cultures, but by this same definition leaves minimal traces in dominant narratives, records, and archives – disappearing, as it were, like 'airy mist'.

CHAPTER I.
Travel, interrupted: Frustrated voyages at the 1993 Yu Fest and BITEF

'U staru Španiju ne vjerujem, jer je gnjila kao gnjila jabuka, a u Novu Zemlju ne vjerujem, jer je nema na Zemlji.'

[I don't believe in Old Spain, because she is rotten like a rotten apple, and I do not believe in the New World, because she does not exist in the World.]

- Columbus to his galley, *Kristofor Kolumbo* (Krleža 1918)

I. Introduction

In 1993, two major theatre festivals held in Serbia, by then a rump-Yugoslavia – Yu Fest and BITEF – announced their upcoming programmes: both framed travel as a central motif. In a nod to the fifth centenary of Columbus' 'discovery' of the Americas, Yu Fest dedicated its 1993 edition to the Spanish Golden Age (1492-1699). Meanwhile, and following a muted edition with no international participation, Belgrade's BITEF reopened in 1993 with a season dedicated to Wanderers and Dreamers. This focus on voyage, discovery, and the so-called New World – in other words, a rich theatrical display of transnational spaces and journeys – might suggest a fertile ground for mnemonic mediation. However, in this chapter I will propose that encounters with paralysis – real and imagined – were in fact major thematic undercurrents at both festivals. Stasis prevailed over movement, both on and off the stage. Expanding on the work of literary critic John Culbert, I will demonstrate how these moments of paralysis were indicative of memory being stifled, or blocked.

In *Paralyses: Literature, Travel and Ethnography* (2011), Culbert argues that it is not movement, but its absence, that characterises the treatment of travel on the nineteenth and twentieth century literary stage. Repeated references to halted or interrupted movement reveal a crisis of faith in travel as a mode of obtaining knowledge. This crisis can be read as a crisis of modernity: for as much as modernity is associated with fluctuation, speed, and change, the contemporary traveller is defined instead by aporia – moments of impasse – that lead to paralysis on psychic and physical levels. Opening his study with reference to Lévi-Strauss ('I hate travelling and wanderers… Yet here I am' [2011: 6]), Culbert underscores the dilemma of the Modern Age traveller, whose position oscillates between an inappropriate nostalgia towards the Early Modern explorer (for whom all was new), and a distrust of the over-informed, disenchanted modern traveller-tourist. Culbert writes:

> […] paralyses undo the certainties of knowledge, presenting alternatives to the normative codings of travel, transports, and narrative. These alternatives, raised in moments of paralysis, may be political, sexual, or affective. At the limit – and paralysis always concerns a problematic limit – what presents itself may be more than a mere option and a decision; the alternative instead poses the challenge of the radically *other* (2011: 13, emphasis in original).

While Culbert includes brief reference to theatre, the plays he cites are characterised as subsets of the broader literary tendency he delineates: an anxious era of 'texts' which evade, pause, and freeze. The embodied nature of (most) stage work remains a curious omission within a study focused on what is usually understood to be a corporeal expression. The question of whether his framework is applicable within a dramaturgical context is one I will explore in these pages, here in relation to how Early Modern Spain[59] was imagined in Serbia of 1993, a time of great political upheaval and uncertainty.

Through a close examination of three productions staged at both BITEF and Yu Fest, and their accompanying paratexts (reviews, announcements, programmes), I will read for moments where Culbert's notion of the 'problematic limit' – the encounter with the impasse and the so-called 'other' – becomes manifest and, in my view, central to the performances themselves. I demonstrate that such paralytic encounters are present on multiple levels: 1) programming: in the sense of performances abandoned mid-rehearsal, 2) textual: in the choice of texts that themselves portray travel as frustrated or circular, and 3) dramaturgical: directorial moves that adapt the texts, such that the intended portrayal of travel (within the text) is modified and halted through extra-textual additions (for example, through music or set design).

It will emerge that, like the ethnographers in Culbert's study, the artists behind the 1993 Yu Fest and BITEF invoke two attitudes towards travel – the Early Modern and the Modern – and conclude that neither is satisfactory. Within this context, paralysis reflects an inability to imagine a productive future for the region – foreign histories are invoked

[59] Though specific dates vary, the Spanish Golden Age broadly encompasses the late fifteenth into the early seventeenth centuries. Marked by the liberation of the Peninsula from the Moors (after almost 800 years of warfare which reached a close in 1492 at the fall of Granada), the Golden Age was a period of significant literary and artistic innovation, of economic prosperity, and of violent geographic expansion under the reigning monarchs. Classical references and Neoplatonism were brought into the artistic sphere, literary trends such as *culteranismo* and *cultismo* flourished, and the Baroque idea of 'theatrum mundi' [the world as stage] was explored frequently on-stage, with the most famous example being Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* [Life is a Dream] of 1635. For a rich theatrical analysis of this period, see Jonathan Thacker's *Role-Play and the World as a Stage* (2002), but also *A Companion to Golden Age theatre* (Thacker 2007).

not in a generative, multidirectional (Rothbergian) mode, but as a way of underscoring the futility of all journeys, irrespective of their geographic context. Consider, for example, the following blurb, which accompanied Yu Fest's 1993 production of Miroslav Krleža's *Kristofor Kolumbo* (1918), a Modernist re-imagining of Columbus' voyage from Spain to the Americas:

> *Vivere non est necesse, navigare necesse est*. Živeti nije važno, važno je ploviti. Ništa nije strašnije za Admirala od izmaglice iz koje izranja Novo Kopno. Kraj je plovidbe. Ništa nije gore za Revolucionara od časa u kujem mu se ostvare ideali: Gotovo je s revolucijom. Kolumbo i galijoti, Krleža i idioti, Lenjin i mase, zvezdano nebo nad nama i moralni zakon u nama: tisućučetristodevedestdruge Las Americas, hiljadudevedestosedamnajste rođajet Rosija [sic], o, ima li puta do Novog Kopna 1993? Stojim kraj druma. Šofer menja točak. Nije mi se dopadalo tamo odakle dolazim. Ne dopada mi se tamo kuda idem. Zašto s nestrpljenjem posmatram promenu točka?
>
> [*Vivere non est necesse, navigare necesse est*. It is not important to live, it is important to sail. There is nothing more dreadful for the Admiral than the mist from which a New Land emerges. The voyage has ended. Nothing is worse for the Revolutionary than the moment in which his ideals are realised: the revolution is over. Columbus and his galley, Krleža and the idiots, Lenin and the masses, the starry sky above us and the moral law within us: 1492 and America, 1917 and the birth of Russia, oh, is there a route to a New World in 1993? I am standing on the side of the road. The driver is changing the wheel. I didn't like where I came from. I don't like where I am going. Why do I look, impatiently, at the wheel being changed?] (Ristić 1993)

The explorer here does not know what to do. Travel is yearned for yet understood to be self-defeating – the energy of the journey is extinguished by its successful outcome. Unlike the travelling player, who traverses divides, the paralytic player can be viewed as an anti-mediator: rejecting communication, progress, and dynamic approaches to memory. Only a cacophony emerges, a ricochet of allusions that collapse time and space.[60]

Following a brief overview of Yu Fest, BITEF, and the historical circumstances of 1993, this chapter has two analytical sections. First, I examine the festivals' paratexts through the lens of the eerie (Fisher 2016): a selection of what I term 'phantom productions', retained in the programmes yet never performed, are shown to evoke an incomplete spatial system that unintentionally refracted the fracturing Yugoslav state. Moving to the realm of performance, I then examine how statis was foregrounded in the three

[60] 'the starry sky above us and the moral law within us' is a reference to Immanuel Kant; and the driver changing the wheel, to Bertolt Brecht's poem, 'Der Radwechsel' [The Wheel-Change].

productions performed at both Yu Fest and BITEF: Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovehuna* (Fuente Ovejuna),[61] Krleža's *Kristofor Kolumbo,* and *Don Kihot*, an adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Full footage of *Fuenteovehuna* and *Don Kihot* was preserved by KPGT and is publicly available; my analysis of *Kolumbo* is based on other extant archival sources (reviews and production stills).[62] In examining these depictions of Early Modern Spain and the Baroque notion of *desengaño* [disenchantment], I show that all three productions portray travel as a fundamentally futile and frustrated endeavour, and their protagonists as disillusioned explorers.

I. ii. Atmospheres of Darkness: BITEF and Yu Fest in 1992/93

The introduction to this thesis detailed the success of Belgrade's BITEF festival since its 1967 inception, its relevance on the international stage and, particularly, to Spanish artists performing during Franco's dictatorship (see pp. 32-36). The first two decades of BITEF represented a metaphorical golden age of rich experimental work, porous artistic borders, and generous financial support. 1992 marked a significant change: as Serbia became increasingly isolated on the political stage, BITEF was held for the first time without international participation and was entitled *Bitef pod embargom* [Bitef Under Embargo]. The decision to hold the edition was controversial, as some perceived an ongoing festival as a denial of the current state of political affairs which, in turn, could be read as support of the regime (Šentevska 2021: 137). This debate was not divided neatly along political lines; leftist and artistic director Jovan Ćirilov defended the choice, arguing that were BITEF to close, it might never open again (Medenica 2021: 276-277).

When the festival reopened to international guests in 1993, Ćirilov called it a *čudo*, a word roughly translatable as '*miracle'*, but that can also have negative connotations, as in the Old English usage of *awesome* or *amazing*: 'desilo se čudo i eto ove godine Bitefa ima. I sada samo može da ponovo desi neko čudo pa da ga ne bude' [something unbelievable happened and Bitef has returned. And now all it would take would be for another unbelievable thing to happen to take it away] (Petkovska-Gajić, 'Bitef, ipak', *Borba*, 8

[61] Depending on the edition, Lope de Vega's play can carry the title 'Fuenteovejuna' or 'Fuente Ovejuna'. In the Serbian production discussed here, the title was transliterated as 'Fuenteovehuna'. To make the distinction between production and playtext clear, I cite the Spanish text using 'Fuente Ovejuna'.
[62] KPGT has a physical archive and theatre in Belgrade, a digitised archive on the company website, and a dedicated Youtube channel (KPGTtheatre), where complete footage of *Don Kihot* and *Fuenteovehuna* can be found. My analysis is supplemented with three interviews: Ljubiša Ristić (2023), Saša Gabrić (2023), and Kokan Mladenović (2024).

September 1993). Spanish theatre featured heavily in its programme, stimulated by a parallel decision by director Ljubiša Ristić to dedicate his own festival, Yu Fest, to the Spanish Golden Age earlier that Summer. Ristić had a history of collaboration with BITEF; in the 1992 programme, seven of the total eleven shows came from Yu Fest alone.[63] Indeed, one paper claimed these seven productions had 'saved' BITEF's honour, in light of the embargo ('Lutalice i sanjari', *Narodne novine*, 17 September 1993).

Since its inaugural edition in 1987, Yu Fest had been held in Subotica (though the productions toured), under the direction of Ristić. Frequently described as the *enfant terrible* of Yugoslav theatre (Dević 2018: 203; Milivojević 2015; Kornélia 2022), Ristić had for decades occupied a colossal role within the region's theatrical scene; his career and reputation would later be seriously compromised by his alignment with Mira Marković – wife of Slobodan Milošević – and her party, the Yugoslav United Left.

Alongside the acclaimed artists Nada Kokotović (choreographer), Dušan Jovanović (playwright, director), and Rade Šerbedzija (actor), Ristić was a founding member and principal director of KPGT, a major Yugoslav collective whose ethos was reflected in the name - each initial referring to the word for 'theatre' in four of the country's official languages (Kazalište, Pozorište, Gledališče, Teatar).[64] KPGT was founded in Zagreb, in 1977, as a direct reaction and artistic move against rising regional nationalisms ('Sve što je vredno je prošlost', *Borba*, 21-22 August 1993). Since the 1970s, Ristić had championed a theatrical practice that was perceived by some as a paradoxical, but powerful, 'blend of institutional and alternative, publicly funded and self-financed, bourgeois and communist, conventional and unconventional, progressive and reactionary, leftish and rightish, elite and populist' (Šentevska 2021: 134-135) and it was in this same vein the new festival, Yu Fest, operated, oscillating between apparently contradictory aesthetic and political modes. The company deconstructed and criticised Yugoslav policies, in order to preserve them. The company's pan-Slavic stance was not uncontroversial. An exposé in *Danas* published on 30 October 1984, for example, accused Ristić – notably, alongside Yugoslav veterans of the Spanish International Brigades – of being a 'loose cannon' who operated 'outside the parameters of Yugoslavia's political system' (Milić in Pavlaković 2010: 1182; Pavlaković 2010: 1181-1182).

[63] Data taken from the BITEF Digital Archive (Bogunović and Sofronjević 2018).
[64] Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, and Macedonian, respectively.

Yu Fest was in effect a collaborative project between Subotica, Budva and Kotor (Klaic* 1989: 105). Following a successful KPGT season dedicated to Shakespeare in 1986, Ristić – who was at the helm of the National Theatre in Subotica – was approached by Svetozar Marović and Andjelko Kovačević, from Budva and Kotor, respectively, with the aim of jointly forging a theatrical network across the three cities (Jovanov 2016: 161-162).[65] The following year (1987), Yu Fest began, with the inaugural edition dedicated to Molière.[66] If KPGT had already pursued a plurilingual and experimental approach to theatre, this was magnified under Yu Fest, due to the scale of its geographic reach. Travel was core to the company's ethos: the festival was conceived as an 'otvoreni mrežni sistem' [open network system] (Jovanov 2016: 163) that would connect actors, directors, theatres, and other cultural institutions across the SFRY. The inaugural edition travelled to eighteen cities and was described by critics as a 'putujući karavanski teatar' [travelling caravan theatre] (Jovanov 2016: 197). It did not discriminate between capital cities and less populated areas. For a sense of scale, the first edition offered 17 premieres and a programme of over forty plays in total (this included visiting productions) (Jovanov 2016: 167); a retrospective in *Vreme* suggests the festival reached 20,000 audience members (Gogić, 'Vreme je za barok', *Vreme*, 13 September 1993). As early as 1987 – the year of the first edition – the major theatre scholar and critic, Dragan Klaic, underscored the potential political impact of this newly formed pan-Yugoslav Festival:

> YU Fest, as the whole network was named, is not only an entrepreneurial coup and an operation of mind-boggling logistics; but, it is also an undertaking of clear political importance […] In a federal state where six republics and two autonomous provinces tend to look after their own turf, pursue their own political priorities, and where competing and often irreconcilable economic interests turn into political conflicts and potentially dangerous ethnic strife, YU Fest brought artists from all parts of the country together, despite the reigning cultural parochialism, and turned this festival into a symbol of Yugoslav cultural and, indeed, theatrical, unity. (Klaic 1987: 22)

[65] Ana Dević provides important context on the link between KPGT and Ristić's role at the Subotica National Theatre, a link which may initially appear paradoxical. Dević writes: 'The next phase of KPGT was marked by an unexpected move—to an institutional theatre. In 1985, Ristić and Nada Kokotović, his partner and creator of "choreodrama" in Yugoslavia (one of the trademarks of KPGT plays) accepted to head the National Theatre in Subotica, a city in the Province of Vojvodina inhabited by a large Hungarian minority. The decision to offer the directorial post to the *enfant terrible* of Yugoslav theatre was a plan by local politicians to save the two drama ensembles—Hungarian and Serbian—which were both in a prolonged state of stagnation.' (2018: 203).

[66] One of the plays was Molière's Don Juan, *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*, with Rade Šerbedžija in the lead (Jovanov 2016: 170).

The aesthetics of Yu Fest mirrored those of KPGT: performances were often outdoors and revealed a commitment to experimental staging practices, such as a heavy use of dance and choreography (led by Kokotović), non-verbal scenes, and an unaffected blend of the official Yugoslav languages (Jovanov 2016: 182). Yu Fest quickly gained an impressive critical following and was henceforth annually dedicated to various themes, such as to local Yugoslav authors (1988) and musical theatre (1989). At the start of the war, these themes took a markedly darker turn: 1991 was entitled *Balkanske tragedije* (Balkan Tragedies) and 1992, *Istočno od kraja* (East of the End; a rhyming pun on John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* – known in Serbo-Croatian as 'Istočno od raja').

Just as BITEF's 1993 season of Wanderers and Dreamers represented an affective move away from the 'embargo' theme of 1992, the 1993 Yu Fest edition also demonstrated a conscious shift in tone. The previous two editions of Yu Fest (cited above) had overtly referenced the war, while the 1993 theme suggested a tentative sense of hope, or defiance: *Zlatno doba* [Golden Age]. News clips reflected this yearning tone towards both voyage and the Spanish Early Modern era, evident in their headlines: 'Živimo zlatno doba' [We are living through a Golden Age] (*Dani Subotice*, 11 August 1993); Vreme je za barok [It's time for the Baroque] (Gogić, *Vreme*, 13 September 1993); 'Čežnja za zlatnim dobom' [A Yearning for the Golden Age] (*Politika Express*, 20 August 1993), 'Sve što je vredno je prošlost' [The only thing that is valuable is the past] (*Borba*, 21-22 August 1993), 'Neki drugi životi. Važnost putovanja' [Some Other Lives. The Importance of Journeying] (Radošević, *Politika*, 22 September 1993).

The 'importance of journeying', as *Politika* put it, extended beyond the stage and into the realities of the period. Serbia (as a rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and still unified with Montenegro) was in 1993 an international pariah. Extreme economic sanctions imposed the previous year in reaction to the continued violence by Serbian forces in Croatia and Bosnia, and aimed at Slobodan Milošević, had left the already unstable economy crippled, and the country culturally isolated. At the time of its instatement on 30 May 1992, UN Resolution 757 was the 'most comprehensive set of measures ever implemented by the United Nations' (Dimitrijevic* and Pejic* 1995: 124) and barred all air traffic, trade, cultural and sports exchange, and scientific collaborations with FR Yugoslavia.[67] Writing for *Energy Economist*, John Lesley described the situation:

[67] The full resolution is publicly available to read at the UN Digital Library.

> the UN trade embargo imposed against Serbia and Montenegro is bringing the country's energy sector to its knees. If the winter proves to be a prolonged one, a lack of petrol and heating fuel in the relatively insulated Belgrade may prove to be a turning point in the Balkan crisis. […] Now the only access to Serbia, a secondary route through northern Bosnia, is constantly under direct Moslem-Croatian [sic] armed attack and most often impassable. ('Serbia Creaks Under Sanctions', *Energy Economist*, 1 February 1993)

Critics have suggested that the 1993 Yu Fest theme was a 'rather cynical naming in the atmosphere of international isolation, mass impoverishment, and forced war mobilization' (Dević 2018: 207). Certainly, the contrast between Spain's sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the time of the *Reconquista*, the 'discovery' of the New World, and the theatrical boom exemplified by writers such as Tirso de Molina, Lope de Vega, and Calderón de la Barca) and the Yugoslav situation of the early nineties was stark. Ristić*, however,* argued that the theme was not merely intended as ironic. In an interview given in 1993, he stated:

> Mi smo poruku jasno poslali. Ovo je zlatno doba za svakog ko se danas prvi put zaljubi, kome se rodi dete, ko preživi, za svakoga ko kupi novi frižider. Mi hoćemo da verujemo da i u najstrašnijim vremenima ljudi moraju da izvlače iz sebe najbolje što poseduju, da stvaraju, da žive, da daju drugima da žive… to je ono čemu je posvećen ovaj Yu-Fest. Da nema tako strašnih vremena koja ne mogu biti zlatno doba za ljude koji hoće da veruju da svet može biti bolji i da se može izboriti za bolji svet.
>
> [Our message is clear. This is a golden age for those who are falling in love for the first time, for those who are having children, for those who are surviving, for those who can buy a new fridge. We want to believe that even in the worst of times people must and can find a way to draw from within themselves the desire to create, to live and let live… This Yu-Fest is dedicated to this belief. To the belief that that there is no time so horrible that there is no Golden Age for those who hope that the world will be better, for those who believe they can fight for a better world.] (Ristić in 'Živimo zlatno doba', *Dani Subotice*, 11 August 1993)

However, for all this optimistic defiance, the voyage as a metaphor and the Golden Age as unifying theme were contradicted by the plays chosen, by their accompanying summaries, and indeed by the way they were staged. Before turning to these productions, I will compare the festival as it had originally been conceived with its final programme. Several 'phantom' productions lived on in curious and surprising ways, and their paralytic presence within the programme haunted what eventually became of the 1993 Festival as a whole.

II. From high expectations to 'nonhappenings': Locating the eerie in the 1993 Yu Fest and BITEF programmes

'Ekonomske i političke sankcije svoje prave zube pokaza će 1993. godine. I u takvim uslovima Vi organizujete YU Fest!'

[Economic and political sanctions will show their true teeth in 1993. And in the middle of all this, you think to stage a YU Fest!]

– Headline, interview with Ivan Blagojević [68]

In Mark Fisher's 2016 study, *The Eerie and the Weird*, he develops the titular two concepts in contraposition to Freud's notion of the uncanny (or unhomely). Rather than the foreign that feels familiar, the *eerie* and the *weird* work in the opposite direction, such that something initially familiar becomes horrifying or awe-inducing due to an unexpected element of strangeness. The *eerie* is represented by what Fisher describes as a 'failure of presence' or a 'failure of absence' - an object, person, or mood that persists despite expectations of the contrary; or indeed an object that should *not* be present, but is there, nonetheless. A concrete example might be a library that contains no books (a failure of presence) or an object inside an otherwise entirely abandoned and empty house (a failure of absence). The weird is represented, in turn, by a general presence that should not be there: doubles, simulacra, mirages, temporal loops. The original 1993 Yu Fest (and its selection at BITEF), when reconstructed through programmes and news clips, offer a striking example of the eerie. These documents repeatedly reference what I describe as 'phantom productions'. These were plays that were abandoned mid-rehearsal, due to the financial and political difficulties of the period (Ristić 2023, Gabrić 2023, Mladenović 2024), but that nonetheless remained etched on the programme. Further, the phantom productions had been cited across news outlets in the lead-up to the festival. Like an outdated map, these documents offer a panorama of the scope of the festival as originally conceived and are useful tools for historical reconstruction – but only to a point. Like signs without referents, the programmes and articles repeatedly refer to productions that, in effect, never existed.[69]

[68] In Krstić 1996: lxxiv. Ivan Blagojević was director of the Niš faction of KPGT.

[69] Interestingly, Aleksandar Boskovic* writes in 1996: 'Serbia is today the only truly *hyperreal* country in the world […] The attitude of the majority of Serbs can be described as hyperreal as well. On the one hand, the official propaganda kept claiming that Serbia and Serbs were not at war, and that they have nothing to do with wars. On the other hand, the graveyards are suddenly full of men of military age, and there is a growing feeling of concern and anxiety. As Baudrillard would say, the war never happened' (1996: para. 2, para. 5).

The 1993 Yu Fest programme was ambitious.[70] In its original iteration, it included eight productions, four of which were Early Modern Spanish plays in translation: Calderón's *La vida es sueño* [Život je san/Life is a Dream] and *El príncipe constante* [Postojani prince/The Constant Prince], Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla* [Seviljski zavodnik/The Trickster from Seville], and Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*. The remaining productions included Miroslav Krleža's aforementioned *Kristofor Kolumbo*, a Modernist retelling of Columbus' voyage; a free adaptation of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*; and a staged version of Ignacio Loyola's religious texts, the Jesuit Constitutions.[71] Somewhat more tangentially related to the theme, the final play was a new work entitled *Ali Baba and the Forty Bandits*. This play was attributed to Scheherazade (i.e. storyteller of 1001 Nights) and its direction was attributed, in the programme, to 'four bandits' (Ristić 1993).[72] A profile on the festival in *Borba* earlier that Summer also included a play entitled *Pad Kalifata* [The Fall of the Caliphate] (Sarčević, 'Zlatni vekovi Španije', *Borba*, 21 June 1993), presumably in reference to Spain's triumph over the Moors and the Granada War; however, this production was not included in the eventual programme.

Ristić planned to direct *Kolumbo* and *Don Kihot*, and for the remaining productions commissioned a young ensemble of directors. These were Andraš Urban, Kokan Mladenović, Saša Gabrić, and Ricardo Sánchez Díaz, a Mexican playwright-director who was based in Serbia at the time.[73] Apart from Ristić, this was a very young creative team, some of whom were only just finishing their directorial studies. It was only after the original selection had been advertised across numerous journalistic platforms, and the accompanying pamphlet had been printed for distribution, that the programme was severely reduced. An atmosphere of expectation was thus created only to be fractured. On interrupted festivals, Kate Wilson writes:

> Writing about festivals often take for granted that no war, influx of refugees, or mass outcry has stopped the event from happening […] Yet when a cultural event does not happen because it had to be cancelled, something else does happen– an

[70] Consider, for example, that the UK did not see an entire festival dedicated the Spanish Golden Age until 2004 at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).
[71] Spanish theologian and cofounder of the Society of Jesuits, 1491-1556.
[72] The bandits are likely a reference to the thieves in the Ali Baba story who guard the stolen treasures that the protagonists are trying to obtain. One early news clip indicates that Ali Baba was intended as a dance piece, and was to be prepared by the renowned ballerina and choreographer Sonja Vukicević (C.K., 'Zlatno doba španske drame', *Narodne novine*, 20 July 1993).
[73] The direction was divided as follows: Ljubiša Ristić (*Don Kihot*; *Kolumbo*), Saša Gabrić (*Fuente Ovejuna*), Andraš Urban (*The Constant Prince; The Jesuit Principles*), Ricardo Sánchez Díaz (*Life is a Dream*), and 'four bandits' (Ali Baba) (Ristić 1993).

> event of a different kind, cultural collateral damage wreaked by violent political forces that loom over the region. […] How can we think about a nonhappening? There is no corpus of writing about *nonexisting* events or cultural collateral damage. (2008: 103, emphasis in original)[74]

Yu Fest was not cancelled, but its reduced programme represented a cut of 50% of the initial offering. News clips included reference to the financial issues faced by the artists involved (Krstić, 'Tri predstave Zlatnog doba', *Narodne Novine*, 30 August 1993). Nonetheless, and while *The Fall of the Caliphate* was discarded early on, the remaining four abandoned plays – Urban's *Constant Prince* and *Jesuit Principles*, Sánchez' *Life is a Dream*, and the bandits' *Ali Baba* – remained etched in the festival's programme, complete with additional information such as summaries and cast lists.[75] These pamphlets were circulated in advance of the festival (Ristić 2023). The audience thus encountered a programme that referred to productions that did not exist. The presence of these phantom productions contrasts sharply with the supposed celebratory and optimistic tone evoked through reference to the Spanish Golden Age. Decked in gold around its edges, the programme emphasised that the spectator was to enter a time of wonder and discovery, not only through the production list but also through its physical arrangement. Designed by Ljiljana Ilić Kritinić, it was arranged not as a leaflet to be read left-to-right, but as an eight-page structure designed to open up as though a map. Unlike in a traditional, booklet-type programme, this design renders it impossible to view any of the individual productions without simultaneously viewing the 1993 festival's programme as a whole, which together forms a connected network (figure 6). The phantom performances that remain in the programme evoke an incomplete spatial system, reading as a map in which certain sections lead to nowhere. This is an image that would, much later on, become a frequent metaphor in literary and political writing on the region – Yugoslavia as a sort of nowhere-land, as a non-lieu, as a signifier without signified.[76]

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[74] In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in light of closures of theatres and festivals around the world, there has been a boom in academic focus on such 'nonhappenings'. For a particularly extensive study, see the *Contemporary Theatre Review* special issue, 'Festivals in the Pandemic' (2022) and especially: Thomasson 2022: 227-234. I refer to Wilson here, however, as her discussion focuses on festivals affected by political turmoil and upheaval rather than pandemics, and is thus particularly pertinent to the 1993 editions of Yu Fest and BITEF.

[75] Kokan Mladenović's *Seviljski zavodnik* was indeed performed in Niš. It received a positive review in *Narodne Novine* (Krstić, 'Tri nezaboravne predstave', 9 September 1993); however, it did not join the remainder of the tour (Mladenović 2024). This was Mladenović's second time with the Don Juan theme. In 1992, and as mentioned in the Introduction, Mladenović had directed a forgotten radio play by Aleksandar Obredović, *Povratak Don Žuana* [Don Juan's return] for his final graduation project in Belgrade.

[76] This motif is explored by Juan Mayorga in his play, *Los yugoslavos* [The Yugoslavs] (2013), in which a woman wanders through an (unnamed) city for days on end, with no apparent motivation nor clear destination. It is later revealed she is following a map left behind by a group of Yugoslavs. I will return to

The difficulties faced by Yu Fest ultimately had ramifications for its subsequent presence at BITEF. Without explanation, Saša Gabrić's *Fuenteovehuna* replaced Andraš Urban's *El príncipe constante* at last minute in Belgrade ('Lutaju i sanjaju', *Večernje novosti*, 17 September 1993). The abrupt nature of the change meant that BITEF's official 1993 programme was, like that of Yu Fest, incorrect. To date, the programme includes a two-page spread on Calderón's play, a version that both Gabrić and Ristić have confirmed was never completed, much less staged (conversations with the author, 2023). The text accompanying BITEF's catalogue was entirely taken from the Yu Fest programme (Ćirilov and BITEF 1993: 32-33). It is perhaps fitting that the same play that inaugurated BITEF in 1967 and that would go on to win the audience prize – I refer here to Grotowski's acclaimed version – would haunt this 1993 Festival, in a reflection of the effect of political upheaval on theatre. Within the context of these two 1993 festivals, *El príncipe constante* persists as an eerie absence, then to the contemporary theatre-goers holding the programme in hand, and today to those studying this period.

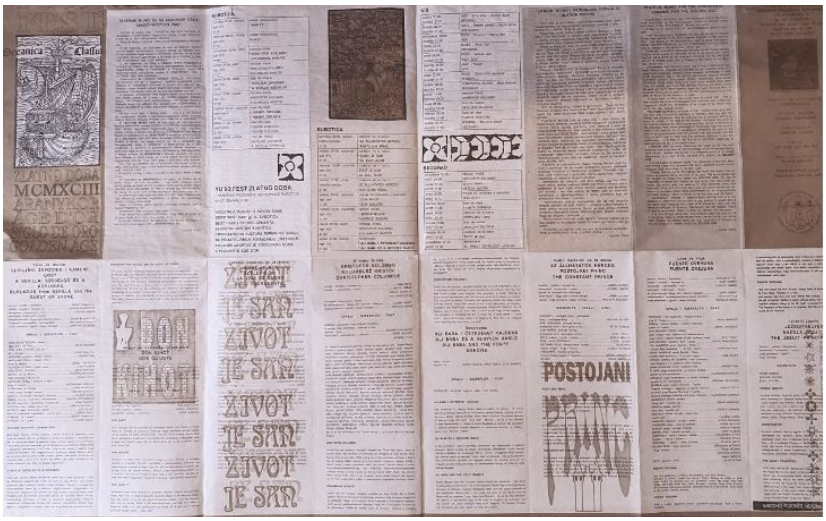


Figure 6: Yu Fest 1993 Programme, KPGT

III.i. *Don Kihot*: Lost in transit

Only three productions from the Yu Fest '93 programme had a complete tour: *Fuenteovehuna*, *Don Kihot*, and *Kolumbo*. These were also the three to travel to Belgrade's BITEF. Saša Gabrić directed *Fuenteovehuna*, while both *Don Kihot*, a loose adaptation of

this play in the Conclusion. For the map as a recurrent symbol in Mayorga's work (especially in *El Cartógrafo*), see Johnson 2022: 75-91.

Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, and *Kolumbo*, an expressionistic play by Croatian author Miroslav Krleža, were directed by Ristić.

Despite a radically different subject matter, *Don Kihot* and *Kolumbo* share a mutual approach to travel, in both cases bringing to the fore the topic of abandoned journeys – in the former imagined, and in the latter, real. Both merge the histories of the Former Yugoslavia with those of Early Modern Spain, as well as other periods: World War II, Stalinist Russia, and the Spanish Civil War. The synopsis of *Don Kihot* in the programme pamphlet reveals a chaos of fused temporalities and locations:

> Vitez Tužnoga lica od Vukovara do vetrenjača, Sančo, verni Sančo iz Puste Reke, od Tjentišta do poslovice. Dulsineja, major sanitetske službe. Dečak koji je dojehao na raketi zemlja-zemlja i Rus koji puca za pare.
>
> [Sad faced knight, from Vukovar to windmills, Sancho, faithful Sancho from Pusta Reka, from Tjentište to proverb. Dulcinea, Major of the Medical Corps. Boy who came riding on the ground-to-ground missile, and the Russian who kills for money.][77] (Ristić 1993)

These are references that transpose Cervantes' *Quijote* to the battlegrounds of Yugoslavia, across various centuries and wars: the Vukovar siege, which took place between 25 August and 18 November 1991, resulted in the deaths of 3000 prisoners of war, ranging from soldiers, to civilians, to children. The city was the site of a massacre on 20 November which occurred in a hospital (Scharf 1998: 369), where this 'Kihot' takes place. Sancho's new origin, Pusta Reka, is one of the main areas to which Kosovar Albanians experienced forced migration in the late-nineteenth century;[78] Tjentište, meanwhile, is home to a memorial of Partisan soldiers that died in Bosnia during World War II, in a horrific battle that lasted over a month while Axis forces were fighting for control. Gal Kirn refers to this battle as 'the most tenuous moment of 1943' and 'a turning point for the whole Yugoslav partisan movement' (2014: 320).[79]

As might then be expected, the filmed version of the play reveals significant departures from Cervantes' plot. However, the play's protagonists – Don Quijote, Sancho Panza,

[77] English translation cited from the Yu Fest programme (Ristić 1993).
[78] Note, also, that Ristić was born in Kosovo.
[79] Kirn writes: 'Nazi, fascist and other collaborationist troops outnumbered partisans by almost ten to one; this was *the to be or not to be* of the Yugoslav partisan resistance. Thousands of civilians and partisans were killed in the forests close to the village of Tjentište, but in the end the partisans, thanks to their military courage and persistence, were able to break through the siege, and finally received international support from Western Allies (ibid, emphasis in original).

and Dulcinea – retain characteristics from the original text. The action takes place in a hospital ward from an unidentified period – presumably the present-day (1993), though outfitted to resemble one of the Stalinist period. Experimental in style, the production does not offer a clear plotline, but rather is composed of a series of dream-like vignettes. The character representing Don Quijote is an unnamed warship captain from the 1990s and Sancho Panza, here renamed Stojanče Pančetović, a Partisan warrior from WWII. The captain has an undisclosed illness and Stojanče Pančetović, a deep wound on his stomach. Two anonymous soldiers, also patients, complete the ward: one has suffered a stroke and is unable to speak, and the other has bandages covering his entire head. The play contains two loose narrative planes: its diegesis follows two days in the lives of the patients in the hospital ward; this plane is then interspersed with a hypodiegetic narrative of *Don Quijote*, mirroring the composition of the source text (which sees the eponymous protagonist become the novel's reader). As the play progresses, the two planes become blurred: the captain comes to believe he is Kihot; Stojanče Pančetović, that he is Sancho Panza; and the head nurse adopts the persona of Dulcinea. It is unclear whether the hypodiegetic plane truly transpires, or if it is merely a hallucination of the captain to which the audience is privy.[80] Finally, the play closes with the suggestion that the captain committed a crime in Vukovar, but what this crime was – and whether it really occurred – remains a mystery.

As Milena Dragićević-Šešić has noted, the hospital setting proved particularly attractive to theatre makers working in the early 1990s in the former Yugoslavia (2018: 177-198). I would argue that here, the space allows Ristić to use physical ailments as metaphors for a disintegrating nation. This is predominantly rendered through characters experiencing anxiety about their identity, anxieties then magnified through their illnesses. Unlike Cervantes' protagonist, who famously (if implausibly) states that he knows categorically who he is and what his missions are ('Yo sé quién soy' [I know who I am] (I.5)), here no such certainty can be found. At various points in *Don Kihot*, the protagonists are either unable to say who they are, what their names are, or from where they have come. Sancho, early on, relates to Don Kihot a terrible dream he has had:

[80] The accompanying programme only confuses matters further, as the actors are credited in relation to the characters from the novel (eg. Miodrag Krivokapić is credited as playing Kihot, Petar Radovanović as Sancho Pansa, and Ana Kostovska, as Dulcineja od Toboza [Dulcinea del Toboso]). The two wounded soldiers do not have alter-egos and are played by Goran Vidaković ('vojnik' [soldier]) and Boris Isaković ('najamnik' [mercenary]). (Ristić 1993).

> Sanjao sam da ne mogu da kažem svoje ime. Sve odgovaram na ono što me pitaju, ali kad me pitaju, „kako se zoveš?“ ne mogu da izgovorim. A znam! Ali ne mogu da izgovorim! Tako posle onda, pitaju me za neke stvari, ja sve tako lepo odgovaram, odgovaram… Ali kad me pitaju, „kako se zoveš“ ja ne mogu da kažem. […] Ja hoću da kažem, Stojanče Pančetović! Ali neće jezik… Neće... Ja se sve više plašim da me neki ne pita, bre, kako ti je Stojanče ime?[81]
>
> [I dreamt that I could not say my name. I'm answering all the questions that they ask me, but when they ask me, "what is your name?" I cannot say it out loud. And I know! But I cannot say! And then, they ask me some more questions, and I answer them all so very nicely. But when they ask my name, I cannot respond. […] I want to say, Stojanče Pančetović! But my mouth refuses… It won't.... Oh, I just have this terrible fear that they will ask me, hey there, Stojanče, what is your name?] (*Don Kihot* 00:08:57-00:09:52)

This dream is both a play on Cervantes' novel as well as an indictment, revealing how a country's disintegration – its unstable ontological status – affects the identities of those who inhabit it. In part II of *Don Quijote*, Sancho tells Quijote that he only feels true calm when asleep, but also that when he sleeps, he is no-one: 'solo entiendo que en cuanto duermo, ni tengo temor ni esperanza, ni trabajo ni gloria' [I only know that when I sleep, I do not have fears nor hopes, nor work nor fame' (II.68) to which Quijote responds 'duerme tú, Sancho … que naciste para dormir' [Sleep, Sancho… you were born to sleep] (ibid).[82] On a broader and extra-textual level, Stojanče Pančetović's anxieties reflect those of a nation whose identity was in flux at the time of staging. The pan-Yugoslav name of Ristić's company, KPGT, itself had no logical sense anymore in the current climate. Nowhere is the torture of this inability to name oneself more evident than in the opening scene involving the character of the *vojnik* ('soldier'), an unidentified man who lies mostly immobile in a hospital bed directly between that of Stojanče (downstage) and the captain (upstage). We are told by the head nurse – later, Dulcinea – that he has suffered aphasia, hemiparesis of the left hemisphere, and is entirely stripped of speech. The captain/Kihot, in true Quixotic fashion, nonetheless tries to ascertain where he is from:

> Kihot: Odakle si ti, vojnik?
> Vojnik: (*vrišti i jauče*) Ahhhhhhhh!
> Kihot: Užice?
> Vojnik: (*vrišti i jauče*) Ahhhhhhhh!
> Kihot: Ah, Priština.

[81] The unusual syntax in the Serbo-Croatian is from the source.
[82] In Andrés Trapiello's modern epilogue to *Don Quijote* (2004), his Sancho Panza experiences the same existential loss as Stojan Pančetović did in 1993. The narration reads: 'Aprendió a leer. De hecho aprendió a leer con el fin de leer su propia historia tal y como la contó Cide Hamete. Se dijo: «No sé quién soy»' [He learned how to read. In fact, he learned how to read in order to read his own life story, just as it had been narrated by Cide Hamete. He said to himself: 'I do not know who I am.' (2014: 10-11).

Vojnik: (*vrišti i jauče*) Ahhhhhhhh!

[Kihot: Where are you from, soldier?
Vojnik: (moans and screams) Ahhhhhhhh!
Kihot: Užice?
Vojnik: (moans and screams) Ahhhhhhhh!
Kihot: Ah, Priština.
Vojnik: (moans and screams) Ahhhhhhhh!] (*Don Kihot* 00:06:15-40)

And so on and so forth: this interrogation goes on for several minutes until finally, through a process of elimination, Kihot discerns that the soldier is from Subotica – the city where the play was first performed. It is striking that Kihot's questionings resemble that of a court interrogation, and that the *vojnik* cannot respond due to his illness. If the audience is to hope that, given the hospital setting, the man's health will improve, these illusions are quickly destroyed.The nurse relates to her trainees that the man will one day acquire between 100-200 words of vocabulary, but he will never be able to form complete sentences. Speaking to a new generation – the soldier is played by an actor decades younger than the actors playing Quijote and Sancho – the boy's undecipherable moans echo the impossibility of articulating the new nation's name. Dubravka Ugrešić expressed as much in her work, *The Culture of Lies* (1995): 'My passport has not made me a Croat. On the contrary, I am far less today than I was before. I am no one. And everyone' (269). From an affective standpoint, it is not difficult to understand that a country's fragmentation would cause identity confusion; however, and as Ugrešić alludes, the dissolution of the state was mirrored in very real, physical changes, which can now be understood through the well-known concept of documentality developed by Maurizio Ferraris in the early 2000s.[83]

Between 1991 and 1992, three of the republics attempted to secede – Slovenia and Croatia successfully, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to continued resistance. In Autumn of 1993, when this play was performed, the SFRY had formally ceased to exist. All the same, Yugoslav identity documents (passports, birth certificates) circulated in the years following the first wars; though these documents were invalid, many citizens continued (and continue) to consider themselves Yugoslav long after the country's dissolution. Within this turbulent landscape, the sudden release of new identity documents caused

[83] Ferraris proposes that the 'written world' we inhabit is formed of inscribed 'social objects' that affect how individuals move through various spaces, ranging from the personal to the structural (e.g. legal spaces, or across national frontiers). The term documentality refers to this modern environment (Ferraris 2016: 67).

social mayhem and distress. Igor Štiks writes of a generation lost in 'legal limbo' (2010: 12) and Jelena Vasiljević, of 'an instability of belonging […that] relie[d] on changing and unstable criteria' (2018: 1157). Ironically, this was particularly evident in Slovenia, the first state to secede and one of relatively homogonous (Slovene) population. Štiks notes that on 23 February 1992:

> 18,305 ethnically non-Slovene lawful residents from other republics were literally erased from the registries in Slovenia. In the months to come, their documents (e.g. passports, drivers licenses, IDs) were invalidated. They lost all civic and social rights, jobs, health care, and social benefits, and became 'dead' from an administrative point of view – simply put, they were *izbrisani*, i.e. erased. (2010: 15-16)

The Slovenian case of 1992 is only one example of the systemic erasure of minority populations. The most profoundly lost were the so-called "ethnic Yugoslavs" (Jovic* 2001) – those who migrated across republics, who were the children of mixed marriages, or who simply self-identified as such, from an ideological standpoint.[84] Sancho's dream, therefore, points to the real possibility of imminent identity loss; for the soldier, meanwhile, this loss has already taken place. And while Cervantes' Quijote may be certain about who he is, the reader is well-aware that there are significant gaps between the character's perception and how he is perceived. This is mirrored in Ristić's adaptation: while Sancho and the soldier are aware of their loss of identity, Kihot's tragedy, by contrast, is that he is not. Halfway through the play, during a scene of approximately ten minutes during which the set is plunged into darkness, Sancho informs Kihot that he has been spending time with Bartolomé Carranza (or Sanson Carrasco, he is not sure).[85] Carranza brings the following news: a book about the captain's life has been written by a certain 'Cid Hamlet "Patlidzanija". (This is again a play on *Don Quijote*, eventually framed by Cervantes as a historical novel written by Cide Hamete Benengeli – Sancho here mispronounces the fictional author's surname, the joke being that he has turned Benengeli into *patlidjani*, the Turkish loan-word for eggplant, and 'Hamete' into Hamlet.) The general, elated, assumes immediately his new identity as the famous *Kihot*. At this point, Stojanović becomes Sancho, and the nurse Dulcinea.

[84] Branislav Jakovljevic* places the figure of ethnic Yugoslavs at around 10% at the start of the wars, or approximately two million citizens (1999: 8).
[85] Sixteenth-century Spanish priest persecuted during the Inquisition (1503–1576), who died decades before *Don Quijote* was written. Sanson Carrasco is a character from the novel, who tries (in vain) to heal Quijote.



Figure 7: Promotional image*, Don Kihot* (1993), KPGT

The identities now fully exchanged, a parallel narrative begins (figure 7). The captain/Kihot engages with the world as the protagonist of the novel: he chases in vain after the nurse, wages imaginary battles, and perceives a small fan as a windmill. It is implied – but notably, never confirmed – that this may all be a dream. The dream/reality confusion reaches its apex at the play's close, which sees the captain/Kihot accused of a (war?) crime. As the character attempts to defend himself, he enters a further dream-like state (a dream within a dream), and the nurse/Dulcinea is transformed into The Knight of Mirrors. It is unclear whether this interaction is real, or yet another illusion. All the same, the behaviours of the characters around Kihot become equally erratic, lending the audience the sensation that the protagonist is 'un loco cuerdo' [a sane madman] – and that the reality around him is stranger than fiction. On an extratextual level, the impossibility of ascertaining the truth within the play itself reflected the chaos of the surrounding and ongoing wars, a context in which, famously, truth is the first causality.[86] Indeed, the play's ambiguity and its social relevance was praised by critics:

> Ono što su nekada činili viteški romani u naše vreme čine ratovi: život se pretvara u pozornicu volšebnika s kojima u nekoj bolničkoj sobi, u halucinacijama, vojuje kapetan bojnog broda […] scene očigledno iz parodije prelaze u nešto sto bi trebalo da deluje kao ironičan, i žestoko ironičan, komentar konkretne ljudske situacije koja od stvarnosti pravi utvare, i obrnuto.

[86] The captain, as Kihot, speaks increasingly in aphorisms that point to this dilemma: 'Historija je kao nešto svijetlo. Jer je ona istina. Tamo gdje je istina, tamo je Bog. Ukoliko Bog postoji. Ukoliko je i on iskren [istinit].' [History is like something light. Because she is truth. God is there, where truth is. If God exits. If God is telling the truth].

> [In our time, war achieves what chivalrous novels once did: life is turned into a sorcerer's stage where a hallucinating captain of a battleship goes to war in a hospital room […] the scenes clearly move away from parody into an ironic, viciously ironic, commentary on this human situation which has turned reality into an illusion, and vice-versa.] (Pašić, 'Slagalica po Ristiću', *Večernje novosti*, 24 September 1993)

The central pathos of Don Quijote is that he inhabits a reality only he understands (and to a certain extent, perceives). However, illusioned as he may be, the character does at least physically travel across space. Indeed, and as Culbert notes, he is arguably one of the Western world's most canonical travellers, alongside Odysseus (2011: 321). The fate of Ristić's *Don Kihot*, by contrast, is that his protagonist is confined to the walls of a hospital ward, by default constrained: no movement can here take place. The hospital setting of the play provided a sharp contrast to the news-clips announcing it, which guaranteed audiences would soon be treated to 'lutalice i sanjari […] i Don Kihot na svom Rosinantu' [wanderers and dreamers…and Don Quijote on his Rocinante] (Petkovska-Gajić, 'Bitef, ipak', *Borba*, 8 September 1993). There was no Rocinante here.[87] In rendering even Quijote's imagined journey as physically impossible, Ristić offers a mirror to a country frozen in time: aware that the past is no longer accessible, yet equally unable to move forward.

It was reported in the news that *Don Kihot* received the longest ovation at that year's BITEF (Gogić, 'Među Lutalicama i sanjarima' *Subotičke novine*, 1 October 1993).

III.ii. *Kristofor Kolumbo*: Abandoned Voyages

If *Don Kihot* portrays a man who prefers dreams to reality, Miroslav Krleža's *Kolumbo* (1918) offers the inverse: a traveller attempting to reach new horizons, only to realise that his destination has all along been illusory. Of all three plays presented at Yu Fest/BITEF, *Kolumbo* comes closest to depicting Culbert's notion of aporia and, despite not being a Golden Age play, engages with the Early Modern theme of *desengaño*.[88] The 1993 production was factitiously presented as celebrating the 'discovery' of the Americas on its fourth centenary, only to ruthlessly portray the West as an ideologically confused chimera. I will focus my analysis below on the adaptations Ristić made to the script, which

[87] Rocinante is Don Quijote's horse.

[88] There is a vast body of literature on the role of *desengaño* in Early Modern Spanish poetry, theatre, and prose. While difficult to translate, the clunkier 'undeception' – as opposed to disenchantment – perhaps best captures the positive connotations of the Spanish word. To encounter *desengaño* was to be free from *engaño* (deceit, illusion).

magnified the temporal scope of the play and emphasised its anti-capitalist elements. These modifications further emphasised the futility of progress, a futility mirrored in stage design; the production took place on a moored boat. Unlike *Don Kihot* and *Fuenteovehuna*, there is no film footage of *Kolumbo*; my analysis is therefore based on reconstruction from newspaper reviews from the KPGT archive and an audio reel of the accompanying score, which the director shared with me in June 2023. In this version of *Kolumbo*, the chronology of Columbus' voyage is rendered ambiguous, and Krleža's own politics – particularly his relationship with Russia and the West – form prominent undercurrents. As such, a few words of context on the author are relevant:

Miroslav Krleža (1893 - 1981) is widely considered to be one of Croatia's most prominent writers of the twentieth century,[89] a High Modernist who revolutionised the Croat (and Yugoslav) literary scene with a unique blend of acerbic commentary and the use of local dialects in his writing (across prose, essays, and plays). That his work has not received the same level of international attention as other major figures in the region – e.g. his contemporary, Ivo Andrić – is often attributed to the lexical difficulty of his texts and, as Daniel Gerould lamented, to his 'Central European baggage' (2003: 133).[90] Nonetheless, his literary influence is indisputable and well-documented (Biti 2018: 97) and there exists an entire academic discipline dedicated to the study of his oeuvre, *krležologija* (krležology). In terms of cultural impact, Krleža arguably has a parallel in Spain's Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936). This is most evident in his mockery of the bourgeoisie, though arguably also in his expressionistic style.

Born and raised in Zagreb, while still under Vienna's control, Krleža lived through some of the major events of modern history: the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the October Revolution, both World Wars, the formation of the Yugoslav Kingdom, and, following the establishment of Federal Socialist Yugoslavia, Tito's break with Stalin. Though a committed Marxist, he was, at least in literary terms, 'never uncontroversial' (Pavlić 2014: 5) and aroused suspicion across ideological divides. His political drive was evident from youth; he crossed the Croatian border to join the Serbs in their battle against the Turks. He was a leftist who believed – and participated –

[89] 'the most prominent figure in the Croatian literary canon' (Pavlić 2014: 5); 'probably the greatest Croatian writer of the 20th century' (Gužvica 2017: 86).
[90] For an in-depth discussion on English language translations of Krleža's work, see Elias-Bursać 2020: 399-418.

in the fight of the workers and the oppressed against the ruling classes, yet whose descriptions of the masses were unsentimental and often highly critical. While he did not fight in the Spanish Civil War, a collection of 1936 letters sent to Marko Ristić, the Serbian surrealist poet and diplomat, reveal his support for the cause (Todić 2017: 53-62); he was also a close friend of Croatian International Brigade veteran, August Cesarec.

Like many of his contemporaries, Krleža admired Lenin greatly; he travelled to Russia in the months following his death. Later, he was horrified by the Yugoslav Communist Party's alignment with Stalin and said so openly in 1939, causing him to be expelled from the party (Lemesle 2021; Cipriš 2017: 10). Consequently, both Stalinists and Croatian *ustaše*, ultra-right nationalists, wanted him dead (Kadić 1963: 400). Communist groups disdained him, as he rejected the social realism expected of writers of the time – the form promoted in the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress.[91] Despite his prolific literary activity and his status as a 'a cultural icon of the left' (Bogišić 2021: 258), Krleža's unpopular political position severely affected his early career. It was really only after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 that the author was rehabilitated in Yugoslav literary circles; indeed Josip Broz later appointed him director of the Lexicographic Institute of the SFRY.[92] In a now famous speech, given in Ljubljana in 1952, Krleža attacked social realist dogma and defended the author's right to write however he pleased; the speech was seen as a 'watershed moment' (Perica 2020: 30) and catalyst for stylistic innovation. It also confirmed, once and for all, Krleža's position as a major player on the literary scene.

The publication and staging history of *Kolumbo* reflects the turbulent politics of the early interwar period. Written in 1917 and published the following year as *Cristoval Colón*, the play formed part of Krleža's so-called 'genius group' (an incomplete selection of plays dedicated to major figures, including Michelangelo and Goya).[93] The first edition opened with a dedicatory to Lenin, which was promptly removed. When released, it was considered both politically and aesthetically unstageable (Kadić 1967: 56) and it only received a premiere decades later, in 1955. Krleža amended the text, adding an epilogue

[91] Josip Mihaljević notes that Krleža was 'one of the first authors in Croatian and Yugoslav literature who represented leftist ideals, but he was also the first to criticize the dogmatization of the leftist literature of the Soviet Union' (Mihaljević in Elias-Bursać 2020: 401).
[92] The country's central reference publishing house, responsible for the national encyclopaedias, among other major lexical publications. Krleža was seen as its founder and the Institute was re-named after him following his death.
[93] The full list included: Columbus, Michelangelo, Goya, Immanuel Kant and Jesus Christ.

(Kolanović 2017: 126-131). The initial reception of the text reveals Krleža's problematic relationship to Croatia's elite in-circle of writers. It has been suggested that Josip Bach, then-director of HNK [Croatian National Theatre], deliberately sabotaged the performance, suggesting it would be performed in 1918 while in actual fact shelving the play ('Kristofor Kolumbo', *Krležijana*, 2024). The arguable apotheosis of the play's production history came in 1974, when it was staged at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival under the direction of Georgij Paro. Here, the action took place atop an actual ship that literally sailed across the Adriatic during the performance, with the audience on board. While Paro's version would go on to become a cult production, and was reprised in following years, by the time of Ristić's staging, the author was unpopular: Krleža's unifying leftist vision was resolutely at odds with the contemporary atmosphere. News clippings therefore spoke of the author's 'return' to local stages (V.P.G.a, 'Krležina prava pitanja', *Borba*, 22 September 1993).

The play narrates the voyage of its eponymous explorer, who becomes disillusioned upon realising that there is no New World, on American shores or elsewhere. It is highly expressionistic, with most characters not given names, only vocal qualities (e.g. 'a moaning voice' 'an angry voice'). Extensive stage directions, characteristic of the playwright, set both the scene and its atmosphere: on board the *Santa Maria*, Columbus and his galley set out to sea. The action takes place at night, creating an atmosphere of foreboding – what can be read as the 'sumrak jednoga društva, civilizacije i kulture' [twilight of a group, of civilization, and culture] (Senker 2000: 23). As the journey progresses, it becomes more dangerous: the skies darken, storm breaks out, and lightning flashes. The crew become dispirited and demand to be taken back. They are drunk, insolent, and uninterested in any aspect of this supposed New World other than as a possibility of obtaining riches. Columbus' allies on board, the *falange* [phalanx], try unsuccessfully to control the men.[94] Columbus insists they move forward, but as he sees 'America' in the distance, he realises all that he believed was a lie: there is no New World; all worlds are the same. He also finally realises what the audience has known from outset: that none of his crew members ever shared his dream. An emotional chiasmus occurs: as Columbus is filled with *desengaño,* the crew become illusioned with the sight of new land,

[94] Fleet or troops; not to be confused with Spain's proto-fascist Falange movement of the early-to-mid twentieth century.

finally thrilled and eager to explore its wealth. The captain's sudden change thus stirs outrage on board, and his own men turn against him. He is crucified and left to die.

While clearly set in the fifteenth century, Krleža's script contains a select few anachronisms: for example, a brawl on the ship sees part of the galley invoke Taylorism as the solution to anarchism (see Kolanović 2017: 126-131). Under Ristić, these anachronisms are amplified, serving to both expand the temporal scope of the production, but also to weave in allusions to Krleža's politics. The synopsis to the play, cited in the opening pages of this chapter in full ('Nothing is worse for the Revolutionary than the moment in which his ideals are realised'), functions, for example, as a reference to Krleža's pessimistic comments on the student protests of 1968. In conversation with Predrag Matvejević, Krleža warned that the protesters would see the 'ostvarenje njihovih ideala' [the realization of their dreams/ideals] (Krleža in Mandić 2011), which might be seen as a form of *desengaño*.[95] According to reviews, the galley members in Ristić's *Kolumbo* were dressed in a combination of Early Modern pirate-wear and business suits, further confusing the time period (Krstić, 'Plovidba u nepovrat', *Narodne novine*, 3 September 1993). The business suits, likely worn by the Falange on board, allude to the (modern) capitalist system to which Columbus unknowingly leads his galley; Krleža's (and Ristić's) distrust of this system has been well-documented (Gašparović 1989; Kolanović 2017).

An interview with Ristić in *Borba* suggests the production stayed close to the source playtext (Sarčević, 'Zlatni vekovi Španije', *Borba*, 21 June 1993).[96] It is in the preserved musical score, therefore, that one can observe the director's influence. Ristić employed a live choir, which was praised in reviews across various cities (Pašić, 'Plovi brod', *Večernje novosti*, 22 September 1993; Popović, 'San je tako divlji', *Književna Reč*, 10 October 1993; Krstić, 'Plovidba u nepovrat' *Narodne novine*, 3 September 1993b). All the music was sung by women, who sang while emulating the movement of waves (Milivojević, 'Ka pozorištu

[95] As Kolanović demonstrates, Krleža's comments on the May 1968 protests were also included by Slobodan Šnajder in his 1978 re-working of the play, *Dijalektički Anticolumbus* [Dialectical Anti-Columbus] (2017: 131). It is possible that Ristić was also alluding to, or had been inspired by, Šnjader's text in drafting his synopsis to *Kolumbo* – the two had worked closely together at the time of *Dijalektički Anticolumbus*'s publication. (In 1978 and 1980, Ristić produced two of Šnajder's plays in Zagreb). I should note that this is only a hypothesis.

[96] This interview also reveals the pluri-dialectal approach to the festival: 'Krležu ćemo igrati u originalu, ne prevodimo ga, a Seviljski zavodnik je adaptiran na dubrovački govor, napominje Ristić. Andraš Urban će na madžarskom postaviti De la Barkinog „postojan princa" i Lojolina „Načela jezuita" [We will perform Krleža in the original, we won't be translating it [read: adapting to the region], and *The Trickster of Seville* will be performed in a Dubrovnik dialect', states Ristić. 'Andraš Urban will stage de la Barca's *Constant Prince* and Loyola's *Jesuit Constitutions* in Hungarian' (Sarčević, 'Zlatni vekovi Španije', *Borba*, 21 June 1993).

atrakcije', *Monitor*, 8 October 1993). As I will go on to discuss, the songs evoke not only the time of the Reconquista and Krleža's Lenin travelling to an abstract 'New World', but also a modern Spanish context. There are three principal melodies, with adapted lyrics: Jeanette's 'Porque te vas', the Andean 'El condor pasa', and the original song, Carnojevića Bluz [Charnojevic's Blues] taken from Ristić's earlier production, *Šiptar* (1985).[97] All serve to highlight the impossibility of Columbus' journey.

The opening song was a modification of pop-singer Jeannette's 'Porque te vas'. A hit when released in 1974, Jeanette's song is heavily associated with Carlos Saura's *Cria cuervos* [Raise Raivens] (1976), a film which occupies a firm role in Spain's twentieth-century cinematic canon. Within the context of Saura's film, released in the twilight of Franco's dictatorship – the early years of the Transition – the music follows a young girl attempting to come to terms with the deaths of her mother and father. The energetic and jaunty melody of the song contrasts sharply with description of loss in the lyrics. It might be argued that these original, forlorn lyrics haunt Ristić's adaptation, hidden beneath the surface as in a palimpsest.[98] In Ristić's re-creation, the original melody is retained, but with temporally scattered references. Thus, the original opening lyrics ('Hoy en mi ventana brilla el sol/ Y el corazón/ Se pone triste contemplando la ciudad/ Porque te vas' [Today the sun shines through my window/ and my heart/ saddens while watching the city/ Because you are leaving]) are instead changed to a vertiginous list of figures; some real, and other fictive. Following the original melody, the choir sings: 'Marylin Monroe, Martin Luther King/ Donald Duck/ Bill Addison, Jorge Luís Borges, Simon Bolivar/ Porque te vas'. While references to place in the original lyrics are not geographically specific – the speaker notably moves through areas that could be anywhere: 'junto a la estación' [by the station], 'bajo la penumbra de un farol' [under the shadow of a lantern], 'junto a las manillas de un reloj' [by the hands of a clock] – Ristić's lyrics, by contrast, are specific yet aggressively anachronistic, suggestive of a confused journey from outset.

The scattered allusions to celebrities and cartoons, interspersed with revolutionaries, clearly read as ironic. In a 1934 essay, *Amsterdamske varijace* [Amsterdam Variations],

[97] NB: a pejorative term for Kosovar Albanians. The play is discussed on subsequent pages.
[98] On musical melodies, adaptations, and palimpsests, see J. Martin Daughtry, *Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening* (2013).

Krleža had summarily diagnosed Hollywood cinema as a modern-day opiate, paraphrasing Marx:

> pet stotina milijuna gledalaca obmanjuje se bioskopskom iluzijom tempa, luksuza, bogatstva i sretnog svršetka sviju ljubavnih pustolovina, što se svakodnevno odvijaju na platnu evropskih i prekooceanskih kinematografa, uspavljujući ljudske brige, da će se sve ipak dobro svršiti. Te lelujave crnobijele sjene u mračnim dvoranama bezbrojnih kazališta, to titranje svijetla na bijelim platnima, to je danas ogromna nova laž […] to je novi opijum masa i naroda[.]
>
> [five hundred thousand viewers are deceived by the cinema's illusion of pace, of luxury, and of a happy ending to all love adventures, which unfold every day on the screens of European and cinemas across the Atlantic, soothing people's worries, telling them that everything will be alright in the end. Those quivering black and white shadows in the dark cinema halls, that flickering of light on white canvases, this is the great new lie […] this is the new opium of the masses and the nation] (Krleža 1934: 146)

Columbus is headed to the land of this 'great new lie', which he mistakenly believes to be a land of progress and the New. Indeed, the play closed with clips from the film, *Superman* (Jeremić, 'Sve je laž', *Politika*, 22 September 1993). The lyrics of the traditional Andean song, 'El condor pasa', are similarly re-worked to form a list: thus 'El condor de los Andes despertó /Con la luz de un feliz amanecer' [The condor of the Andes woke up/ with the light of a joyous dawn] becomes 'Honduras, Puerto Rico, Carracas/ Panamá, El Salvador, Rio de Janeiro'. Hollywood again appears, as does as Tiki-Taka (the style of football play favoured by the Spaniards, though introduced via Johan Cruyff). The original orchestral score was composed by Daniel Alomía Robles in 1919 to accompany an operetta 'condemning the exploitation of Andean miners by US workers such as Cerro de Pasco' (Dorr 2007: 11). The inclusion of a song highlighting atrocities committed by the USA offers a striking contrast with Columbus' idealistic (though eventually murderous) journey to American shores.[99] Meanwhile, the lyrics to Čarnojevića Bluz [Čarnojević's Blues] were retained as in the original production of *Šiptar*. Written by Dragan Tomić and first staged by Ristić in 1985, this play explored how the Partisan movement united citizens that otherwise considered each other to be enemies in three moments of Yugoslav history

[99] It also mirrors the class struggle of those on board. Towards the end of the journey, the galley revolts against Columbus, exclaiming that they do not care whether they reach the Old or the New World, rather that they only want to be free: 'Nama je svejedno! Naprijed ili natrag! Mi hoćemo zraka! Mi hoćemo krv vašu! Osveta! Osveta! Osveta! Svima! Mi ne ćemo više na lanac! [It is the same to us! Forward or backward! We want air! We want your blood! Revenge! Revenge! Revenge! On everyone! We don't want to be in chains anymore!] (Krleža [1918] 1956: 139).

(1945, 1948, and 1968) (Todorović, 'Priča o istini', *Svijet Sarajevo*, 28 February 1986).[100] The song is a woman's lament as a journey begins; curiously here the emphasis is on the impossibility of remaining still: 'pomalo plačemo/ sve dok se selimo/ a kada stanemo/ opet se spremamo/ za put' [we cry a little/ as we move/ and when we stop/ we prepare again/ to go'].



Figure 8: Promotional image, *Don Kihot* (1993), KPGT

While Ristić rejected that idea that his choice to stage this play was political (V.P.G.a, 'Krležina prava pitanja', *Borba*, 22 September 1993), several reviewers suggested that the play evoked Yugoslavia's impossible future. Slobodan Krstić, for example, saw in it a reflection of 'vremena sadanjeg, gdje nestaju i najoptimističkije ideje' [this time, where even the most optimistic ideals are lost] ('Tri nezaboravne predstave', *Narodne novine*, 9 September 1993). The casting only led to further circular associations (figure 8). Krivokapić, here Columbus, had formed part of the 1974 cult version directed by Georgij Paro; he had played one of the anonymous galley members in Dubrovnik. Now promoted to the Admiral, he spoke that that while the 1977 version was a diversion; now the play reflected reality. In light of the Yugoslav wars, Columbus' struggles for a new and just world had suddenly crystallised and taken on a tangible form: 'Čini mi se da je te godine u Dubrovniku sve bilo i gluma. Taj tekst sam danas ponovo otkrio i doživeo. Taj tekst danas mi se dojmio, dok je 1974 godine, prošao pored mene.' [It seems to me that

[100] Miodrag Krikopavić (here, Columbus) was also the lead in the 1985 *Šiptar*; he played Kosovar Albanian, Skender Hoti.

everything that year in Dubrovnik was an act. I've now rediscovered this text, and I have lived it. The text today has left its mark on me, while in 1974, it passed me by] (Krivokapić in Golubović, 'A Krleža, obavezno' *Politika Express*, 22 September 1993).[101] Yet unlike Paro's version, Ristić's took place upon a moored boat of 20 meters long; landlocked by design.

Finally, and following again Paro, Ristić employed Krleža's later version of the script, which included the epilogue.[102] The difference in tone between the original and amended ending is of note. In Krleža's first version, the play closes with the Admiral telling his galley 'Laž! Narode! Sve je laž! [Lies! People! Everything is a lie!] (Krleža [1918] 1956: 171). Like the heroic protagonists of many Golden Age plays, Columbus has been *desengañado* – freed from his illusions. He can therefore openly face the material conditions that he was previously unable to acknowledge. The later epilogue, filled with what Ante Kadić described critically as 'highly resounding but meaningless words [that] speak [...] more about the then prevailing situation in Yugoslavia than about Columbus' (1993: 143), offers an entirely different reading. Here, the dying Admiral tells his men to continue on their journey:

> Čuj me, Narode, što ti govorim kroz vjekove. Ti ćeš se osloboditi tih sablasti, ti ćeš preplivati na drugu obalu, ti ćeš otkriti nova kopna, ti ćeš pobijediti ovu planetu i ti ćeš otputovati na zvijezde u koje ja vjerujem.
>
> [Hear me, Nation, for I speak to you across the ages. You will free yourselves from these spectres, you will swim to the other shore, you will discover new lands, you will conquer this planet, and you will reach the stars in which I believe]. (Krleža [1918] 1956: 284)

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[101] Krikopavić also sent an evocative letter to *Monitor* detailing how his view of Yugoslavia as a lost nation was reflected in the play: 'Ja nikada neću moći da prebolim onu Jugoslaviju. Ostaću do kraja života ‚jugonostalgičar' ma koliko me zbog toga ružili, mrzili i optuživali neki, možda i mnogi ljudi. […] Danas me uveravaju da sam živeo u laži, da je čitav moj život bio laž, a ja to niti mogu niti hoću da prihvatim. Ne iz nekakvih opet ideala, nego jednostavno zato što to jeste bio moj život. Pravi, autentičan život, a bila je to, po meni i jedna prava, autentična, sjajna zemlja. Kažem to jasno i glasno, makar me kao Kolumba razapeli. Da nam nije sada lepše kada smo svaki na svome? 'Ajte, molim vas!' [My wounds from Yugoslavia will never heal. I will remain a "Yugonostalgic" until the end of my life, no matter how much some, or even many, people may mock, hate, or scorn me because of it. Today they try to convince me that I lived a lie, that my whole life was a lie, and I cannot and will not accept that. Not because of some ideological reason, but simply because this was my life. This was a real, authentic life, and in my opinion, a real and authentic country. I will say that loud and clear, even if they destroy me like they destroyed Columbus. Oh [they say], it's so much nicer now that we are all divided. Oh, come on!] ('Miodrag Krivokapić', *Monitor*, 1 October 1993).

[102] Krstić writes: Kraj je plovidbe, ali i kraj admiralovih ideala. Narod, galioti se vraćaju u „zvezdano nebo nad nama", poštujući „moralne zakone u nama". [It is the end of the journey, but also of the admiral's ideas. The people, the galley members, return to "the starry sky above us" and "the moral law within us"] ('Plovidba u nepovrat', *Narodne novine*, 3 September 1993).

In this revised version, all remain illusioned. The epilogue highlights the circularity of the narrative: the journey continues, but it is clear no shores are ever to be found (there is no New, Columbus had warned the galley earlier). One reviewer described the production's ending presciently, borrowing from the playtext: 'Plovi ladja, umesto u nepovrat, u realnost, u svet bez ideala, znan i prepoznatljiv. I tako u krug, poput zemaljske kugle' [the boat continues to sail, but instead of towards the point of return, it sails to reality, to a world without ideals, one that is known and recognisable. And thus the journey is a circle, like the sphere that is the globe'] (Krstić, 'Plovidba u nepovrat', *Narodne novine*, 3 September 1993). Indeed, the country and its citizens would remain at war for the remainder of the decade. And for as much as the director rejected the political associations of the play, it is difficult not to see Ristić's own contemporaneous commentary on Yugoslavia reflected in the production: 'Mi danas nemamo ništa vredno oko sebe što pripada sadašnjosti, niti išta vredno što pripada budućnosti. Sve što je vredno je prošlost, i pripada prošlosti u sumi' [Nothing in our present is valuable, and there is no value in the future. All that is of value is in the past, and it belongs to the past] ('Sve što je vredno je prošlost', *Borba*, 21-22 August 1993). Like those travellers in Culbert's study, this modern Columbus cannot assume the romanticised attitude of the Early Modern explorer, an attitude of wonder and enchantment, as it belongs to a different era, one in which reaching the 'New' still appeared as a possibility, even if an illusory one. Meanwhile, the attitude of the so-called modern explorer is shown to be equally disturbing, full of its own nationalistic ideals of dominion. This latter is indicated by the galley's increased violence as well by the musical accompaniment, which has erased lyrics of loss (in 'Porque te vas') or of historical injustice (in 'El condor pasa'), substituting these with an ironic celebration of capitalism and the West. As such, the past-future dynamic collapses in on itself, leaving for the captain only the option to stay still.

III.iii. *Fuenteovehuna*: The Eternal Return of the Same

The third play included at the 1993 YU Fest and BITEF was Lope de Vega's (1562 - 1635) magnum opus, *Fuente Ovejuna* (transliterated as *Fuenteovehuna*), here under the direction of Saša Gabrić. Across its long performance history, this play has proven to be something of a theatrical Rorschach test, with directors using (and abusing) Lope's text to promote an array of ideologies. In the version seen here, however, a moral vacuum emerges: neither the town, nor the monarchy, are glorified. Both are presented as hapless and confused. This tonal choice is striking within the context of a play that has in Modern

history – particularly in Soviet Russia and in Spain of the early 1930s – been employed to rouse revolutionary spirit. On the autumnal 1993 streets of Niš, Subotica, and Belgrade, however, the villagers' famous revolution was portrayed as a cyclical act that led not to freedom, but to the beginning of a new torturous cycle: the eternal return of the same. I will discuss below how this production deviates from both political modes traditionally associated with the text's staging – the revolutionary and the reactionary – and point to how Gabrić's dramaturgy offers a spectatorial experience more closely aligned with viewing a painting than a staged play. Evoking the tenebrism of the Baroque, Gabrić's 'painting' of *Fuenteovehuna* offers ruin without promise of redemption, and echoes Johan Conradie's description of the style's affective power:

> Through the device of tenebrism, the subject (viewer) is encouraged to feel empathetic but unsettled, rather than feeling the painting is for easy consumption or simply a mimicry of a reality. […] tenebrist painting evokes not just sadness, but a *paralysing listlessness*, dejection and self-depreciation, as well as an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness. (Conradie 2017: i-3, my emphasis)

Dramaturgically, Gabrić's use of intense darkness, slow-motion movement, and a strategic placement of the Monarchs – who sat atop an iron cage throughout the production – all contributed to create an atmosphere of foreboding that alluded to, but never overtly specified, the ongoing siege in neighbouring Sarajevo. The director's select use of direct address implicates the audience without allowing for response, a one-way dialogue that mirrored the calls for aid emanating from Bosnia.

III.iii.*i.* Background

First published in 1619, Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna* draws loosely from two historical events that took place in the Castilian town of Fuenteobejuna in the early fifteenth century and during the reign of Queen Isabella I of Castille and King Ferdinand II of Aragon. In Lope's version of events, the town and its inhabitants are terrorised by Fernán Gómez of the Order of Calatrava, their local *comendador*, or chief. The town's inhabitants include Laurencia, described as a beautiful and strong-willed maiden, her suitor, Frondoso, and their immediate friends and family. As the plot advances, Fernán Gómez' aggression towards the town's women becomes increasingly brutal. Under the guise of a supposed *droit du seigneur*,[103] he rapes Laurencia's friend, Jacinta, and abducts Laurencia on her

[103] A medieval law that allowed overloads sexual access to their virginal subjects (Chemris 2010: 113). Literally, 'the lord's right'.

wedding day, taking her with him by force to his dwelling and instructing his guards to not let anyone inside. Through intense efforts, she manages to escape being the victim of rape herself.[104] Irate, Laurencia returns to the town square, and delivers possibly the most famous of all Golden Age speeches after Segismundo's in *La vida es sueño* [Life is a Dream], accusing all the villagers – but especially her father, Esteban – of being passive observers in the face of horrific injustice. They are, in her words, less than men, and less than Spaniards: ('¡Vosotros, que no se os rompen/ las entrañas de dolor/ de verme en tantos dolores, ovejas sois […] bárbaros sois, no españoles' [You, who do not convulse in pain/from seeing me in such pain/ are but sheep … you are barbarians, not Spaniards]) (III.1757-1759; 1771).

Her speech closes with a demand that the villagers kill Fernán Gómez, though she underscores that if they prove unwilling, she will commit the deed herself. Humiliated and incensed, the town bands together and vows to seek justice. Aware that the murder will be taken as an act of violence against the King himself, they agree that under no circumstances will they reveal the name of any individual involved. They proceed to do the deed. Informed of Fernán Goméz's murder, the King launches an investigation. Famously, and even under torture, the villagers refuse to name a murderer, chanting instead in unison 'Fuenteovejuna lo hizo' [Fuenteovejuna did it]. Impressed by their collective bravery, the King grants the townspeople his audience, so they then travel to Tordisillas and detail their mistreatment by Fernán Gómez. The King pardons them and agrees to take the town under his personal jurisdiction until a new *comendador* is found. The villagers rejoice: order has been restored.

Duncan Wheeler has argued that *Fuente Ovejuna* is 'the only *comedia* in which past and present productions enter into continual dialogue with each other' (2011: 195-196), and it was the play's transnational history that attracted Ristić, especially prior performances in the USSR ('Na razmeđu vekova', *Borba*, 22 August 1993). By the late nineteenth century, Lope's playtext had been translated into French (1822), German (1855), and Russian (1875) – a notable contrast with post-Golden Age Spain, where the play was not revived until 1899 (Gagen 1993: 5). Jack Weiner's extensive research on *Fuente Ovejuna* in Russia under the tsars – as well as a later study on the Soviet period – elucidate the extent to which this play proved attractive to wildly disparate political regimes in Eastern Europe

[104] This is the general academic consensus. However, it should be noted that some scholars have argued that Laurencia's fate is much more ambiguous: see, for example, Aronson 2015: 33-47.

(1968: 99-151; 1982: 167-223). The first Russian production, which premiered at the Moscow Maly Teatr in 1876 under the unofficial direction of Segrei Iurev, painted the monarchs in a favourable light and was a resounding success (Weiner 1968: 117). As much was noted by Menéndez y Pelayo, who wrote in 1899 of 'una versión rusa que suele representarse con grande aplauso en los teatros de aquel Imperio' [a Russian version often staged to great applause in the theatres of that Empire] (1949 [1899]: 171). Nonetheless, the revolutionary undertones of the production alarmed militia and, while not banned, the run was severely reduced in length (Weiner 1968: 120-121). Still, this version led to spin-offs in other major cities, including Saint Petersburg. By the time of the incoming Soviet regime, the pro-monarchical reading was unperformable; this did little to affect its staging potential in the region, as a simple cut (as with the removal of the Monarchs) would change the tone of the play entirely.

These monarch-less Soviet versions proved highly popular and would go on to indirectly influence Spanish productions of the 1930s, and in turn, later Yugoslav productions. Of the pre-Civil War period, Lorca's version with *La Barraca* is perhaps the most-well known. It premiered in 1933 in Valencia; reconstructions by Suzanne Byrd demonstrate that, despite Lorca's insistence that he did not adapt the play – rather, merely cut it – the Monarchs were again eliminated, lending the performance a revolutionary flavour (in Bayliss 2009: 92). Scholars suggest that Lorca's dramaturgical choices were likely inspired by Soviet versions, which he would have heard about from Rafael Alberti (Weiner 1982: 220). Other major performances during this period included versions by Cipriano de Rivas Cherif and Margarita Xirgu (1935) – although this latter version restored the Monarchs, it too was met with suspicion (Domingo Martín 2019: 74). In sum, during these turbulent years in Europe's history, the play was ultimately attractive to an array of political orientations: Teresa Kirschner writes that 'para finales de los años 30, *Fuenteovejuna* había sido reclamada y vindicada con igual pasión bajo el gobierno zarista y el soviético ruso, el nazi alemán, el radical socialista francés y ambos bandos españoles' [by the end of the 30s, *Fuenteovejuna* had been reclaimed and championed with equal passion under the tsars as under the Soviets, as the German Nazis, the French radical socialists, and both Spanish factions] (1997: 262).[105] Gabrić's production, however, will be shown to divorced from any obvious ideology.

[105] The ebb and flow of Spanish politics in the twentieth century can be seen reflected in *Fuente Ovejuna* stagings. Post-1939, theatre-makers aligned with Franco's ideals sought to rescue *Fuente Ovejuna* from what was perceived as a mutilation of Lope's text, with major examples including Cayetano de la Luca's version

Given these transnational entanglements, it is surprising that the play arrived relatively late to the Former Yugoslavia, in 1951. This was a notable delay in comparison to Calderón's *La vida es sueño*, which had already been staged in the mid-nineteenth century (Stojanović and Rajić 2012: 2, 6). Dragoslav Ilić translated the Serbo-Croat version in 1950, leading to its national premiere in 1951 at the Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište [Yugoslav Drama Theatre], under direction of Bojan Stupica. A Slovenian version was staged that same year, in translation by Janko Moder (Kmet 2019: 246). It was again directed by Stupica, though now with a different cast. While still set in Spain and with the Spanish names retained, Stupica amended the ending, closing the play with a group of peasants crawling in front of a Russian tsar (Kmet 2019: 254).[106] After a 1956 version directed by Aleksandar Ognjanović in Šabac (Western Serbia), the play appears to have disappeared from major Serbian stages until the 1993 version (Stojanović and Rajić 2012: 6). It is curious that while Stojanović and Rajić reconstruct the 1950s versions in extensive detail in their joint study, Gabrić's staging is afforded only a sentence, and does not indicate the director's name, the company, nor festival (2012: 8), possibly an indication of Ristić's radioactive political status.

III.iii.*ii. Fuenteovehuna* in 1993

KPGT has preserved complete footage of Gabrić's production. As in previous stagings, Dragoslav Ilić's translation was employed. The cast featured Milan Marodić (Fernando), Irena Jakočević (Isabel), Sanja Moravčić (Laurencia), Danilo Kolić (Esteban), and Mirsad Tuka (Fernán Gomez) in the lead roles; Lengyel Gábor provided the musical score (Ristić 1993).

Arguably, Lope's absence from local stages in the preceding decades, along with this director's relative youth,[107] allowed Gabrić an unusual perspective from which to approach this play – a tabula rasa. His version seems to exist as a hermetically closed

at the 1944/45 Season at the *Teatro Español*, a staging that Duncan Wheeler has argued had 'blatant fascist subtext (Wheeler 2012: 85). The transition and democratic period has seen directors seek to explore the tension between the townspeople's rebellion and the apparently 'neat' resolution of the end, or the tension between the hierarchy among the villagers. Alberto Conejero's striking adaptation from 2017, for example, shifts focus from Laurencia to Jacinta, in a modern-day feminist retelling of the play (Fernández 2018: 192-201, esp. 195-6).

[106] Unlike the Serbian version, the title was here translated (as 'Ovčji kal'). For an extensive discussion of this version, see Kmet 2019.

[107] Multiple reviews of the period employed *mladi*, 'young', as an epithet for Gabrić.

object, in conversation with nothing but itself. As mentioned above, interviews from 1993 clearly demonstrate that Ristić was aware of *Fuente Ovejuna*'s Soviet performance history; Gabrić, however, was not familiar with these details at the time of staging, or at least did not remember (Gabrić 2023). Speaking with *Borba* in 1993, Gabrić offered few comments, other that the play required no adapting, as it was 'sam po sebi aktualan' [current on its own] (V.P.G.b, 'O pozorištu u žestokom vremenu', *Borba*, 23 September 1993). He rejected a political reading (ibid). However, his disclaimers do not entirely survive scrutiny. From outset, this *Fuenteovehuna* is portrayed as far-removed from the pastoral idyll traditionally employed to characterise the town and its inhabitants. The usual dramaturgical establishment of a *locus amoenus* (idyllic resting place) as the shepherds' home is here rendered as a black, empty space.[108] Gabrić employs a dark, open field that functions as a logical inverse of the bucolic pastoral ideal, forging instead what might be considered a *locus tenobrosus*.

An emerging corpus of scholarship on theatrical darkness has explored its powerful effect in establishing mood. Scott Palmer draws from Gernot Böhme's writing on atmosphere to elucidate how Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig, among others, forged a 'dramaturgy of darkness' that altered the experience of spectatorship (2017: 56-60). These innovators saw in the use of shadows and irregular lighting a radical potential to alter an audience's experience of performance. In *Fuenteovehuna*, the lack of light is constant and assumes a character of its own: as Scott Thompson notes, darkness 'encroaches on the spectacle, and indeed is part of it' and can be both 'menacing and productive' (2020: 74). For Gabrić, this menacing atmosphere also serves to obscure the distinction between performance and spectator. The audience is thus enveloped within the production. As early as 1598, Angelo Ingeneri wrote:

> [t]he darker the auditorium is, the brighter the stage will appear; contrariwise, the brighter the auditorium, the more confused will be the spectators' view of the stage, for then that which ought to have been distinctly and easily seen will be rendered obscure and consequently less pleasing. (in Palmer 2017: 48)

[108] Gabrić's production thus shares visual qualities with Adolfo Marsillach's contentious *Fuente Ovejuna* of that same year (CNTC, Madrid). Described by Susan L. Fischer as a 'carnivalesque theatre of terror' (1997), this description is similarly apt for Gabrić's version, though arguably magnified: while Marsillach opted for tonally cold hues (silvers and midnight blues) and stark lines and visuals in his staging, Gabrić's version is entirely set in the dark and open-air.

In the absence of stage lights, it is unclear where the production ends and the public begins – an obfuscation that will here be later amplified through use of direct address. As such the audience here becomes not only a witness to the production, but an (in)active participant. Furthermore, within semi-darkness, a theatrical atmosphere could be immersive and overwhelming, while also hermeneutically unstable, insofar as the action on stage was purposefully left unclear (Palmer 2013: 56-60). Gabrić's design draws from the experimental lineage of Edward Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia (figures 9, 10), but adds an additional variable through choreographed movement so slow it almost evokes a tableau-vivant. This is most evident in the prologue, a non-verbal scene of over seven minutes long.

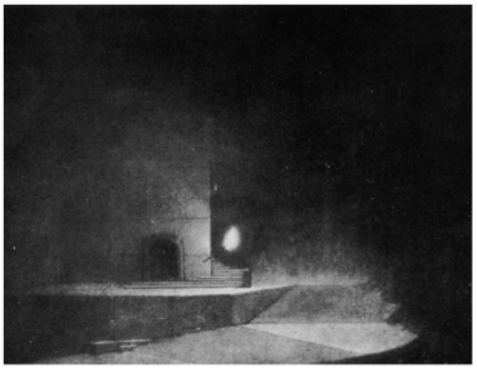


Figure 9: Design for *Tristan und Isolde*, by Adolphe Appia (1923)



Figure 10: Production still (00:16:08), *Fuenteovehuna* (1993), KPGT

This seven-minute-long opening offers little by way of action. Men in steel military uniforms march back and forth, employing rhythmic and machine-like movements. Villagers 'run' across the field intermittently, though this running is slow and erratic; at times they fall over or crouch down. One of the villagers is tortured; he falls to the ground in slow-motion. Gabrić's meditative, slow opening sets the tone for the rest of the production, in which characters move about as though in a stupor. That the ensuing scenes do not pick up the pace lends a striking contrast between Lope's muscular and economical prose and the lethargy of the characters speaking these verses. A characteristic of Lope's drama, and *Fuente Ovejuna* is not an exception, is a tendency towards fast-paced drama and plot development. The playwright outlined as much in his seminal *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* [The New Art of Writing Plays], a treatise on drama written in 1609 (de

Vega 1996: vv. 185-7; 193-200)).[109] And through frequent and lengthy pauses, Gabrić again contradicts Lope, who advised against excessive use of non-speaking characters (Thacker 2007: 27). By employing slow-motion movements and limiting speech, Gabrić turns his stage-set instead into a canvas. Despite the townpeople's presence, the landscape seems barren and empty, as though abandoned. These visuals evoke the photographs of destruction described by Eduardo Cadava in "Lapsus Imaginis': the image in ruins':

> There can be no image which is not about destruction and survival, and this is especially the case in the image of ruin. We might even say that the image of ruin tells us what is true of every image: that it bears witness to the enigmatic relation between death and survival, loss and life, destruction and preservation, mourning and memory. (2001: 35)

The stage-field becomes a site of 'ruin', and the paralysis of the villagers comes to evoke the tenebrist style of Caravaggio or, even, Goya (figures 11, 12). See, for example, the following tableau, representing a confrontation between the villagers and Fernán Gómez:



Figure 11: Production still (00:40:12), *Fuenteovehuna* (1993), KPGT



Figure 12: El tres de mayo de 1808 by Francisco de Goya (1814)

In this interaction from Act II Scene I – during which Fernán Goméz, speaking to Esteban, accuses Laurencia of rebuffing him ('Reñilda, alcalde, por Dios…Ha dado en darme pena' [Rebuke her, mayor, for God's sake… she has offended me] (II.974; 976) – the villagers remain throughout in the position seen in figure 11. They stay still over three long minutes (*Fuenteovehuna,* 00:40:06–00:43:54). Gómez and his men, by contrast, move slowly backwards and forwards, like predators to prey. The audiences' eye is naturally

[109] Bruce Wardropper has articulated the modes in which *Fuente Ovejuna* departs from the framework set forth by Lope in *Arte nuevo* (1956: 159-171), but the emphasis on fast-paced plot development remains. For a discussion of the central tenants of the *Arte Nuevo*, see Thacker 2007: 26-28, and for context, ibid: 2-5.

guided to the only site of light, the villagers' clothing, whose white linen evokes both the signifiers of innocence and surrender. But like the audience comfortably viewing the play only a few hundred kilometres from Sarajevo, the villagers' literal immobility is above all a physical manifestation of their paralysis in the face of this serious threat to Laurencia's safety. Laurencia is visually the only exception, who returns after abduction to deliver her monologue to both villagers and audience while running about the field, dropping to the floor and getting up again, in a manic display of frenzied movement at total odds with the rest of the production.

But for as much as Laurencia embodies rebellion and eventually galvanises the villagers to act in her defence, by the end of the production, arguably no progress has been made. The play ends as pessimistically as it began, an effect achieved through Gabrić's withering portrayal of the Monarchy and, by extension, the villagers' willing return to their reign. As *Fuente Ovejuna*'s staging history confirms, every modern director faces the question of how to portray the royals. A fidelity to Lope's text paves the path to a pro-monarchist reading likely unpalatable to a modern audience, while downplaying the Monarchs represents an anachronism. Gabrić deals with this dilemma by portraying Ferdinand and Isabella as superficially well-meaning yet also representative of a broken and vicious political system. Present throughout the production but only lit at select intervals, they placidly watch the scenes unfold without intervening.[110] They sit, inert, above an iron cage – the same cage in which Laurencia was abducted and possibly raped – in a throne styled to resemble a *máquina real*, a box theatre (for puppets) typical of the late Medieval period and Spanish Golden Age. Neither is the audience spared, as they are likewise framed as silent bystanders: Laurencia's use of direct address implicates the public without allowing for response, a one-way dialogue that mirrored the calls for aid emanating from Bosnia.[111] Nonetheless, it is the villagers for whom the greatest criticism is reserved, as they rejoice pathetically upon being pardoned and willingly return to the iron cage above which the Monarchs rule (*Fuenteovehuna* 1:30:20-1:31:14). Just as Culbert describes the modern-day

[110] As in Declan Donnellan's 1989 version at *The National*, where the royals observed the scenes as they unfolded (Jays 2010: para. 5), here Ferdinand and Isabella act as witnesses to the action. Arguably the effect is more severe than in Donnellan's staging, as the audience is here repeatedly tricked to 'forget' that the Monarchs are silent bystanders – while they sit upon their throne throughout the production, they are only illuminated at select intervals.

[111] The audience might here also be seen as taking on the role of the 'implicated subject', a term proposed by Michael Rothberg to problematise the notion of the passive bystander. For Rothberg, while the implicated subject does not necessary directly *engage* in violence, he or she nonetheless benefits from violence and from the structures that enable it (2019: 1).

traveller as following a route similar to the figure-eight, a deceptive and never-ending loop (2011: 50), so too do Gabrić's villagers enter a game of the eternal return of the same. Only a small child, dressed entirely in white linen, rebels and runs away.[112] The implication is clear: the villagers fear freedom more than injustice.

The parallels between this play and the time in which it was staged – the town as Sarajevo, Fernán Gómez as war criminal Ratko Mladić – are self-evident; it is to Gabrić's credit that these allusions are not made overt (though also, the restrictions of the period would have made an open critique difficult). The production focused its energies instead on offering a mirror to a passive audience, and in the words of one critic, provoked *jeza* as a spectatorial experience – effectively, disgust mixed with horror ('Tiranija kao porok i strast' in Krstić 1996: xliv-xlv). Seen from a post-war perspective, the tone of inevitability underscoring the dramaturgy – ranging from the visual elements, which suggested a completed and immutable painting, to the slow and confused movements of the shepherds – reveal the production to have been prescient. In the years following *Fuenteovehuna*'s premiere, the Siege of Sarajevo continued, nationalism – in Croatia, Serbia and indeed Bosnia – grew to feverish heights, Kosovo became a battleground for literal war and for a war of memory. As in the production, there was ultimately neither resolution, nor revolution. The multiple internal planes proposed in the play – the Monarchs as puppets, the throne as *máquina real*, the villagers as figural representations – act as a final nod to the Golden Age theme of 1993. In Ristić's words, the notion of *theatrum mundi* [world as a stage] was 'ništa više i ništa manje od Kalderonove definicije barokne čežnje za zauvek izgubljenom celinom' [nothing more and nothing less than Calderón's definition of the Baroque yearning for a completeness that has been forever lost] (Ristić 1993) – an apt description of this unusually defeatist staging of Lope's play, which offers paralysis in lieu of progress.

IV. Conclusion

When the 1993 programme of Yu Fest was prepared, arranged with gilded edges like a map from the time of Columbus' exploratory voyages, designer Ljiljana Ilić Kritinić probably did not intend to create a metaphor for the fracturing Yugoslav state. All news clips in the lead up to the festival suggest that the artists involved had every intention of

[112] Evocative, too, of the fugitive youth in white linen in the Gospel of Mark, who escapes the scene of Jesus' unjust arrest (Mark 14: 51-52). I want to thank Dr Imogen Choi for bringing this comparison to my attention.

staging the productions that had been announced. Nonetheless, the creation of a programme full of signs that 'led to nowhere' was appropriate, if inadvertent.

Long after Yugoslavia's dissolution, the country continues to inspire hyperreal representations. In 2013, Belgrade's Bitef theatre[113] (not to be confused with BITEF festival), hosted the world-premiere of Juan Mayorga's play *Los yugoslavos* [The Yugoslavs], here under the direction of Stefan Bodroža. With the Spanish title retained, but the text translated to Serbian, this was the first of Mayorga's plays not to premiere in its original language. Set in an unnamed, twenty-first century metropolis (but probably Madrid), the play follows a married couple, Martín and Ángela, who live together, but are unable to communicate. The wife, nearly mute, disappears every day; the husband, distraught, hires a man to follow her. It ultimately transpires that Ángela has been walking the city in circles, going from bar to bar, following an abandoned Yugoslav map.

Compulsive, circular walking might appear incompatible with the notion of paralysis discussed in this chapter, but they are two sides of the same coin. The journey that ends where it began, with the traveller obtaining no new knowledge, is not a true journey – it for this reason that Culbert invokes the aforementioned figure-eight as his primary metaphorical symbol, which also lends his monograph its cover image (2011). In Serbia of 1993, the paralytic players recoil from the travels on which they are supposed to embark, because to travel would be to enter a future that they do not desire – and, along with it, a process of mnemonic mediation. Histories of Spain in-flux, of borders being renegotiated – whether of Columbus' voyage to the 'New World' and subsequent violent expansion of the Spanish Empire, or of Don Quijote's energetic but deranged explorations through the chivalric genre, which would forever change its literary history – function in 1993 as disturbing reminders of Serbia as in-flux nation, and as such are rejected.

In Mayorga's *Los yugoslavos* – staged exactly twenty years after these 1993 productions – the same phenomenon can be observed, testifying to the enduring hermeneutic potential of paralysis as a dramaturgical lens. Ángela, unable to communicate her existential dread,

[113] Not to be confused with BITEF, Bitef Theatre was founded in 1989 and maintains a regular programme throughout the year – though it also houses productions from the festival. The theatre was championed and inaugurated by Mira Trailović, who passed away a few months after it was opened. The Square where the theatre is located was renamed in her honour (Jakoljević 2024).

follows a map that leads to nowhere, and in doing so, only retraces her own steps. Within the context of the Spanish metropolis in which the play is set, the character does fear not modernity (like Culbert's ethnographers), but the postmodernity of this urban, anonymous jungle. The yearned-for return to Yugoslavia in Mayorga's text is therefore not at all specific to the Yugoslav space, but to a nebulous, imaginary utopia, a land in which 'se juega de verdad. Mientras las mujeres bailan' [the stakes are high and people play for real, while the women dance] (Mayorga 2017: 671). Indeed, it is notable that except for the title, this citation, and the map that Ángela follows, the play includes no further reference to Yugoslavia. The (now-defunct) country's total absence from the play's narrative – other than as symbol – is arguably the apotheosis of Yugoslavia's paralytic contemporary status – invoked across decades, looping in circles, and ultimately a chimera.

CHAPTER II.
Stages of Spain in Yugoslavia: 'Naši Španci' and *¡Ay, Carmela!* (1996-2020)

I. Introduction

In the mid-1980s, two major dramatists – Ljubomir Simović (b. 1935) in Yugoslavia and José Sanchis Sinisterra (b. 1940) in Spain – wrote the plays that would go on to be considered their magna opera, defining their careers and the theatrical canons of their respective nations. On 10 October 1985, Simović's *Putujuće pozorište Šopalović* [Travelling Troupe Šopalović] premiered at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade. Set during World War II, the play follows a group of travelling performers in Nazi-occupied Užice (Serbia). Facing several challenges along the way, the actors prepare a German play, Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*, for an unwilling audience composed of villagers and occupying forces, most of whom harbour a deep distrust towards the theatre. Their version of *The Robbers* is never fully performed.

While *Putujuće pozorište Šopalović* was on its Yugoslav tour in 1986, Sanchis Sinisterra put the final touches on his equally foundational *¡Ay, Carmela!*, which premiered the following year at Zaragoza's Teatro Principal, on 5 November 1987. Written to commemorate fifty years since the start of the Spanish Civil War, Sanchis Sinisterra's play follows two vaudeville actors, Carmela and Paulino, who unwittingly cross into rebel-occupied Belchite. In Belchite, they are forced to perform their show in front of a group of International Brigade volunteers held hostage by Francoist troops. In refusing to perform a sketch mocking the hostages and the Republican cause, Carmela is shot: the play is predominantly told in flashbacks after the fact. Again, the play at the centre of the play – this anti-Republican sketch – is left unfinished.

While I will not be pursuing a comparative reading in this chapter, the parallel success of Simović's and Sanchis Sinisterra's text is relevant to the discussion here. Since the productions' respective premieres, both plays have been the subject of extensive academic scholarship,[114] primarily focused on the mnemonic mediation strategies employed by the dramatists, who raise the spectres of traumatic histories through the trope of the travelling actor. I want to build on this discussion, but tilt its axis such that the memories being

[114] I offer a literature review later in this chapter (p. 91).

mediated are not local, but foreign. In doing so, I will draw on the striking performance history of *¡Ay, Carmela!* in the former Yugoslavia.

Between 1996 and 1999, Sanchis Sinisterra's play was performed extensively across three republics at war: Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. In Bosnia, it would go on to become the longest running production in the nation's history, staged regularly between 1999 and 2020 with the same cast. While this is a history that has spanned over twenty years, it has not yet been the subject of academic attention. My primary contention is that it was precisely by 'travelling' to the Spanish Civil War that these Yugoslav *Carmelas* were able to gain traction, due to the political impact and cultural afterlife of the Yugoslav International Brigade veterans.

Through a reading informed by Peter Glazer's notion of radical nostalgia (2005), I will situate all three versions within the broader history of Yugoslav volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Paying particular attention to the representation of the veterans in Yugoslav rock music, I will show how memories of the brigades travelled through songs, creating a fertile environment for a play about the Spanish conflict to become a surprise hit. Turning to the performances themselves, I chart versions of *¡Ay, Carmela!* across the three republics: Serbia (1996-est.1998), Croatia (1998-2005), and Sarajevo (1999-2020).[115]

Drawing on extant reviews, interviews with the artists, and preserved footage, I will demonstrate how each production employed different techniques to frame its audience as an 'implicated subject' (Rothberg 2019). I further suggest that the final, Sarajevan version positioned the play as part of an extended conversation on Partisan woman fighters from World War II. Despite exhibiting distinct strategies of intervention, I show that each version would not have been possible without the previous one: a domino-cultural effect that ultimately led to the eponymous song, in a version by rock artist Darko Rundek, living a life of its own. Rundek's song, and its curious afterlife, is the subject of the conclusion.

II. Radical Nostalgia: 'an alternative or more pervasive history'

[115] These dates refer to the premiere and subsequent tours.

In Glazer's 2005 study, *Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration in America*, the author charts seventy years of commemorative acts by veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, with two central aims, one historical and the other theoretical. His first intervention is to chart the vast tapestry of such events across the twentieth century, providing extensive focus on performance – particularly songs – that had not been previously analysed in depth. Secondly, and of relevance to this thesis, he proposes that despite nostalgia's reputation as a conservative, reactionary force, this feeling can be employed as a powerful tool not only in fostering community, but also in pursuing radical and progressive political aims. In defending this hypothesis, Glazer draws from Theatre and Performance Studies, and suggests acts of commemoration can be seen as 'collective memory performed' (2005: 56). Activities such as joint (communal) singing of anti-fascist songs, Glazer writes, are 'embodied performances' that merge memories of the Spanish Civil War with the present moment, offering the 'audience the opportunity to recall and re-engage one of the most important acts of resistance in the twentieth century […subsequently] elements of its history are reinvigorated, the actions it inspired rehonored, and its significance renewed' (2005: 214).

While Glazer limits his archival corpus to commemorative acts by veterans and their immediate circles (family, friends), I will here suggest that acts of radical nostalgia can be observed, and indeed fostered, beyond their obvious geographical markers or even personal genealogies. This might be considered a form of a radical nostalgia once-removed. Through focus on the aforementioned productions of Sanchis Sinisterra's *¡Ay, Carmela!* in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, I will show how these performances, in evoking memories of the International Brigades, function as an example of displaced radical nostalgia. Treating these stagings not only as performances, but also as commemorations, changes the prism through which they might be understood as carriers of memory. As Glazer notes:

> Remembering is part of the human condition. Most everyone remembers, whether they want to or not. The act of remembering, per se, is innocent. That does not mean that *what* we remember is innocent, or how we remember, but simply *that* we remember. Commemoration, driven by memory, is not innocent. Commemorations do not just happen, they are made to happen. Just as a monument must be constructed, the commemorative act requires effort, choice. […] Groups use commemoration as a means of self-definition, *especially when the larger culture is presenting an alternative and more pervasive history*. (2005: 43, emphasis in original; 2005: 55, my emphasis).

Similarly, 'collective memory performed' – which is what I will suggest these stagings of *¡Ay, Carmela!* represent – can be considered acts as commemoration. Rebecca Schneider frames this idea succinctly in her forward to a 2023 edited volume on commemorative theatre: 'commemorations theatricalise and theatres commemorate' (2023: xv). Although the volume's editors suggest that all theatre is 'by its very nature' commemorative (Fernandes, Haughton, and Verstraete 2023: 1), the case studies collected all clearly challenge dominant political tendencies, ranging from revisionism in Uruguay (Stevens 2023: 65-80) to the representation of Kurds in opera (Verstraete 2023: 143-158). And indeed, within the Yugoslav context, these *¡Ay, Carmela!*s challenged the status quo. Politicians across republics sought to stifle the activities of the veterans, who were rapidly losing their cultural (and political) status in the post-Tito years, but in response, these performances fought against what Sanchis Sinisterra has termed the second death of the dead: *el olvido* (forgetting).[116]

II.i. Remembering the Spanish Civil War in the former Yugoslavia

> Ja sam se među Špancima, tada i docnije, uvijek osjećao kao među »svojima«, više svojima nego među pripadnicima bilo koje druge nacije… španski jezik ostaće u meni i poslije Španije… kao nekakav moj drugi materinji jezik.
>
> [Among the Spaniards, I always felt like I was among "my own" – more among my own than with those from any other nation… The Spanish language will remain within me even after Spain… like another mother tongue.]
>
> – Gojko Nikoliš, People's Hero of Yugoslavia; veteran of the Spanish Civil War[117]

It is estimated that between 1936 and 1939 over 1,900 Yugoslavs travelled to Spain to fight in the Civil War.[118] The volunteers became national symbols of the fight against fascism in the Balkans and are today referred to as transnational heroes: 'Naši Ś̌panci' [our Spaniards]. Eric Hobsbawm has described this affective phenomenon towards the volunteers as a romanticised, external nostalgia, noting that the Civil War is remembered

[116] The playright has said that '[e]l tema esencial de *¡Ay, Carmela!* es *la segunda muerte de los muertos*: el olvido' [the essential theme of *¡Ay, Carmela!* is the second death of the dead: forgetting] (Sanchis Sinisterra in Ríos Carratalá 2005). The notion that condemning the dead to oblivion is a second form of injustice is echoed by Pedro Almodóvar in his 2021 film, *Madres paralelas* [Parallel Mothers], and openly articulated by the director in an interview with Maria Delgado (Almodóvar in Delgado 2023: 209).
[117] Citation from Nikoliš' memoire, *Korijen, stablo, pavetina* (1981: 156).
[118] The number of volunteers has been the subject of debate. For many years, 1,604 was the accepted minimum baseline. The figure cited above is based on research by French historian Hervé Lemesle, who revised the number to 1,910 (2017: 51). Among the veterans coming from Yugoslavia, it is worth noting that Croats, Slovenes, and Jews (diaspora) were particularly well represented (2017: 54).

outside of Spain 'like the heart-rending and indestructible memory of a first great and lost love,' but that this 'is not the case in Spain itself, where all experienced the tragic, murderous and complex impact of civil war, obscured as it was by the mythology and manipulation of the regime of the victors' (2007). In Yugoslavia, however, the Spanish Civil War held particular resonance – especially in the immediate aftermath of the war's end. Josip Broz Tito, the country's leader until his death in 1980, mobilised veterans of the Spanish Civil War (namely, members of the International Brigade) in World War II and these veterans ultimately became the backbone of the Partisan movement (Niebuhr 2016: 153).[119] Though not all the volunteers were communists, 'the experience of the war, and the subsequent hardships of many in the French internment camps, created a disciplined cadre of communist revolutionaries out of those who survived' (Pavlaković 2005: 293). Historically, the volunteers' participation was critical 'with regard to the construction of a new Yugoslav identity' (Pavlaković 2014: 520) and despite the war's outcome (namely, the fascist defeat over the Republican side), the Brigade continues to be a reference point of pride for many in the region. In the section of his memoir entitled *Španjolske madrugade* [Dawns of Spain], veteran Gojko Nikoliš writes:

> Doživjeli smo poraz. Ali, španska revolucija nije prestala da traje. Nastavila se na osebujan način: njeno sjeme, njene poruke i iskustva raznijeti su po svim zemljama gdje su živjeli interbrigadisti. Nisu uspjele da ih zatru ni Staljinove čistke. Mi, u Jugoslaviji, borbom protiv zavojevača, vraćali smo na svoj način i dug prema Španiji, osvećivali smo njene žrtve. Dužni smo joj ostali sve do danas za privilegiju koju nam je dala, ustupivši nam svoje tlo da se na njem borimo i za našu stvar.
>
> [We were defeated. But the Spanish revolution did not end. She continued in a peculiar way: her seed, her message, and her legacy were scattered throughout all the countries in which the members of the Brigades lived.[120] Even Stalin's purges failed to destroy them. We in Yugoslavia, by fighting against the invaders, in our own way repaid our debt to Spain. We avenged her victims. We owe it to her to this day for the privilege she gave us; for giving us her ground to fight on for our cause as well.] (1981: 231)

A group of veterans of the Spanish Civil War went on to become the leaders of the four Yugoslav armies fighting for liberation at the end of World War II: Koca Popović, Peko Dapčević, Kosta Nađ, and Petar Drapšin. The (so-called) Yugoslav Spaniards ended up comprising 'most men in the top army echelons' (Todić 2015: 138). Victor Alba and Stephen Schwartz write that 'the single example of a country where the "Spaniards"

[119] During this period Tito became Secretary General of the KPJ.
[120] I have chosen to maintain the feminine prepositions and pronouns, though the neutral 'it' and 'its' could be used in English, in a wish to preserve the tone of the original text.

maintained themselves as a compact power center, extending from the highest party posts downward, is Yugoslavia' (1988: 214). The origin story of Yugoslavia, and its struggle against fascism, henceforth became indelibly linked with Spain's history.

This was a history that endured: over the course of the twentieth century, memories of the Spanish Civil War (and Spain more broadly) continued to play a role in the Yugoslav cultural imaginary.[121] Following World War II and the consolidation of Tito's Yugoslavia, the country broke off all diplomatic relations with Spain (Pavlaković 2010: 1179) – becoming the only country, apart from Mexico, not to recognise Franco's government as legitimate (Alba and Schwartz 1988: 215).[122] Meanwhile, Yugoslav veterans of the International Brigade, many of whom were artists and (what would today be termed) public intellectuals,[123] published memoirs, novels, and poetry outlining their experiences of war in Spain. These became a significant mode of cultural and historical transmission. To give one example, in his 1938 memoir, *Španjolski susreti* [Spanish Encounters], veteran August Cesarec details in depth a conversation held between himself and dramatist and poet Rafael Alberti in Madrid's *Teatro de la Zarzuela*, during which they discussed the future of Spanish theatre, as well as two specific dramas: Federico García Lorca's *Mariana Pineda* and Cervantes' *Numancia* (Cesarec [1938] 1961: 39-42).[124]

Across many of these memoirs, novels, and poems, the Spanish conflict appeared to refract memories of World War II. In 1945, Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić – who was not a veteran but had been posted in Madrid in 1928-29 as Vice-Consul of the then-Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Škrabac 2020: 93) – wrote the short story *Pismo iz 1920* [Letter from 1920].[125] The story's protagonist, a Jew from Sarajevo, first leaves Yugoslavia for Paris following World War I, and then from there goes to Spain as a volunteer during the civil war. In Spain, he is killed, and his hospital bombed. History, in the story, is presented

[121] Following Winfried Fluck, I understand cultural imaginary to be 'a repertory of images, affects, and yearnings which stimulate the individual imaginary ever newly' (in Frank 2017: 17-18).
[122] Economic relations began to thaw in 1969, and relations were fully restored during the Spanish transition period (Pavlaković 2010: 1179).
[123] See Victor Alba and Stephen Schwartz, *Spanish Marxism Versus Soviet Communism* (1988), especially 214-228.
[124] Sanja Knježević has argued that Cesarec indirectly led to an entire poetic movement in Croatian poetry, as upon return he brought with him a copy of Lorca's *Romancero gitano*, which he gifted to the major poet Drago Ivanišević. Ivanišević then translated the text, which became influential within the Yugoslav literary scene (Knježević 2022: 118-119).
[125] In 1935, he had written *Razgovor sa Gojom* [Conversation with Goya]. Andrić scholar Celia Hawkesworth has noted that Andrić 'was particularly drawn to Spain and, like many writers of his generation, he felt a special affinity with the work of Goya' (1984: 5).

as circular: whether the Spanish expulsion of 1492, the Spanish Civil War, or either of the World Wars, all mirror each other in their violence and persecution, or indeed are traced on top of each other, as in a palimpsest (Silverman 2015). Yet even in Andrić's story, Spain continued to represent a freedom from nationalist politics: as Hansen-Kokoruš notes, even 'though Maks [the protagonist] dies in the Spanish Civil War, he is fighting in the international brigades where national, cultural and other differences do not matter' (2021: 168).

The character of the '*Španac'* [Spaniard] also appeared in several films, often representing a nostalgic view towards this time period (Pavlaković 2010: 1186). Pavlaković highlights Veljko Bulajić's film *Kozara* (1962), in which a Yugoslav veteran sings a Spanish song to animate his friends and fellow soldiers. But this trope can be seen in music, too. While the use of Spanish and Italian anti-fascist songs in Yugoslav (and post-Yugoslav) spaces has been explored extensively (Hofman 2020, 2021; Baker 2010; Atanasovski: 2017), little attention has been paid to depictions of the veterans *themselves* in music. From Arsen Dedić's ballad 'Hej, haj brigade' (1973), which commemorates their lives, to Riblja Čorba's rock anthem and call-for-action 'Žikica Jovanović *Španac'* (1990, my emphasis), memories of the volunteers were passed on through music across decades – a motif I will return to in the Conclusion. A particularly notable example is the song 'Pavel' by the acclaimed new-wave[126] rock band Azra. The lyrics address a veteran of the International Brigades:

> Pariz ti je dao sebe/ Dio neba zauvijek/ Sto te mući na kraju puta? / Sjećaš li se Španije? /Zanima me dal' bi opet išao u rovove…
>
> [Paris gave you itself[127]/ A part of the sky forever/ What weighs on you at the end of the road?/ Do you remember Spain? / I'd like to know if you'd go back to the trenches…]

The Azra song is of note as it illustrates the hybrid mnemonic quality of the veterans. This song was released in 1982 (note also, the same year as the socialist victory in Spain)

[126] Considered the 'Golden Age' of Yugoslav music, the new wave ('novi val') was a cultural movement that roughly began in the 1980s, with echoes of the UK and American new waves. It was often characterised by punk, punk rock, or reggae style and politically provocative lyrics; it came as a reaction to the hard or 'pure' rock movement of the 1970s. Among others, the major players included Azra, Idoli, Prljavo Kazalište, and Haustor.

[127] The centre of the KJP's exile activities was in Paris. Much of the organisation of the volunteers' activity began there (Gužvica 2019: 55-56; Prpic* 1969: 27).

as part of the double studio album *Filigranski pločnici* [Filigree sidewalks]. Azra and the lead singer (and composer), Branimir "Johnny" Štulić (henceforth, Johnny) enjoyed cult status and in their music were openly critical of the waning, stagnant Yugo-Socialist system. The album contained, for example, '68', a song mocking a former-student protestor of the 1968 generation who, later in life, assumed a bourgeoise existence. The tonal difference with 'Pavel' is striking. While '68', sung in the first-person, highlights the *inefficacies and hypocrisies* of the 'veteran' student-rioters in Yugoslavia, 'Pavel' does not criticise its subject. Instead, here the speaker asks the veteran if his ideals live on: it transpires that they do, and this provokes interest in the speaker: 'Govoriš mi o ideji/ o patriotizmu generacije/ da li je to skup nekorisnih ljudi/ ili nešto vrijedno robije?/ Razgovarajmo o slobodi/ Sjećaš li se Španije?' [You speak to me of the idea/ of the patriotism of a generation/ were these just useless people and their personal interests/ or perhaps something more?/ Let's talk about freedom/ Do you remember Spain?]. The veteran embodies the hopes of a nation, out-of-reach to a new generation. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to further detail the particular history of this band, sociologists and music scholars have demonstrated Azra's cultural impact (in particular, Ramet 1988: 396-410 and Gordy 1999; also Spaskovska 2011: 355-372; Jovanovic* 2014). Music and the veterans' memory would eventually become entwined in the public sphere: a 2013 article in *Vreme*, for example, on the history of the Spanish brigades was entitled 'Neman je pred vratima' [The monster is at the door] (Bazdulj, *Vreme*, 30 May 2013). Note that this is a lyric taken from 'Pavel'.

The loss of the Brigades' dream, as described by Johnny in 'Pavel', reflected the contemporary political moment. In 1982, remembering Spain again became a political act. Following Tito's death in 1980, and the later outbreak of the wars in the 1990s, the activity of the veterans began to be monitored with suspicion and, in some cases, with outright hostility. In 1984, after a general meeting of the *Španci* which called for major reforms within the Communist party, the veterans were smeared and vilified across newspapers and in the general party (KPJ) meetings.[128] As Pavlaković observes, this extreme reaction reflected the political power held by the veterans:

> When Spanish veteran Gojko Nikoliš defended the decision to draft such a letter by referring to numerous other examples of public criticism of the country's

[128] See also Olga Manojlović Pintar, *Poslednja bitka. Španski borci i jugoslovenska kriza osamdesetih* (2019), especially pp. 95-102.

> leaders, Dragoslav Marković *retorted that the criticism from the Španci carried considerably more political weight, especially since it was conceptualised by battle-hardened revolutionary fighters and communists*. (2010: 1182, my emphasis)

Two years later, however, a government-sponsored commemorative event on the veterans was held, illustrating their uneasy place within the public sphere (ibid: 1182-1183). The veterans were broadly considered one of the backbones of the Yugoslav Partisan movement; however, in light of secessionist movements – and growing hostility towards the pan-Slavic ideal – this history was, in the post-Tito years, unpalatable.

By the 1990s and the onset of the wars, 'a wave of historical revisionism that accompanied the new nationalist narratives swept aside the collective memory of the Spanish Civil War […] the partisan movement was tarred […] while Nazi-fascist collaborators were rehabilitated and recast as nationalist heroes' (Pavlaković 2020: 279). It was within this turbulent context that *¡Ay, Carmela!* was first staged in the former Yugoslavia.[129] The first production was performed in 1996, the second in 1998, and the third in 1999. As I will go on to discuss, despite taking place in three republics, each in different stages of war, the productions were highly successful in each region, suggesting a universality in the messaging regarding the Spanish Civil War. This message was at complete odds with the political – revisionist – moment, but it spoke to the enduring appeal of the veterans. Yet, it is also of note that none of these productions were produced by National Theatres. Whether in Zagreb, Belgrade, or Sarajevo, it was only theatres 'at the periphery' that saw value in returning to the Spanish cause.

III. First Steps: *¡Ay, Carmela!* in Belgrade

José Sanchis Sinisterra, founder of the experimental company and theatre-lab, *Teatro Fronterizo*, is one of Spain's most celebrated dramatists of the democratic period. His *¡Ay, Carmela!* has assumed a canonical role in Spain's theatrical output. Subtitled 'Elegía a una guerra civil' [Elegy to a Civil War], the play follows two vaudeville artists, husband Paulino

[129] It was also a period in which metatheatre was burgeoning, as indicated by the success of *Putujuće pozorište Šopalovic*, but also of other productions – with a particularly notable example being Goran Marković's *Turneja* [the Tour] (1996), which shares affinities with *¡Ay, Carmela!* in that the central actors accidentally cross into enemy territory. Like *¡Ay, Carmela!*, *Turneja* was adapted to a film (in 2008): again directed by Marković, it was Serbia's official submission for the 2009 Academy Awards. For an extensive study on the several forms of metatheatre employed in the former Yugoslavia before and during the wars of the 1990s, see Dušanka (Duška) Heaney Radosavljević's *Metatheatre as a Political Tool in Yugoslav Drama in the 1980s and 1990s* (2003).

and wife Carmela, who unwittingly end up in enemy territory and are forced to perform in front of imprisoned soldiers, members of the International Brigade. It is told in a mix of flashbacks, as it is revealed from outset that Carmela is in fact dead: she was shot from the back of an auditorium. The flashbacks take the form of a varieté act (a collection of sketches, musical numbers, and comedic gags) staged by Carmela and Paulino, while the scenes in the (apparent) present-day see Paulino speak with Carmela, who has returned in ghost-like form. Two side characters, Gustavete (the couples' stagehand) and Ripamonente (an Italian fascist general) are frequently addressed by the protagonists, but do not appear on-stage. The play was adapted to a film in 1990, directed by Carlos Saura, starring Carmen Maura and Andrés Pajares in the lead roles.

While the play resists a linear (chronological) reading, it might be summarised as follows. Set entirely within a theatre, the play opens with a forlorn Paulino entering the stage; he drinks and mumbles to himself. Shortly thereafter, Carmela arrives: Paulino's shock and initial disbelief, and the couples' subsequent dialogue, indicate to the audience that Carmela is there post-mortem. While the exact cause of Carmela's death is not immediately specified, it is clear from these initial conversations that Paulino feels guilty – implicated – and that Carmela occupies a form of limbo. She describes the realm from which she comes as a hazy space in which men and women mingle in an extremely long queue. Each time she appears, she suggests that it more difficult for her to return, and that those around her in limbo are becoming more 'borrosos' [blurry]. Despite the circumstances, these scenes (which appear to take place in the present-day) are frequently ludic in tone. One recurring motif, for example, is Paulino's absurd jealousy of the men who are in limbo alongside Carmela, and his fear that they may be flirting with her.

In the flashbacks, Carmela and Paulino are in Belchite, where they are forced to perform in front of a group of captive soldiers. In each progressive flashback scene, Carmela appears less willing to continue with the performance. The crescendo occurs in the final scene of Act II, when – in the middle of a particularly distasteful act, where Carmela's sketch involves draping herself suggestively in a Republican flag – Carmela breaks away from the performance and begins to sing the song after which the play is titled. Almost immediately, Carmela is shot: the set then goes black and, shortly afterwards, an epilogue begins. This epilogues sees Carmela and Paulino converse one final time, here discussing the meaning of memory. During this conversation, Paulino becomes increasingly agitated.

His distress leads to violence: he tries to grab Carmela and kiss her, to no effect. In tandem, Carmela appears to enter another, third realm: her words suggest that she is surrounded once more by the captive soldiers, ultimately obscuring the divide between the flashbacks and the apparent present-day. The play closes with Carmela speaking to the veterans directly, suggesting that she has finally entered, fully, the world of the dead.

Both play and film have been analysed extensively, from the perspective of gender (MacDonald 1998: 47-59), nationality (Keown 2018: 98-116), translation studies (Londero 2010: 324-331), food (Castellani 2007: 357-367), music studies (Schiavo 2016), film adaptations (Gómez 1994; Amaducci 1996: 65-76; Auladell Pérez 1995: 249-257), and, perhaps above all, memory (Fernández Ariza 2003; Buffery 2017: 863-882; Sprinceana 2014: 58-72; García-Manso 2018: 393-417; Rizea 2011; Lodi 2017: 115-126). While I will draw from various analyses of the play, I will orientate my discussion below around the relevance of the Brigades as witnesses to Carmela and Paulino's actions/performances, a perspective that has not been explored in depth and that, in my view, was foundational to its appeal across Serbia and Croatia.

Helena Buffery has argued that Carmela exhibits a form of 'embodied witnessing' during her interactions with the captured soldiers (2017: 866), and to this I would add that this form of witnessing extends to the audience. Through the rupture of the fourth wall, the public experiences what occurs on stage from the perspective of both the captured Brigades and the fascist *teniente* [lieutenant], whom Carmela and Paulino must obey. This odd dialectic would seem to suggest extreme shifts between embodying the perspective of perpetrators and victims, and recalls Primo Levi's notion of the grey zone (1988), as well Michael Rothberg's work on implication (2019). For Rothberg, the implicated subject is 'neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator […they] occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes' (2019: 1). And while the play's protagonists suffer enormous consequences at the hands of the incoming regime, they are also – if unwillingly – initially involved in upholding its power. While Carmela becomes increasingly disturbed at the notion of performing in front of the soldiers, Paulino is insistent throughout that

they continue to do so. Though he does not himself harm the soldiers, he participates in legitimising the same forces that will eventually execute them. As Rothberg writes:

> […] ambiguity is productive: it is precisely the difficult-to-locate position between victims and perpetrators that makes implicated subjects *useful to power*, that makes them, in [Simona] Forti's words, 'transmission belts' of domination. (Rothberg 2019: 55, my emphasis)

Within the realm of *¡Ay, Carmela!,* the couple's predicament represents an 'irresolvable dilemma' as Bert Cardullo notes – here in relation to Saura's film, though his comments extend to the play (1992: 102). The pair must decide whether to 'entertain the enemy or die, appear to collaborate with the fascists or be executed by them' (ibid). In Belgrade – where the first (post)-Yugoslav version of *¡Ay, Carmela!* was staged – this apparently irresolvable dilemma would speak to an urban public not yet directly experiencing the war, but whose silence regarding the situation in neighbouring Bosnia would be heavily criticised, not only abroad but by thousands of protesting within the country. As such, the temporalities of the play arguably expand, moving away from its original engagement with effigies of return (as described by Buffery) to an effigy of the here-and-now. As Maria Delgado notes, within the Spanish context of the post-transition period, the play arrived to 'a nation haunted by the ghosts of the Civil War' and in which Carmela 'functioned as a reminder of the need to deal with an unresolved past and learn to live with the many spectres that remain in the nation's consciousness' (2008: 37). Haunted in real time by the horrors taking place only a few hundred kilometres away, here Carmela will function for Serbian audiences instead as a reminder of the unresolved present, and Paulino – their mirror-image – as a reflection of the consequences of inaction.

Joj, Karmela, as Sanchis Sinisterra's play was transliterated, premiered in 1996 at Belgrade's KULT Theatre, a space which had become known for its inauguration three years prior with the world premiere of Aleksandar Popović's *Tamna je noć* [Dark is the Night] (Radulović 2018: 107-122), the first anti-war play in the Serbian region. The context of the relatively new theatre may have paved the way – or, at least, foreshadowed – *¡Ay, Carmela!'s* eventual success. Mina Sohaj writes, for example, that the Serbian theatrical community was the final – out of Croatia and Bosnia – to engage with the war, and notes that the first anti-war play came not 'from an existing institutional theatre network, but

from the stage of a newly founded theatre' (2015: 119).[130] Despite reticence on the part of theatre-makers to touch on the subject of the war, *Tamna je noć* was an immediate success and described in newspapers as cathartic (ibid). Still, its anti-war message also led to it being targeted by nationalists, with the artists involved allegedly receiving death threats and demands to stop performing (Milatović-Ovadia 2023: 224-228).[131] The play continued to be performed for several years, within Serbia's borders as well as internationally in Europe and the USA (Palmer 1998: 96), and it is within this atmosphere of political resistance that *¡Ay, Carmela!*'s arrival should be framed.[132] Further enhancing the links between the two productions, Predrag Ejdus – one of *Tamna je noć*'s protagonists – would go on to play Paulino.[133]

The arrival of *¡Ay, Carmela!* to KULT's stages was the result of a fortuitous meeting between two half-brothers: Irfan Mensur and Hadi Kurich, both actor-directors of considerable renown, the former based in Belgrade and the latter in Sarajevo.[134] Kurich, whose work forms the basis of Chapter III, was the director of the Sarajevo National Theatre when the siege began in the Spring of 1992. Alongside his wife, actress Ana Kardelis, and their two children, he relocated to Spain following the onset of the siege.[135] There, he founded the theatre company, Teatro de la Resistencia [Theatre of Resistance], which continues to be active to-date.

In parallel, Mensur went into his own form of exile. Between 2 and 3 February 1993, Mensur was beaten up in Belgrade by two nationalists; he was targeted as a Bosnian. Afterwards, he left for Sweden as a political refugee. Across republics, the attack was strongly condemned by the theatrical community. Within Serbia, there was a national call organised by the Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište [Yugoslav Drama Theatre], where Mensur was a company member, for all theatres to temporarily close in protest of what had occurred ('Irfan Mensur: Pretučen', *Ludus*, 5 February 1993). The Subotica National

[130] Popović had shopped the play to various major theatres, such as Zvezdara, Duško Radović, and the Yugoslav Drama Theatre; all had rejected it (Sohaj 2015: 122).
[131] Sohaj notes that it is difficult to ascertain how extreme these threats were, but cites an archived review by Professor Mirjana Radošević that mentioned several threats, including a bomb threat (Sohaj 2015: 128).
[132] For reference, Dark is the Night is a melancholy Soviet Song composed by Nikita Bogoslovsky for the 1943 film, *Two Soldiers*.
[133] On how actors retain traces of previous performances, transmitting these indirectly to their audiences, see Wright 2014: 153-164.
[134] Half-siblings on the paternal side, both children of Mensur Kurić. Irfan Mensur was born Irfan Kurić, but later in life took his father's first name as his surname.
[135] The Spanish government had pledged to take in at least two thousand refugees (Carrizosa 1992).

Theatre released a statement requesting that '[u] saopštenju za javnosti zahteva se od vlasti da dokažu da je Jugoslavija zemlja u kojoj je ilegalno, nemoralno, i kažnjivo ljude deliti po naciji i veroispovesti' [the authorities prove that Yugoslavia is a country where it is illegal, immoral, and punishable to divide people by nationality and religion] ('Otkazana predstava u znak protesta', *Dani Subotica*, 10 February 1993). However, though Mensur went into brief exile, he ultimately returned to Belgrade to resume his performance and directorial career. Kurich, meanwhile, remained in Vila-Real, Spain. In Summer 1996, Mensur made a brief trip to visit his brother. On the final night of his stay, Mensur asked Kurich to recommend a Spanish play that he might stage upon his return to Belgrade. After hearing the synopsis of three plays, *¡Ay, Carmela!* was chosen: a story focused on the difficulties faced by actors during periods of war appealed to the director. Mensur was to fly back the following day; there was little time to prepare the text. He described the translation process as follows:

> Našao je tekst, i onda smo seli, celu noć, pred moj put, ispred kasetofona. On je direktno u mikrofon, direktno prevodio sa španskog, i mi smo potrošili nekih šest-sedam kaseta, bukvalno čitajući na španskom, prevodeći na srpski… Ja sam doputovao… i onda sam to stavio u kasetofon, i polako na olovku skidao njegove rečenice, koje… nisu bile pozorišne, kolokvijalne…i to spremio za scenu.
>
> [He [Kurich] found the script, and we sat down together. We spent all night, the night before my return from Spain, in front of a tape recorder, and he translated into the microphone directly from the Spanish. We went through six or seven cassette tapes, quite literally reading in Spanish and translating into Serbian… Later, when I returned, I played them back and slowly transcribed his sentences by hand, adjusting them for the stage, as they were a literal, rough translation.] (Interview with the author, 2021)

Mensur returned to Belgrade with these cassettes, and soon began rehearsing with his invited cast. The play was staged the following year, with a symbolic premiere on 20 October 1996 (Hubač, 'Teatar beogradski', *LUDUS*, 15 November 1996). The choice of premiere date opened a multidirectional framework, positioning the play as a form of commemoration, as 20 October marks the liberation of Belgrade in World War II.[136] Opening *¡Ay, Carmela!* on Belgrade's *Dan oslobođenja* offered a historical comparison in

[136] As Marco Abram has suggested, the date was from outset framed in international terms. In 1945, People's Hero Moša Pijade had written that the first liberation anniversary was 'not only Belgrade's celebration' but that of the entire country, 'stand[ing] as a symbol of the liberation of the whole country; it is a universal celebration of the liberation of all [the country's] peoples' (Pijade in Abram 2012: 173).

two directions: one looking towards the past and the other to the present, with the Spanish Civil War as a conduit connecting the two.[137]

Radio Televizija Srbija [Radio Television of Serbia] screened a filmed version shortly after the premiere, which continues to be available online on the *RTS* archives. Predrag Ejdus (Paulino) and Svetlana Bojković (Carmela) gave powerful performances as the two leads, with Ejdus lending Paulino a quiet dignity often absent in portrayals of this character. Bojković, on her part, played a quick-witted and entirely un-self-conscious Carmela, resisting the temptation to sentimentalise even the character's most difficult recollections.[138] The set design was carefully minimalistic, in line with the original play-text: the scenes take place in an empty theatre, with only a few objects on stage (a suitcase, a broken gramophone).

The translation is generally faithful to its source, with one significant exception: references to Spain have been almost entirely removed. Belchite becomes 'this town' [ovo selo] (*Joj, Karmela* 00:19:48),[139] and other place names, such as Logroño and Barcelona (21:40), are erased. Federico García Lorca – whom Carmela recounts meeting following her death – is transformed into 'onaj…onaj koga su streljali tek što je počeo rat…onaj slavni. Onaj. On' [that famous poet… the one who was killed at the beginning of the war…him, him] (00:34:59–36:11). Similarly, the Italian *teniente* Ripamonte, with whom Paulino converses in the original in rusty Italian, has been replaced here with a Mr. 'Poručić:' a pejorative play on the word *poručnik* (the literal translation of *teniente*), and *poruka*: a message, as from an informer. The text no longer references Italian at any point. All that remains of Spain in this *¡Ay, Carmela!* is the country's red, yellow, and purple Republican flag, draped around Carmela in her final scene before being shot; a flag which arguably, over time, in any case became associated with volunteers from across the world.

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[137] The members of the Association of Spanish Veterans in the former Yugoslavia continue to hold gatherings on 20 October. On 20 October 2023, for example, an event was held in collaboration with Belgrade's *Instituto Cervantes*, covering the history of the Yugoslav brigade volunteers.

[138] Both seemed to relish the roles, and indeed Bojković has stated that Carmela was one of her favourite roles to play: 'Nije slučajno baš mene Irfan pozvao. Mi se dosta dugo poznajemo, od mladosti, i znao je moj karakter – koji je sličan Carmeli' [it was not an accident that Irfan invited me [to play the role]. We've known each other for a long time, since youth, and he knows my personality – which is similar to Carmela's] (Interview with the author, 2023).

[139] There is no published or publicly available version of Mensur and Kurich's joint translation. References henceforth will be in minutes and seconds of the performance, available on the RTS Archives YouTube channel (Mensur and Mitić 1996).

In discussion, Mensur remarked that through these textual changes he wished to emphasise the universal difficulties faced by actors in times of crisis, irrespective of location.[140]A similar decision was taken with respect to the score, arranged by Aleksandar (Sanja) Ilić, a major player on the Yugoslav rock scene and founder of the band San.[141] Under Ilić's direction, Carmela's number in the middle of Act II – in the original script, a *pasodoble* [military march] 'muy español y muy castizo' [very Spanish, tremendously Spanish][142] – is rendered as a slow and indeed very Slavic march, here accompanied by the accordion. The original title, *Suspiros de España* [Spain's Sighs, or Spain's Breaths], a popular *pasodoble* from 1902, is changed to 'Uzdah zemlje' [The Earth's Inhale] (01:03:05-07).[143] The lyrics now refer to geographically unspecific topographies (e.g. rivers and mountains), instead of particular names. Extending the reach further, to a local's ear, Bojković's rendition of the song evokes not a generic Slavic sound, but a particularly Russian one, expanding the historical remit of the play to World War II, Soviet resistance, and perhaps even the Great War of the nineteenth century.

Within translation studies, the approach taken by Mensur is referred to, at times pejoratively, as 'domesticating' (Venuti 1993).[144] Broadly, this encompasses a strategy of translation wherein foreign elements of an original text are minimised in order to ease the reading (or here, viewing) process in the target language. However, while Mensur's modifications may appear to sacrifice an integral ingredient of the script, Sanchis Sinisterra has insisted – at times with frustration – that *¡Ay, Carmela!* is not a play *about* the Spanish Civil War, but rather a play that occurs during it (Sanchis Sinisterra in Aznar Soler 1991: 61).[145] Carmela, likewise, is not in my view a political creature, and much less some

[140] Interview with the author, 2021.
[141] Ilić had previously collaborated closely with Irfan Mensur on their joint album *Plava ptica* [Blue Bird] (1992), whose title song criticised the Milošević regime (lyrics by Mensur and composition by Ilić). The album was created in tandem with the premiere of Maurice Maeterlinck's *Bluebird* at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre and under the direction of Mensur (Đukić 2016: 149). The song continues to be popular today, although not many are aware of its theatrical origins.
[142] *Castizo* does not have an obvious English equivalent – it is used to describe something or someone that is 'authentically' (or quintessentially) Spanish.
[143] Composed by Antonio Álvarez Alonso in 1902, the song is extremely famous in Spain and has gone through several lyrical permutations that have over time changed its political tenor. For further detail on the song's polysemic and at times conflicting associations, see Woods Peiró 2012: 210-212 and Encabo 2023: 64.
[144] Margherita Laera, Kélina Gotman, Geraldine Brodie and Emma Cole, among others, have written extensively about theatre translation and its politics. For a lively discussion of Venuti's term in a roundtable with contemporary practitioners, see Laera 2011: 213-225. For an introductory overview, see Brodie and Cole 2017: 1-18. For a conceptual analysis of the relationship between translation, 'doubling', and movement – particularly relevant to this thesis – see Gotman 2016: 17-20.
[145] The author similarly states: 'Y lo que ahora pienso, es que, aparte de esta reminiscencia un poco mítica, la obra no trata sólo de la Guerra Civil Española, aunque yo no lo sabía cuando la escribí. La obra tiene

iteration of *La Pasionaria.*[146] Rather, she is an artist forced to react quickly under extreme circumstances and therefore according to her internal moral instinct, or ethical code.

It is not insignificant that the script itself deliberately obfuscates clear markers of location. This degree of geographical uncertainty is evident from the opening note preceding the first stage direction: *La acción no occurió en Belchite* [The action did not take place in Belchite] (Sanchis Sinisterra 2000: 90). Andreea Sprinceana observes that this (non) 'temporal specification… is intended to mark a lack of historical correspondence, to prevent the play from becoming encapsulated in a rigid historical reference' (Sprinceana 2014: 62-63). Belchite becomes a symbol that can move freely across time and space. Arguably, *¡Ay, Carmela!* staged in a rapidly collapsing Yugoslavia comes quite close to providing a theatrical mise en scène to that which Sanchis Sinisterra had imagined, i.e. a play set during civil war. There was no need to historicise the production; the contemporary atmosphere itself provided a clear grounding.[147]

With Mensur's production, the creation of a post-Yugoslav wave of *Carmelas* officially began (figure 13). The play was a critical success: the premiere received excellent reviews (including one by Ivan Medenica – then student and later, Artistic Director of BITEF (2015-2023) (Hubač, 'Teatar beogradski', *LUDUS*, 15 November 1996). The performances in Belgrade led to an international tour (ibid). In a case of life-imitating-art, however, the run was interrupted by political upheaval. As a reaction to Slobodan Milošević's fraudulent election in 1996, students across Serbia began to protest his contentious victory, both in the streets and in theatre halls (Prosic-Dvornic* 1998: 124-127). The protests formally began on 20 November 1996, exactly a month after *¡Ay, Carmela!'s* premiere (Dimitrov 2007: 239) – which itself had been perceived as a form of

que ver (y me lo han dichos muchos de los responsables de esos montajes extranjeros) con la dignidad del vencido; tiene que ver justamente con la memoria o, si quieres, con la segunda muerte *de los muertos, que es el olvido*.' [And what I now think is that, apart from that slightly mythical remembering, the play is not just about the Spanish Civil War, although I was not aware of this when I wrote it. The play is about the dignity of the defeated (I have been told this by the many artists who have staged it abroad); it is about memory, or, if you like, about the *second death of the dead, which occurs when they are forgotten*.] (Sanchis Sinisterra in Vieira and Rojo 2009: 301, my emphasis)

[146] The playwright, in turn, has spoken jokingly of the 'traición textual' [textual betrayal] he observes in versions that excessively 'politicise' Carmela (Sanchis Sinisterra in Vieira and Rojo 2009: 301).

[147] By way of comparison, consider that a successful and concurrent Italian version (1990s) transposed the action to World War II, to a village in Abruzzo occupied by German forces (Martinelli in García Rodríguez 2005: 232).

protest (Mensur 2021).[148] While the protests were occurring, the Actors' Association of Serbia proposed that on 10 December 1996 companies refuse to perform in defiance of the false regime – an act very similar in sentiment to Carmela's refusal to perform her anti-Republican sketch. The Association further suggested that, henceforth, companies read a proclamation on the importance of democracy and free speech before each performance (Milenković 1996). Their recommendation was not a decision to be taken likely: criticism of the regime could destroy a career.[149]



Figure 13: Production still (00:32:50), *Joj, Karmela* (1996), Kult Teatar

During this period (December 1996), Mensur's *¡Ay, Carmela!* was on tour in Kruševac. This was one of the few towns that had not followed the Actors' Association advice, and had kept their theatre open on the 10th of December (Milenković, 'Veliko mesto pored Trstenika', *NIN*, 20 December 1996). This was a clear political decision, indicating that the directors and artists at the helm of the Kruševac theatre supported Milošević. In response, the KULT company artists modified the Association's proposal by reversing its order: first performing *¡Ay, Carmela!,* and only afterwards reading the protest letter. It is possible that had they not made this modification, they would have been left without an audience. A newsclip in *Vreme* from 14 December 1996, entitled *Neprijatnosti* [Trouble], gives an idea of the local atmosphere:

[148] Shortly following the premiere, Mensur was invited to a dinner where, to his surprise, Slobodan Milošević was in attendance. At the end of the evening, Milošević inquired about the production. While nothing was said overtly, Mensur interpreted this event as an attempt to get him to cease staging*¡Ay, Carmela!* (Mensur 2021).

[149] For an example of political retribution, see Mira Furlan's 'A Letter to my Co-Citizens' (1996: 20–24). I will return to Furlan's case in brief.

> Teatar "Kult" je poštovao preporuku glumačkog Saveza. Zbog čitanja proglasa su na gostovanju predstave "Joj Karmela" u Kruševcu doživeli neprijatnost. "Pretpostavljajući da reakcija publike neće biti pozitivna, odlučili smo da prvo odigramo predstavu, pa da tek onda čitamo proglase. Tako je i bilo. U prva tri reda sedeli su funkcioneri, mrko su nas gledali, a ostali su bili prilično neprijatni," kaže Radmila Stojanović, umetnički sekretar "Kulta."
>
> [KULT Theatre respected the Actors' Association recommendation. Problems arose due to their reading of the letter during their guest performance in Kruševac. "We had assumed that the audience reaction to the letter would not be positive, so we chose to first perform the play, and only then read it… Officials sat in the first three rows, watching us with contempt, and the rest were quite unpleasant" states Radmila Stojanović, KULT's Artistic Secretary.] (Ćirić, 'Neprijatnosti', *Vreme*, 14 December 1996)

A review in *NIN* put it more bluntly still: '[Pismo] je pročitao Predrag Ejdus. Upravnicu Jelenu Ivanović umalo nije zadesio slog [Predrag Ejdus read the letter. Jelena Ivanović, the artistic director [of Kruševac theatre], almost had a stroke] (Milenković, 'Veliko mesto pored Trstenika', *NIN*, 20 December 1996).

Despite this political turbulence, the production remained on KULT's repertoire for several seasons. While neither Mensur nor Bojković could confirm the final performance date, and KULT no longer exists as such,[150] Bojković noted that the run went on for a minimum three seasons, with regular performances in Belgrade alongside occasional tours (interview with the author, 2023). A review in the pan-Yugoslav theatrical magazine *Ludus* from June 1998, almost three years after the opening night, confirms both its longevity and the fact that it overlapped with the next version – which would premiere in January 1998.

IV. Carmela in Croatia: A Letter to my Co-Citizens

While Carmela was touring across Serbia, two artists in Croatia found themselves suddenly without work, and would also turn to Sanchis Sinisterra's text for inspiration. These were Gordana Gadžić (1955-) and Ivica Vidović (1939-2011), actors and a married couple from Serbia and Croatia, respectively. Both had been household names in the final quarter of the twentieth century, performing regularly across stage and screen. The onset

[150] It has been replaced by Teatar Vuk, on the same address (Bulevar kralja Aleksandra 77, Belgrade). There is still a space within called 'scena Kult'.

of the war in Croatia irrevocably altered their careers and the couple formed a travelling theatre out of existential and financial necessity. It was there that the next iteration of *¡Ay, Carmela!* would take place, as the inaugural joint production of their newly founded *Teatar Rugantino.* As I will go on to discuss, the staging of this Carmela directly referenced their personal situation, one which must be broadly understood within the shifting attitudes towards so-called 'mixed marriages' in the Yugoslav space during the 1990s. The production also represented a direct challenge to the political behaviour of the Croatian theatrical community, which at this time had become parochial, inward-looking, and hostile towards (perceived) 'outsiders': as Nikolina Židek writes, in the '1990s Croatian cultural institutions favoured only one type of cultural production, with a strong national(ist) mark, and excluded all the others that did not fit into the ideological scheme' (2021: 34).

Statistics about mixed marriages in Yugoslavia are variable and often employed as a political tool, serving at times wildly disparate agendas. In the aftermath of the 1990s, mixed marriages were presented by some sociologists and political scientists as evidence of a pluralistic state that had functioned relatively well until ancient ethnic hatreds latently re-emerged (Buric* 2012: 6-10). To this end, Joroen Smits has demonstrated that rates of inter-marriage fell during the 1980s, falling in line with the social cohesion theory (that high rates of intermarriage suggest a lower likelihood for violence across groups) (Buric 2012: 7; Smits 2010). Although the numbers vary, it is generally accepted that mixed marriages were supported by the state, at least in the first decades of the SFRY, and in some interpretations, were 'believed to facilitate the amalgamation of different nationalities into a unique Yugoslav society' (Le Goff and Giudici 2014: 63).

Fedja Buric has argued that mixed marriages became a 'problem' (a source of national anxiety) in three distinct periods of Yugoslav history: the 1930s, the 1960s, and the 1990s (2012). All the same, the *rate* of mixed marriages remained curiously constant throughout these decades, with estimates hovering between 10 and 13% (Botev 1994). While this number may seem low, the two million Yugoslavs in mixed marriages would nonetheless become an early target of attack as the country disintegrated in the 1990s; performers were no exception. On this period, Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller* writes:

> The first victims of ethnic cleansing have been people who "defy the impossible" (Centlivres and Giordano 1999), whose existence constituted living proof of the

> possibility of living together with the Other: so-called "mixed" or interethnic couples and families, people of mixed parentage. These families […] were now considered doubly disloyal, and often rejected as "others" by one group and as "disloyal" by another, both groups being driven by the ideology of national preference, with the objective of protecting the purity and authenticity of its cultural heritage from the risk of contamination through mixing with the "others". (2000: 197)

Within the realm of the performing arts, there was probably no case of political retribution more disturbing than that of actress Mira Furlan (1955-2022). Furlan, an acclaimed actress originally from Croatia ('the Balkan equivalent of Meryl Streep' [Spelling 1997]), was publicly humiliated and ostracized after continuing to perform in Belgrade following the outbreak of the war. She was called a Serbian whore, blocked from her company repertoire, and tarnished across Croatian media. Furlan's partner, Goran Gajić, was a Serb; this provided further ammunition for her targeting. The mixed-marriage couple eventually left in self-imposed exile to the USA. Although Furlan was able to achieve some success after this move, her career would never completely recover. In Dragan Klaic's words, '[a] generation of theater artists resented nationalism but could not prevent the war, neither as artists nor as citizens; so many of them went with revulsion into exile, and their dispersion mirrored the disintegration of the country' (2009: 519).

The case of Gadžić and Vidović exhibits many similarities, though it received less attention on an international scale (as the two did not leave Yugoslavia). Gadžić moved from Serbia to Croatia full-time in 1992 following the birth of the couple's son; previously, she had been a company member of Belgrade's Boško Buha theatre ('Dobar duh u Ateljeu 212', 13 April 2000, *Danas*, GPA).[151] In the aftermath of the war's outbreak, the pair became the target of a hate campaign instigated due to their cross-national relationship. They were rendered pariahs and effectively, if not explicitly, black-listed from national stages. Vidović, for example, was removed from the repertory cast of the Gavella Theatre, of which he had formed part for twenty-six years as a leading actor. Already in his late fifties at this point, he was not given work and his salary was reduced to that of an entry-level actor (Munjin, 'U ratu smo Ivica i ja preko noći postali nepoželjni', *Portal Novosti*, 1 February 2018; Gadžić 2018: 355). While rehearsing a play in Dubrovnik

[151] Henceforth, I flag documents obtained from Gordana Gadžić's personal archive with the acronym *GPA*. Some of these documents in Gadžić's archive are only partial clips or cut-outs, and as such do not always include the exact date or periodical name. All details from incomplete clips were confirmed in my interview with Gadžić (2021).

in 1992, Gadžić was smeared in local newspapers for 'stealing bread' (money) from Croatian actors, making it clear that her presence was unwelcome (Uzelac, 'Da bismo imali gdje glumiti, osnivali smo vlastiti teatar', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1998, *GPA*). The ongoing harassment was such that eventually she was forced to abandon the project. Over the following decade, she received minimal offers for work, a sharp contrast to the late 1980s, which had been the most productive period of her theatrical career (Bobanović, 'Kroz tragične sudbine glumaca, oni su da bi preživjeli biti prisiljeni služiti', *Nacional*, 1999, *GPA*).

In Sanchis Sinisterra's play, Paulino fails Carmela – he neither hears her, nor protects her – and within the context and atmosphere of Rugantino's production, the theatrical community failed Gadžić and Vidović. As in Serbia, the audience was positioned as an 'implicated' group, though here on both a micro- and macro scale. In a 1998 interview, Gadžić stated that while she could understand the then-hostile reactions from Croatian media to her presence given the political atmosphere of the early 1990s, she would never be able to understand the lack of support from the colleagues she had considered friends (Miletić, 'Vreme je za hrabrost', 1998, *GPA*).[152] By way of comparison, Gadžić cited the February 1993 attack of Irfan Mensur, which had provoked huge waves of support (ibid). Almost twenty years later, she again insisted that it was the theatrical community, not the political one, that failed them:

> Ono što je ostalo trajna trauma je odnos kulturnog miljea, prvenstveno naših kolega iz glumačkog svijeta. Ne mislim tu samo na glumce, već i na druge iz tog miljea. Ta podrška je zauvijek izostala i to je ono što je promijenilo naš život. Nikakva kratkoročna medijska hajka, pa i pojačana političkom podrškom u Dubrovniku, ne bi naš život promijenila i učinila onakvim kakvim je bio. To je, nažalost, priča o ljudima, priča o ljubomori, sujetama, malim ljudskim osobinama, zloči, o onome što u tom teškom povijesnom trenutku izlazi na vidjelo i koje postižu velike "uspjehe".
>
> [The permanent trauma came from what had happened in the cultural sphere, above all with our colleagues from the acting world. I'm not referring here only to actors, but to all those from that environment. Their support was always missing, and this absence changed our lives forever. No media-frenzy, even the Dubrovnik frenzy that was politically supported, could have changed our lives and turned them into what they became. No, unfortunately, this is a story of people, of jealousy, of small human traits, of cruelty, and about what comes to light in difficult historical periods, and what is provoked by a perceived great

[152] This clip does not include a periodical title; see footnote 151.

"success".] ('Što nas je otjeralo iz Dubrovnika?', *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 6 June 2018)[153]

Left with no theatre to house them, the pair founded Teatar Rugantino in 1996, drawing the name from the *commedia de'll arte* mask of the same name (Popović, 'Došao sam na svoju ruku', *Danas*, 15-16 April, undated, *GPA*).[154] Following a monodrama performed by Vidović – Miro Gavran's postmodern *Bit će sve u redu* [Everything will be Alright], written expressly for *Rugatino* (Gadžić 2018: 445) – the couple's first joint production was *¡Ay, Carmela!*. It came to be defining play within the company's history and the one they would eventually designate as 'inaugurating' their theatre. Still, I would like to suggest that Gavran's *Bit će sve u redu* informed their later choice of Sanchis Sinisterra's play.

Miro Gavran (b. 1961) was the first Croat playwright to discuss the topic of forced Serb migration from Croatia, in his 1995 *Deložacija* [Eviction] (Židek 2021: 37), which too featured a mixed marriage (Croat husband and Serbian wife). And like *¡Ay, Carmela!,* Gavran's monodrama *Bit će sve u redu* also focuses on a travelling theatre – though in his play there are seven characters; a director and six actors. One by one, the actors abandon the director, who must go on to play all the characters himself. (Again, this might be seen as a commentary on the prevailing situation and the ostracization the couple were facing – though it should be noted that in Gavran's play, the director is not particularly likeable). Having already established an interest in metatheatre and travelling troupes, *¡Ay, Carmela!* was a logical sophomore production for *Rugantino* (figure 14).

Though the footage of this *¡Ay, Carmela!* has been lost, Gadžić has engaged in rigorous archival work since the play's inception and, in 2018, published a monograph in homage to her husband's life and career, *Hod po rubu, s Ivicom* [Walking with Ivica Along the Edge]. My discussion of the play and its trajectory henceforth is informed by documents provided by Gadžić from her personal archive (cited as *GPA*), her monograph dedicated to Vidović, and an interview we had in 2023. These have been supplemented with the

[153] Compare these words with those in Mira Furlan's aforementioned, *A Letter to my Co-Citizens*. Furlan wrote, from exile: 'I hereby wish to thank my co-citizens who have joined so unreservedly in this small, marginal, and apparently not particularly significant campaign against me. […] Listening to my answering machine, to the incredible quantities of indescribably disgusting messages from my co-citizens, I longed to hear at least one message from a friend. Or not even a friend, a mere acquaintance, a colleague. But there was none. Not a single familiar voice, not a single friend.' (1996: 20).
[154] The name is also a pun on the verb *rugati se* – to play or to poke fun.

unpublished playscript, shared with me by translator Filip Fruk, as well conversations with Fruk and Raponja, the play's director (all 2023).



Figure 14: Poster, *¡Ay, Carmela!,* (1998), Teatar Rugantino

Again, the origin story of this version involved travel, and an element of chance. While in Slovenia, Gadžić and Vidović came across the Serbian newspaper *NIN* – then difficult to find in Croatia (Milošević, 'Zagreb-Beograd, Via Španija,' 2000, *GPA*). The paper included a positive review of Mensur's production of *¡Ay, Carmela!* at Belgrade's KULT Theatre. Intrigued by the play's theme, they contacted Mensur who gave them his blessing to stage their own version, and sent over his translation (Gadžić 2023). Vidović insisted, nonetheless, that Rugantino work from the original source material (ibid). He sourced the Spanish script through the help of the Croatian cultural attaché in Madrid, Ivo Klarić (Munjin, 'Što sam stariji, sve mi je teže glumiti', *Novi list*, 22 March 1993, *GPA*). Gadžić commissioned director Robert Raponja while at Brijuni (Gadžić 2023; Raponja 2023).[155] Raponja, who had previously directed another production of Miro Gavran's *Deložacija* – the aforementioned play about the mixed-marriage couple – at Zagreb's experimental Teatar &TD (1995), agreed. Raponja also suggested that Filip Fruk, a young Hispanist still at university, translate the text. Meanwhile, Vidović commissioned Croatian rock-star Darko Rundek, best-known as the lead singer of the band Haustor, to provide the musical

[155] Brijuni was Tito's private island; it would go on to become the base of Rade Šerbedžija's cult theatre and summer festival, *Ulysses*.

score (ibid).[156] Rundek, who was based in Paris at the time, composed the score from France, though he attended the final few rehearsals in-situ.[157]

It cannot be said that Rundek's collaboration guaranteed the success of Rugantino's *¡Ay, Carmela!,* but it certainly did not hinder it. Like Johnny (Štulić), mentioned in the opening pages of this chapter, Rundek was and remains one of the major figures of the (post-)Yugoslav rock scene. Alongside his band, Haustor, he spearheaded the Yugoslav new-wave movement. Prior to this collaboration, Gadžić had seen his musical score for the play *Ženidba* at Vidović's one-time home, the Gavella Theatre. The score for *¡Ay, Carmela!*, preserved by Gadžić, includes 19 different musical arrangements, many of which were eventually compiled by Rundek for a subsequent album. In Gadžić's retrospective, she underscores that Rundek was a key creative in the process (2018: 451). The success of his hit-song *¡Ay, Carmela!*, discussed later on (pp. 118-122), is indicative of his importance to this production.

The translation process was similar to that recounted by Mensur with his half-brother Hadi Kurich. The work involved close collaboration between Gadžić and Fruk. Fruk provided line-by-line literal translation, while Gadžić would get up, read the lines aloud, and re-work them to sound as natural as possible (Fruk 2023). The unpublished translation provides clues to major revisions made to the text. While references to Spain are here restored (e.g. Belchite, García Lorca), the entire epilogue is reduced to a few sentences.

This omission markedly changes the closing note of the play. In Sanchis Sinisterra's original (and, accordingly, in Mensur's version), Carmela is shot in Act II following her famous refusal to perform a varieté number mocking the Republican flag. In the epilogue, she returns post-mortem, in what is an echo of the play's opening scene. Thereafter, the couple argue about the power of memory. Buffery suggests that in the epilogue 'the culture of forgetting accepted by Paulino in order to survive under Francoism is set against the culture of remembering the past, championed by Carmela, in a world of the dead which […] seems to be the only place where resistance is possible' (2017: 865).

[156] Alongside his musical career, Rundek had a significant history of collaborating with theatres. He first trained to be a director, graduating from Zagreb's Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1992.
[157] Raponja estimates that there were about forty rehearsals before the inaugural production at Zagreb's Vidra theatre in 1998.

Closing with Carmela's death shifts focus from the couple's relationship – which itself functions as an ongoing, dialogic debate on memory – to the physical effects of the war in the here and now.

In Gadžić's book, Croatian playwright Davor Špisić offers an account of what this production symbolised:

> [14. Siječanja 1998] Osnovana je gerilska baza iz koje su se Gadžićeva i Vidović otisnuli na pučinu (nemajući vlastite scene lutalaštvo im je već i logistikom bilo upisano) beskompromisnog stava o tvrdom štavljenju morala i ljudskosti. Igrali su komad o dvoje glumačkih nomada koji se u kaosu španjolskog građanskog rata pokušavaju domoći malene krpice ljudskosti […] Možda jesu formalno pripadali fikcijskim gabaritima španjolskog dramatičara Joséa Sanchisa Sinisterre, ali jasno do bola je bilo da govore o onome što se upravo nama dešavalo.
>
> [(On 14 January 1998)] Gadžić and Vidović established a guerrilla base (given that they had no theatre to call their own, nomadism would always be part of their logistics) from which they set out to fight, out in the open, with an uncompromising stance on morality and human nature. [...] They were performing a play about two nomadic actors who search for a scrape of humanity during the chaos of the Spanish Civil War. Perhaps these characters did formally belong to the fictional world of the Spanish playwright, José Sanchis Sinisterra, but it was painfully clear that it spoke to what was happening to us then.] (Špisić in Gadžić 2018: 450)

As Duška Radosavljević has noted, the Yugoslav conflict was often framed in the news in theatrical terms – e.g. "'a bloody theatre of a war" or a "tragedy of a nation'" (2003: 8). Here, it is instead the war lending its vocabulary to the theatre. The military language employed by Špisić extends the setting of Sanchis Sinisterra's play to the Croatian theatrical reality of the time. Apart from calling Rugantino a 'gerilska baza' [guerrilla base], he titles his essay, *Gerila, umijeće, ljubav: Kako je Rugantino izdržao na barikadama slobode* [Guerillas, art, love: How Rugantino endured on the barricades of freedom] (in Gadžić 2018: 448). The emotional charge of this language aside, it reflects the position in which Vidović and Gadžić found themselves. Without the support of official theatres, they resorted to working independently, in a sense in the style of the guerrilla.

The play would go on to tour for years across Croatia and abroad, in the former Yugoslav republics as well as Austria. Across cities, the reviews were overwhelmingly positive. The play was a 'pun pogodak' [pitch-perfect], 'pravo grafičko remek-delo' [a true graphic masterpiece], 'dirljiva' [moving], the actors 'neodoljivo atraktivni' [irresistibly attractive],

and received 'frenetične aplauze' [frenetic applause].[158] But the most significant cultural effect of their production took place in April 2000, when Rugantino became the first Croatian company to visit Serbia since the onset of the wars.

During a ten-day tour, Gadžić and Vidović performed *¡Ay, Carmela!* to sold-out theatre halls in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Kruševac, Zaječar, Sombor, and Novi Sad. The Belgrade version on 10 April 2000 at the Atelje 212 (two consecutive performances on the same evening; both sold out) was perceived by critics and politicians alike as a major cultural turning-point. The second performance of the evening was followed by a gathering that included the theatre's director, Svetozar Cvetković, and the major actors Ljuba Tadić and Branka Petrić. Members of the Croatian Embassy also attended, including the representative of Foreign Affairs, Andrej Dogan ('Susret Ljube Tadića i Ivice Vidovića', *Novi listi,* 12 April 2000, *GPA*). A review by Željko Hubač in *Danas* articulates the significance of their arrival:

> Dolazak Gordane Gadžić i Ivice Vidovića u beogradski Atelje 212 je nešto iznad požarišnog čina. To je korak, i to hrabar, u pravcu zaboravljanja zla kojim su uporno, i veoma smišljeno, neki nečasni ljudi decenijama trovali ljude sa ovih nesrećnih balkanskih prostora. […]bilo je to zaista izuzetno veče. Kao da se neki dobri duh uselio u salu i na scenu beogradskog Ateljea 212. U trenutku kada se na pozornici pojavio Ivica Vidović, pre no što je progovorio prvu repliku, zaorio se buran i dugotrajan aplauz. Aplauz koji je pokazao duboko poštovanje prema gestu gostiju iz Hrvatske, koji su već nekoliko dana na gostovanju u Srbiji, ali i aplauz koji je pokazao da je velikom broju razumnih ljudi i u Beogradu i u Zagrebu dosta šovinističkog ludila.
>
> [The arrival of Gordana Gadžić and Ivica Vidović to Belgrade's Atelje 212 is more than just a theatrical happening. It is a step, and a brave one, towards moving on from the evil with which some dishonest people persistently and purposefully poisoned our sad Balkan nations. […] it was truly an outstanding evening. It was as though a friendly ghost had moved into the theatre hall and stage of Belgrade's Atelje 212. The very moment Ivica Vidović arrived on stage, before he even uttered a word, a loud and lengthy applause exploded from the halls. This applause reflected the profound respect the audience felt for these guests from Croatia, who have been touring Serbia for a few days already, and it also revealed that a great many sensible people in Belgrade and Zagreb alike have had enough of chauvinistic madness. (Hubač, 'Dobri duh u Ateljeu 212', *Danas*, 13 April 2000, *GPA*)

[158] Reviews from Zagreb (Prpić, 'Uloga po mjeri', 2001, *GPA*), Kragujevac, Serbia (Nikolić, 'Bravo i hvala lijepa!', 11 April 2001, *Ludus*, *GPA*), Belgrade, Serbia (Milosavljević, 'O pozorištu i životu', 14 April 2000, *GPA*), Zagreb (Grgićević, 'Ljubav u ratu', *Večernji list*, 20 January 1998, *GPA*) and Belgrade (Stanivuković, 'Udica je bačena', *NIN*, 20 April 2000, *GPA*), respectively.

The affective use of the term 'friendly ghost' merges the realities of the Spanish play with the Serbian-Croatian context of 2000. In Sanchis Sinisterra's text, Carmela is in effect a ghost; and in Belgrade's Atelje 212, this mixed-marriage couple returned to Serbian stages as though from the dead. Various reviews articulated similar sentiments, often referencing the five-minute applause that followed Vidović's arrival on-stage (Nikolić, 'Bravo i hvala lijepa!', *Ludus*, 11 April 2001, *GPA*; Milosavljević, 'O pozorištu i životu', *Glas javnosti*, 14 April 2000, *GPA*; Ožić Bebek, 'Petominuti aplauz Vidoviću u Beogradu, *Jutarnji list*, 14 April 2000, *GPA*). A Belgrade critic stated that even just a few months prior, the performance would have been inconceivable (Ž.J., 'Maršal okupio društvo', 11 April 2000, *GPA*). Andrej Dogan, in conversation, similarly remarked that the play was much more than a performance (2023). On Vidović's version of Paulino, he stated that he appeared to be playing himself (ibid). This would seem to echo Vidović's own comments, in an interview given in 1998, which hinted at his affinity with the character. In conversation with Bojan Munjin, he said:

> Ovo je priča iz građanskog rata, ali tu glavnu ulogu nema rat, već dvoje nesretnih varijetetskih glumaca, beznačajnih umjetnika, oskudna sjaja, bez političke svijesti koji nastoje preživjeti od svog zanimanja u okolnostima koje su nesklone umjetnosti i životu.
>
> This is a story that occurs during civil war, but war is not the protagonist. Rather, the protagonists are two unhappy varieté actors, unimportant artists, who are totally without a political conscience and who just want to survive, doing what they want to do, in circumstances which are not meant for art nor for life. (Munjin, 'Što sam stariji, sve mi je teže glumiti', *Novi list,* 22 March 1998, *GPA*)

Many interviews noted that Vidović seemed withdrawn, reticent to discuss either his work or the ongoing political situation (Popović, 'Došao sam na svoju ruku', *Danas*, 15-16 April 2000, *GPA*; Nježić, 'Treba se vratiti ljubavi', *Blic*, 12 April 2000, *GPA*). The deeply personal relationship that Vidović and Gadžić had with this play reflected the broader political moment, which sought to tear families (and performers) apart based on ethno-nationalist lines. Gadžić remarked in 2023: 'mi smo kroz priču španjolskog građanskog rata probili u *duh* Hrvatske u tom trenutku' [through the story of the Spanish Civil War, we reached the very core of what was occurring in Croatia at that moment].[159]

[159] Note that *duh* can also be translated as *ghost*, as in the aforementioned news clip (Hubač, 'Dobri duh u Ateljeu 212', *Danas*, 13 April 2000, *GPA*).

The whereabouts of the extant footage of the play remain a mystery. Gadžić estimates that there are at least a few cassette versions housed at various regional theatres, but none of these has responded to her inquiries. Neither Atelje 212 nor the Croatian Embassy was able to offer me leads. Nonetheless, Gadžić's careful archival work (her collection of reviews and news clips), the unpublished text, and the musical score together form the picture of an astonishingly successful production whose impact persisted decades after its final performance in 2005, six years following the premiere of the final, Bosnian version.

This last iteration of the Yugoslav *¡Ay, Carmela!* would take place in Sarajevo, and once again, would be indebted to its predecessor.

V. Sarajevo: Carmela looks ahead

In Sarajevo, ¡*Ay, Carmela!* was to become the longest-running play in contemporary Bosnian history. First staged at the Sarajevo War Theatre on 19 March 1999, the production played for twenty-one years with the original cast: Selma Alispasić (Carmela) and Dragan Jovičić (Paulino). This decades-long run came to an end due to Jovičić's premature death on 6 November 2020 from Covid-19. After the production closed, an exhibition dedicated to the play was opened at Sarajevo's Historijski muzej [Historical Museum] and two documentary videos released, mostly including photographs from their tours. In September 2023, I visited the exhibition and theatre, and spoke with Alispasić and Maja Salkić, SARTR's current Artistic Director. My comments below draw from these encounters, as well as from the filmed version of the play, publicly available via SARTR's online channel. I reconstruct the origins of the production, addressing a few critical gaps in this domain, and then discuss the production's legacy in light of its later dedicated museum space.

The Sarajevo War Theatre [Sarajevski Ratni Teatar], often referred to by its acronym SARTR, was founded on 17 May 1992, a month following the start of the siege, by a group of influential artists from the city, including playwrights, directors, authors, and performers.[160] Doubling as both a performance hall and a literal shelter, SARTR offered

[160] The various founders had met prior to May 1992 to discuss the project, but as 17 May was the date of the first board meeting of all involved, it is cited as its founding date (Hasanović 2020: 362).

a 'location where [audiences] could seek cover while experiencing theatre' (Sohaj 2015: 55). The project began as a collaborative effort between Safet Plakalo and Dubravko Bibanović (Hasanović 2020: 362), with the latter writing SARTR's inaugural, award-winning production, *Skloništе* [Shelter]. Again, this first production – like KULT's *Tamna je noć* and Rugantino's *Bit će sve u redu* – established the theatre's ethos and, retrospectively, illuminates the eventual choice to stage *¡Ay, Carmela!*. Bibanović's play follows two actors, stuck underground in the eponymous shelter, who debate whether or not there is sense in making art during war. (Were it not for *¡Ay, Carmela!, Skloništе* would have been the theatre's most successful production; by 1994 it was performed over ninety times [Sohaj 2015: 108]).

The origins of the 1999 *¡Ay, Carmela!* production in Sarajevo are not publicly available. Despite sharing a director (Raponja) and translator (Fruk), I have been unable any journalistic coverage that references or explains SARTR's relationship with the Rugantino version. From candid conversations with Gadžić, Raponja, Fruk, and Alispasić (all 2023), the following picture emerges.

While Rugantino was touring with *¡Ay, Carmela!,* Safet Plakalo, co-founder and then-artistic director of SARTR, approached Raponja and invited him to direct Sanchis Sinisterra's play in Sarajevo. Raponja agreed, although without consulting Gadžić, Vidović, or Fruk. In effect, Rugantino was unaware of the collaboration. Gadžić discovered that that the adaptation was taking place by chance: Darko Rundek phoned to inform her that SARTR had asked for the rights to his score. Rundek declined on ethical grounds; ultimately SARTR commissioned in-house composer Davor Rocco to arrange the music. Mensur, from KULT, was never contacted, and learned about the Sarajevo version after it had already premiered (Mensur 2021). Over the following six years (1999-2005), Gadžić and Vidović continued to perform their *¡Ay, Carmela!,* in uncomfortable parallel. It is notable that when Teatar Rugantino toured Bosnia in 2000, Sarajevo was not among the cities visited.[161]

These are the awkward origins of the play. For the following two decades, *¡Ay, Carmela!* remained on SARTR's permanent repertoire, both on-site in Sarajevo as well as abroad.

[161] Many years later, when Gadžić eventually saw SARTR's version, th**e** experience was described as unsettling ('ono što sam vidjela na sceni, to su bile moje riječi, moje i Filipove riječi' [what I saw performed on stage, those were my words, Filip's and my words] (interview with the author, 2023).

Alongside regional productions in Bosnia, by the twentieth anniversary in 2019, they had performed across Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Italy, France, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Austria, and the UK (*SARTR* 2019: 19-20). Sanchis Sinisterra attended their performance in Sardinia in November 2000 (*SARTR* 2019: 11-12).[162] Interestingly – and again echoing Rugantino – SARTR's *¡Ay, Carmela!* was the first Bosnian play to visit Serbia in the post-war period, touring to Belgrade's Slavija Theatre in 2002 (Strugar, 'Neodoljiva Karmela', *Večernje novosti*, 12 March 2002).

There is one dramaturgical innovation in this production, however, that prevents it from being a mere copy of Rugantino's version: the introduction of an on-stage Gustavete. This apparently minor change amplifies what might be considered the temporal spheres of implication of the play, shifting focus, I will suggest, to future conflicts. As I noted in brief earlier, Gustavete is Carmela and Paulino's musical helper, or stagehand. Referenced at a handful of points in Sanchis Sinisterra's text, the character does not in fact appear on-stage. (Saura, however, would give the character relative prominence in his 1990 film adaptation). Sanchis Sinisterra's script suggests that the relationship between the protagonists and Gustavete is utilitarian: Carmela and Paulino speak to him when they need things. At select moments of heightened tension, Paulino's exclamations include, for example: ¡Gustavete: prepara la música!' [Gustavete, get the music ready!] (Sanchis Sinisterra 1990: 23) and '¡Gustavete, la marcha!' [Gustavete, play the march!] (23), or Carmela's flat order: 'Tú, Gustavete, a la gramola' [Hey you, Gustavete, go to the record player] (26). In the epilogue, it is implied that the character simply disappears: Paulino enters the stage, and is surprised to be alone (PAULINO: '¿Me oyes? ¿Estás ahí, Gustavete? […] Vaya, hombre: otro que se despide a la francesa… o a la italiana' [Can you hear me? Are you there, Gustavete? […] Damn: another one leaves without saying goodbye]) (35).[163]

In SARTR's production, Gustavete is present (if peripheral) and portrayed as an eerie, haunting witness. In the opening sequence, which traditionally begins with Paulino

[162] Interviews suggest the playwright was not informed of the play's regional history ('cuando acabó la guerra descubrieron, no sé cómo, el texto de ¡Ay, Carmela!' [when the war finished, they found, I don't know how, the *¡Ay, Carmela!* script' (Sanchis Sinisterra in Ríos Carratalá 2005).
[163] 'Despedirse a la francesa' [lit., to leave the French way] is sometimes rendered in English as an 'Irish exit', indicating that someone has left without saying goodbye. Paulino's second remark is a pun, which shifts the Spanish idiom such that it is now 'the Italian way', in reference to the Italian character, Ripamonte (who, in the play, also appears to suddenly leave).

stumbling drunk across the stage, it is Gustavete, here played by actress Meida Šupuk, who is the first to appear.[164] He walks back and forth across the stage, with no apparent aim (*¡Ay, Carmela!* 00:01:30-00:02:15). His body language and facial expressions are forlorn, and he wears an overcoat designed to appear enormously large (the character's vulnerability is further magnified by the actress' youthful appearance, with the cross-gender casting also lending Gustavete a boyish quality). His ghostly presence is reiterated by Paulino's seeming inability to see him: Jovičić, as Paulino, enters the stage drinking from a flask (following Sanchis Sinisterra's stage directions) and ignores Gustavete entirely as the latter cleans up the area, dusting, and lifting objects from the floor. At the end of this introductory, non-verbal sequence, Paulino raises his arm in a Nazi salute, and Gustavete throws a coat over this same arm, as though to obscure the gesture (00:03:12-00:03:30). Only then does Paulino react to Gustavete's presence, angrily throwing the coat back at the helper, who runs away. For the remainder of the play, Gustavete cowers in a corner of the stage, watching silently; his only aural interventions are to provide occasional sound effects with a small harmonica (00:06:00-00:06:05) and to help with the arrangement of a few varieté acts. Generally, Gustavete's musical intrusions puncture Pualino's recollections, and foreground Carmela's arrival on-stage, such that the hum of the harmonica indicates a transition from present to past (flashback). It might seem, then, that the character functions as an extension of Paulino's subconscious.

By the end of the production, however, a strange and unusual transformation takes place: as Carmela revolts, sings *Viva la quinta brigada*, and is shot, Gustavete emerges from the darkness of upstage left. Now lit, he wears a general's uniform (the overcoat is gone) and his loose, beret-like hat has been switched with a miliary visor. His small moustache, though present before, with the new costume now reads as fascist (compare figures 15, 16). Here the epilogue is entirely omitted: the play closes with Carmela raising a defiant clenched fist (following the lyrics from the titular song – 'con el puño en el aire' [with a fist in the air]). As she makes this gesture, Gustavete, behind a prop stage mirror further upstage, raises his own arm in a Nazi salute (1:26:15-1:26:30).

[164] I am referencing here the 2001 filmed version of SARTR's production. Meida Šupuk was later replaced by (male) actor Jasenko Pašić.



Figure 15: Production still (00:02:09), *¡Ay, Carmela!* (2001), SARTR



Figure 16: Production still (01:26:28), *¡Ay, Carmela!* (2001), SARTR

The production's new ending, closing with Carmela's rebellion and death, is a highly politicised rendering of Sanchis Sinisterra's text, portraying the titular character as ideologically driven and therefore arguably flattened into a political symbol. Gustavete becomes a new site of mediation and, from a hermeneutic standpoint, is richer. His transition from perceived victim to perceived perpetrator does not follow an obvious logic. It is evident that Carmela and Paulino treat him poorly; but, is this enough for him to assume a fascist ideology in response, an act of vengeful retaliation? Or is it that Gustavete ultimately sides with the occupiers out of fear for his own life, in a performance that acts as a natural extension of Paulino's own capitulation to the teniente's demands? Neither option is inconceivable.

I do not wish to offer a strict reading of Gustavete's intentions because it seems to me deliberate that these are left ambiguous. Although Raponja's (second) version of *¡Ay, Carmela!* places the protagonist front-and-centre as martyr, the inclusion of this side character complicates its apparent feel-good narrative. More so than in perhaps any other city of the former Yugoslavia, the image of extreme, sudden, and violent ideological pivots would have been immediately recognisable and disturbing to a local public in Sarajevo. While it is generally considered a cliché to speak of the Bosnian capital as some utopic meeting point of East and West, the city was still profoundly multicultural, and as such often perceived as a metonym for Yugoslavia more broadly.[165] But this pluralism

[165] On Sarajevo, its theatrical scene, and affective coverage of the city's multiculturalism, see Jestrovic 2013: 107-114.

would fracture, and turn in on itself, with speed.[166] Note, for example, the temporal dimensions of this excerpt from Slobodan (Boban) Minic's memoir, *Bienvenido a Sarajevo, hermano* [Welcome to Sarajevo, Brother], as the author describes the war's onset:

> [Yo] era joven, lleno de energía y ánimo. […] Sarajevo me parecía una ciudad de *Mil y una noches*. Ahora sé que no lo era del todo. En ella, también vivía una gente que entonces no conocía pero que, *muy pronto*, *en vísperas de los primeros disturbios* y conflictos, mostraron su cara […] También me doy cuenta de que allí vivía gente que "adoraba" a Sarajevo pero que con los *primeros síntomas del peligro* abandonaron la ciudad.
>
> [[I] was young, full of energy and good spirits […] Sarajevo seemed to me like a city out of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Now I know it wasn't all like that. There were people in the city whom I didn't know that the time, but that *very soon*, at the *eve of the first unrest* and conflict, would show their real faces. […] I now also realise that the city was full of people who "adored" Sarajevo, but who at the *very first symptoms of danger* abandoned her.] (2014: 63, my emphasis)

Minic, whose theatrical output in Spain is the subject of Chapter III, here employs speed as a qualifier to describe the violence of incoming warfare, but also to the ease (or apparent ease) with which his co-citizens left his city. Gustavete, in this rendition of *¡Ay, Carmela!*, might be read as a mirror to such immediate ideological shifts. Unlike Ripamonte, positioned somewhere nebulously out in the audience, Gustavete is not an absent, abstract villain. His meek first arrival, relative abuse at the hands of Carmela and Paulino, and general low status all function to awaken compassion in the audience. It is this initial use of pathos that renders his ultimate transformation into an occupying force significantly more disquieting.

I have discussed how in *¡Ay, Carmela!* the audience is positioned as an embodied witness, tasked with alternately assuming the perspective of the fascist teniente and that of the captured soldiers. Within the context of the Croatian and Serbian productions, this slippery oscillation, reminiscent of Rothberg's implicated subject, extends to passivity as a form of violence. In the Belgrade case, this passivity was reinforced by those theatres kept open in tacit support of Milošević's regime, and with Rugantino, by the Croatian artistic community that had done nothing to protect the actor-protagonists, Vidović and

[166] The first violence broke out on 1 March 1992 (the same day as the referendum on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence), when a Serbian Orthodox wedding was attacked; the bridegroom's father, Nikola Gardović, was killed, and the priest injured. The Serbian Democratic Party subsequently barricaded the city, ostensibly to protect the Serbian population. In subsequent weeks there were major protests. On 5 April 1992, the siege formally began.

Gadžić, from systemic abuse. It is striking, however, that in SARTR's version this oscillation is rendered physical and shown on-stage, through the incorporation of this new character whose upraised salute persists even as the play draws to a close. This dramaturgical choice shifts the focus from the dangers of the 'here-and-now' to those of the future. It is a choice that implies that the spectre of fascism will continue to lurk in the shadows if kept unchecked, a danger to which the nation must remain alert. Given that SARTR's version of *¡Ay, Carmela!* emerged several years after the end of the Sarajevo siege, but as Bosnia was still consolidating its post-war identity, this forward-thinking mediation strategy is a lucid one. However, even after the play closed twenty years later, the production's team would continue to employ the past in a generative way, referencing prior nationalist movements to warn of their eventual return. This is best evidenced by the museal space dedicated to the production, formed in the aftermath of its final, 2020 season.

V.i. Carmela as *partizanka*? Commemoration in Sarajevo's Historijski muzej

Across years and cities, SARTR's play moved audiences, many of whom were repeat visitors – one woman claimed to have seen it fourteen times (Alispasić 2023). The play was staged during periods of the Covid-19 pandemic (outdoors), as a mode of boosting morale. When Dragan Jovičić passed away in 2020, *SARTR* was faced with the difficult decision of how to move forward. Although Alispasić was offered the opportunity to continue performing opposite another actor, she declined, finding the idea 'nezamisljivo' [inconceivable] (interview with the author, 2023). In lieu, an exhibition was opened in honour of the production and its history. Located in Sarajevo's Historijski muzej, the exhibit on *¡Ay, Carmela!* expands the conversation surrounding the play to include that of women's resistance more broadly, with particular focus on World War II.

Arranged like a miniature theatre hall, the exhibition reflects the space it commemorates. A visitor finds the space by descending the stairs from the ground atrium, and upon reaching the bottom of the stairs, the colouring of the museum interior changes. The floors and walls turn to black, and the lights dim. On the walls, there are framed archival documents: newspaper reviews, itineraries, performance jubilees. The majority of these were donated by Alispasić, from her personal archives (ibid 2023). Also on view are the costumes and props from the show, hanging on a clothing rack that is encased in glass.

These objects bear testimony to twenty-one years of use: they are frayed and tired – appropriate for the characters themselves. Finally, the front-facing wall contains a video installation which plays two films: first, a documentary collection of photographic stills from the company's years of touring and second, the filmed production itself. It is situated above the major props from the play: the suitcase and the gramophone.

The exhibition is positioned directly opposite the area of the museum dedicated to the history of women's resistance in World War II. Ranging from organisational letters and credos, to objects used in battle such as shotguns of various sizes, the adjacent exhibition offers a detailed history of the Yugoslav *Partizanke* and the AFŽ (Antifašistička fronta žena) [Anti-Fascist Women's Front].[167] The AFŽ was the first of its kind worldwide, with an estimated two million women joining this sub-branch of the CPY [League of Communists of Yugoslavia]. Special attention is given to Mitra Mitrović, founding member of the AFŽ and of the feminist newspaper *Žena danas* [Woman Today]. By placing the exhibition dedicated to *¡Ay, Carmela!* next to that of the Yugoslavia's bravest women, SARTR frames the two as in-dialogue with each other, invoking a radically nostalgic approach to both. This two-way dialogue has been fostered further by Alispasić's frequent allusions, in press, to the importance of Carmela's gender. For example, in a 2017 interview on occasion of *¡Ay, Carmela!*'s tour to the Montenegrin town of Nikšić, Alispasić stated:

> Kada se desila opsada Sarajeva prvi dan su izašle dvije žene na ulicu i povele ljude u proteste. To su Suada Dilberović i Olga Sučić. Nije to džaba žena uradila... i nije džaba i ovdje žena ta koja diže svoj glas protiv tog zla.
>
> [On the first day of the Siege of Sarajevo, two women went out to the streets to protest, bringing others with them. They were Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić. It is not a coincidence that it was women who did it… And it is not a coincidence that here [in the play] it is also a woman who raises her voice against evil.]
>
> (in Mandić, 'Ne dozvoliti da fašizam ponovo vlada', *Vijesti*, 3 December 2019)

Considered to be the first victims of the Siege of Sarajevo, Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić were shot on 5 April 1992 by Serb snipers on the Vrbanja bridge where, earlier in

[167] The following letter from Tito, written in 1942, underscores the attitude toward women: 'Since ever more women demand to join the [partisan] units, we have decided to accept them [...] not only as nurses, but also as fighters. It would be a real disgrace for us to make it impossible for women to fight with a weapon in hand for national liberation' (in Pantelić 2013).

the day, they had joined a larger, multi-ethnic group in an otherwise peaceful anti-war protest (Boerhout 2016: 182). While others were injured during the attack, these two woman – Dilberović, an ethnic Bosnian medical student from Dubrovnik; and Sučić, a Croat-Bosnian civil servant from Sarajevo – were the only fatalities. The Vrbanja bridge was later given a plaque in Suada's honour; and later still renamed in their joint memory, as the Most Suade i Olge [Suada and Olga's Bridge].

It has been argued that multidirectional 'encounters' increase when public discourse surrounding memory fractures: in other words, when there is no clear consensus on 'how and what to remember' (Buffery 2017: 867). Alispasić's reference to Suada and Olga's story, made within the context of the performance of *¡Ay, Carmela!*, illustrates this well. First, the importance of Suada and Olga's joint role in the protests has been contested: although the bridge was eventually renamed in honour of both women – nominally, therefore, a transnational memorial — locals generally know it only as Suada's bridge (Boerhout 2016: 182). Thus, although the official narrative suggests that these 'two young women of different ethnic belonging became symbols of the Sarajevans' defence of their city' (Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic* 2016: 329), in practice the mnemonic politics are ambiguous. Suada – whose name to the native ear sounds Bosnian – entered the cultural consciousness, whereas Olga was remembered as an outsider; or rather, not remembered at all. It was only years later that Olga's name was added to the plaque, following insistence from a local journalist (Boerhout 2016: 183).

In naming both women, and enveloping them into the narrative of Sanchis Sinisterra's play, Alispasić takes an active stance not only against the erasure of Olga's memory, but also against what Adis Maksić terms a reductive 'ethnic conflict paradigm' (2017: 2).[168] In Alispahić's image the women are united first and foremost as women, nationalities aside. By extension, the museal space established by Alispahić in collaboration with Sarajevo's Historijski Muzej transforms the Spanish Carmela into a symbol of women's resistance that traverses eras and countries, whether Partisan volunteers in World War II or peaceful protesters in the 1990s. In light of the ongoing revisionist politics that Bosnians continue

[168] Maksić – a university historian who was present at the protest as a young man – argues that the idealisation of the bridge as the meeting point of two cultures – 'united', as it were – in fact plays into the ethnonationalist paradigm of the very perpetrators of the attack. He writes: 'Implicit in this conceptual framework is the notion of well-bounded ethnic groups…[Olga and Suada] are thus remembered today as a Croat and a Bosniak woman killed by Serbs. Such ethnic labels are an inverse of the antinationalist understanding that led the April 5 protesters to the streets' (2017:2).

to face, the increase of such 'multidirectional encounters' may be seen as a mode of mnemonic resistance. Ultimately, the lines between commemoration and performance are deliberately blurred, to the extent that it is unclear where one ends and the other begins.

VI. Conclusion: *¡Ay, Carmela!* takes to the street(s)

The death of Dragan Jovičić in 2020 marked the end of an era of Yugoslav *¡Ay, Carmela!*'s. His was the last wartime Paulino: Ivica Vidović passed away in 2011, and Predrag Ejdus in 2018. The circumstances of the actors-couples involved, which for so long mirrored the story of the play, have been inverted. Nonetheless, Carmela's presence has persisted in unusual and striking ways in the post-war years. By way of conclusion, I will discuss below a few of these iterations.

In 2012, now-president of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić announced, as part of his nascent election campaign for Belgrade mayor, an initiative called *Beograd na vodi* [Belgrade on Water, or, Belgrade Waterfront]. A joint investment between the Serbian and UAE governments (though the involvement of the latter was not initially disclosed), this 3.5 billion-euro project was to see the complete reconstruction of the area by Belgrade's Sava river, seeing it reconfigured into what would soon be disparagingly termed as the 'Belgrade Dubai': a dystopian Disneyland of sky-reaching hotels, shops, and opulence in the middle of one of Europe's poorest nations (*WorldPopulationReview* 2024). In 2012, the average net-monthly salary in Serbia was 41,558.12 RSD (Daskalovic 2012); at the then-conversion rate of .0072 dinars to 1 pound, this sum represented approximately 299 pounds sterling.[169]

The reaction to this 'megalomaniac project backed by the promise of Abu Dhabi money' (Slavković in Shepard 2016) was swift. By 2014, an organised group of dissenters had formed, under the collective name *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* [We Won't Let Belgrade D(r)own]. Across various years the group organised protests and cultural events. Of note, however,

[169] Furthermore, the site faces (across the river) a former concentration camp. I refer to Sajmište, the Semlin Judenlager concentration camp where 6,500 Jewish women and children were killed, and which later became a detention camp for Yugoslav anti-fascists, partisans, and political prisoners (Ivanković in Iguman and Galway 2024: 497). For an overview of the 'willful neglect' of this site within the specific context of the Belgrade Waterfront development, see Iguman and Galway 2024: 489-504, especially pp. 496-498.

is one particular 'cyclical' event, held on 20 October, Liberation Day. On 20 October 2016, for example, thousands of Serbian citizens (some estimates say up to 20,000) marched through the streets in protest of both the Waterfront development as well as corruption in the government more broadly. As they marched, they sang:

Mi smo protiv ugnjetača
I njihovih pomagača
Legionara i fašista
Ay Carmela Ay Carmela

[We are against the oppressors
And those who help them
Legionnaires and fascists
Ay Carmela, Ay Carmela]

Modelled after 'Viva la quinta brigada'[170] the song is Darko Rundek's – the same version arranged in 1998 for *Teatar Rugantino*, with its lyrics now pointing in further historical directions still: the Spanish Civil War, the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, the corruption cases in contemporary Serbia. It is unclear whether or not the protesters know of its theatrical origins: one academic analysis of the protest mentions, for example, a 'local version' of 'Ay Carmela', with no further contextualisation (Mladenov Jovanović 2019: 6). Perhaps it has suffered the same fate as 'Plava ptica' (see footnote 141). Origins aside, the music evokes, as sociologist-musicologist Ana Hofman puts it, 'the Global left repertoire […] songs that celebrate the fight against class enemies and exploitation, and portray historical and contemporary struggles for workers' rights' (2021: 166). Indeed, in recent years Rundek's song has been employed as an anthem in events as varied as pride

[170] The Spanish song has gone through various permutations, and is alternately known as 'Ay, Manuela', 'El paso/ejército del Ebro, 'Rumba la rumba', and 'Ay, Carmela'. In Luis Díaz Viana's *Canciones populares de la Guerra Civil*, the author attributes its lyrical changes to its popularity (1985: 65-66). The exact origins of its re-appropriation to the Spanish Civil War context and the Republican faction vary, although some attribute the modified lyrics to José Herrera Petere (Díaz Viana 1986: 158). Maryse Bertrand de Muñoz dates the song back to a *copla* sung by guerrilla fighters during Napoleon's invasion of 1808 (2010: 129-130). It was famously covered by Pete Seeger in 1943, alongside Tom Glazer, Bess Hawes, and Baldwin Hawes. Pete Seeger (father of Tom Glazer, of *Radical Nostalgia*) says the song has a 'unique place' in his corpus (Seeger in Glazer 2001: 294). Glazer then suggests: '[i]f a voice can have grain, perhaps certain songs like "Viva La Quince Brigada" can possess something similar. While singing or listening to this march, this martial anthem – a practiced rhythmic artifact of bodily camaraderie and militance – audiences may take in and perform some lingering physical trace of what it meant to go to Spain in the 1930s. People for whom armed combat might be personally anathema are reminded of a passionate time when there were causes worth dying for.' (2001: 294-295).

parades in Podgorica, LGBT+ festivals in Sarajevo, and events organised by the radical leftist Slovenian choir, *Horkestar*.[171]

Outside of activism, the song would have one more afterlife, again related to theatre. In 2013, Belgrade's Atelje 212 and Koper, Slovenia's Gledališče Koper staged a joint and bilingual production of *¡Ay, Carmela!*, with Branislav Trifunović (Paulino) performing in Serbian and Lara Jankovič (Carmela) in Slovenian. Serbian director Kokan Mladenović, referenced previously within the context of Don Juan (p. 10) and the 1993 Yu Fest (p. 53), had suggested the play ten years prior when he was at the helm of Atelje 212 (Šuligoj, 'Ay, Carmela: Lahko govorita isti jezik, a se ne razumeta', *Delo*, 21 February 2013), and after seeing Rugantino's version (interview with the author, 2024).[172] The project was shelved for many years, until it was eventually revived in the 2012-13 season, with Marko Manojlović directing. In an interview given for the Slovenian outlet *Delo*, Katja Pegan, artistic director of Gledališče, stated:

> [Odločitev, da vsak igralec govori v svojem jeziku, je bila posledica spoznanja, da se razumemo, in dediščina prejšnje skupne države. Te možnosti ne bi radi izgubili, ker nas bogati in pomaga odpravljati občutek utesnjenosti. Čas je za rekonstrukcijo ne samo kulturnega prostora, ampak tudi drugih pozitivnih projektov nekdanje Jugoslavije. S Carmelo dokazujemo, da je mogoče izdelati dvojezično predstavo in da je za gledalce lahko še bolj zanimiva, saj odpira nove dimenzije.]
>
> [The decision to have each actor perform in their own language was the result of both the realisation that we understand each other, and the legacy of our shared past. We have the opportunity to understand each other, and we don't want to lose it, because it [bilingualism] is enriching and combats the feeling of being closed-off. It's time to reconstruct not just our joint cultural space, but also the positive projects that came out of the former Yugoslavia. With Carmela, we have demonstrated not only that a bilingual production is possible, but that it can be even more interesting for audiences, as it expands the production's dimensions.] (Šuligoj, 'Ay, Carmela: Lahko govorita isti jezik, a se ne razumeta', *Delo*, 21 February 2013)

In a separate interview, actress Lara Jankovič underscored that volunteers in the Spanish Civil War had come from across the world, and that it was not unimaginable that Carmela

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171 Horkestar also provided the score for the in-person gatherings of the *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* coalition and their protest song (Dragićević Šešić and Matejić 2021: 203–34). In the official video promoting the protests' cause, however, it is Darko Rundek's voice and version that is used in voice-over (Miladinović et al 2016).

172 For Mladenović, the Rugantino version was *the* definitive *¡Ay, Carmela!* (interview with the author, 2024).

and Paulino might be in a mixed marriage ('Lara Jankovič za STA: Umetnik se mora sam odločiti, ali bo ostal zvest svobodi', *Sta Misli*, 24 February 2013). Within the context of a region where language had been historically used as a weapon to fan feelings of nationalism (Bugarski 2001: 69-87), the choice to produce Sanchis Sinisterra's play in a bilingual edition once more highlighted its radical potential within the post-Yugoslav space. It also served to foster relations between Slovenia, the first country to secede from Yugoslavia, and Serbia, the one that never did: two diametrically opposed attitudes to the nation-state.

This cultural influence was cemented on 15 March 2015, when the Slovenian Jankovič participated in a Belgrade-based event commemorating the International Brigades, organised by the veterans themselves under the banner of the *Udruženje Španski borci 1936-1939* [Association of the Spanish Fighters 1936-1939]). Held at Belgrade's *Dom omladine* [Youth centre], the date was chosen in honour of the centenary of the birth of two veterans, Lazar Latinović (b. 15 March 1915) and Lazar Udovički (b. 22 March 1922) ('Umetničko veče: ¡No pasaran! Sećaš li se Španije?', *DOB*, 16 March 2015). Covered widely in local news, the evening included performances by Rade Šerbedžija, Saša Lošić, as well as Lara Jankovič, and was accompanied by a screening of a documentary on the Brigades by filmmaker Ivan Mandić, entitled *Španije njihove mladosti* [Spain of their Youth] (ibid).[173] Among other songs associated with the Spanish Civil War, Jankovič sang *¡Ay, Carmela!* – though here, in a trilingual combination of Spanish, Slovenian, and Serbian.

Fittingly, this commemorative event was titled *Sjećaš li se Španije?* [Do you remember Spain?] – which the reader may remember as a line from Branimir "Johnny" Štulić's song, 'Pavel', mentioned in the opening pages of this chapter. With the volunteers' organisation of *Sjećaš li se Španije?*, it might be said that the relationship between the Brigades and *¡Ay, Carmela!* came full circle. On this evening in 2015, International Brigade veterans in the audience listened to a version of *Viva la quinta brigada* that had returned to the Yugoslav consciousness and cultural imaginary directly due to Sanchis Sinisterra's play.

It is sometimes said that remembering the dead is a way of keeping them alive (Unruh 1983). In Sanchis Sinisterra's play, however, it is the deceased character who has agency:

[173] A play on the title of veteran Lazar Udovički's memoire, *Španija moje mladosti* [Spain of my Youth]. Actor Rade Šerbedžija has a personal connection to Udovički as he is married to his daughter, theatre director, Lenka Udovički

I remembered you, and here I am. Carmela's arrival to Paulino's present leads to a joint re-enactment of the past: a similar re-enactment took place in the former Yugoslavia, precisely as a consequence of Carmela's 'arrival' to local stages. For this to happen, it was crucial that Yugoslav memories of the Spanish Civil War had already travelled intergenerationally. Along with a long history of engagement with Spanish culture, these memories led to the creation of a theatrical institution: twenty-five years of the same play, in three wartime iterations, each speaking to different concerns and aspirations of those involved.

Chapter III.
From Sarajevo to Spain: Staging Autobiographical Travel

I. Introduction

The Siege of Sarajevo (1992-1995), alongside the Yugoslav wars more broadly, provoked analogies in Spanish news coverage of the Spanish Civil War (Hristova-Dijkstra 2016: 89-136), as well as a range of artistic responses, including dramatic works. The earliest stage examples include Itziar Pasqual's *Fuga* [Escape] (1994), Eva Hibernia's *Los días perdidos* [The Lost Days] (1997), and Laila Ripoll's *La ciudad sitiada* [The Besieged City] (also 1997). These plays, predominantly written by women and in a realist idiom, share a common tendency to omit overt mention of Sarajevo, or indeed Yugoslavia (García-Manso 2014: 145-169; Kunz 2021: 345-370). Instead, they are set in geographically nebulous spaces which are then employed as general, non-specific backdrops for gendered violence (ibid).[174] Two twenty-first century productions – *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* (La Conquesta del Pol Sud, Terrassa, 2021) and *GRAD* (Teatro de la Resistencia, Vila-Real, 2020) – stand in notable contrast to this trend and offer a new vantage point from which to explore Spanish theatre about the former Yugoslavia. Inspired by the autobiographies of two Bosnian artists and refugees – Slobodan 'Boban' Minic (b. 1950) and Hadi Kurich (b. 1962), respectively – the productions present a staged form of travelogue, detailing a highly personalised and, by consequence, geographically specific account of displacement.

Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo) and *GRAD* have similar overarching narratives, which (though not all presented in chronological order) depict the following events: 1) a Bosnian artistic director achieves professional success in Sarajevo; 2) the Yugoslav wars begin, and Sarajevo is besieged by Serb paramilitary forces; and 3) the artist leaves Sarajevo for Spain as a refugee and there re-establishes his metier. Neither production follows a linear temporal rubric: both begin in the 1990s only to pivot back and forward several decades, rendering the boundaries between past, present, and future unclear.

The dramaturgical elements of these productions place them within the broader sphere of what has been termed theatre of the real (sometimes, autofiction), but also

[174] Though not one of the plays cited in Kunz's or García-Manso's studies, Teatro de la Resistencia's first production, *Opus Primum: un conte de guerra* (1993) falls in line with this broader trend. I discuss this play later in this chapter.

documentary and autobiographical theatre.[175] These hybrid theatrical genres have several recognisable tendencies, such as the use of documentary footage, autobiographical source subjects, non-professional actors, on-stage cameras and/or projection devices, and a narrative that self-consciously combines fact and fiction. However, although *GRAD* and *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* fall in line with the theatre of the real genre and productively engage with its tenets, I want to suggest here that it is particularly productive to view them as an enacted form of travel writing. Such an interpretative lens provides a framework for exploring the extent to which the autobiographical 'I' on-stage represents an unstable perspective. By unstable, I mean that in narrating a journey, the writer (or indeed on-stage character) is constantly tasked with pivoting between observer and observed, between exposition and interpretation. In this vein, Rob Nixon has suggested that travel writing offers:

> ethnographic and autobiographical possibilities. Because these genres admit[…] rival centers of authority, travel writers are repeatedly confronted with the choice between analyzing the society surveyed and foregrounding their authorial personalities. The presence of two competing foci of interest makes travel literature generally unstable, but it also grants the writer radically different styles of authority. (1992: 67)

By focusing on the observational pivots made by the protagonists in *GRAD* and *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*, I will show that there is a correlation between these oscillations and the memory politics of each production. In both cases – as I have noted above – the characters travel through Bosnia and Spain, presenting what takes the form of an enacted travelogue. In *GRAD*, the voyage to Sarajevo is presented in a ludic form in which the travelling protagonists behave as jesters, echoing those characteristics that the traveller-god, Hermes, shares in common with the trickster (see Introduction, pp. 16-17). Through a superficially playful game that involves direct address and audience participation, the protagonists embolden the viewers into making truth-claims about the on-stage journey. Many of these claims are later shown to be unfounded. Through these interactions, the audience members themselves come to occupy the role of travellers, participating in the construction and mediation of the journey. I will suggest that during this process of

[175] Major figures working within the umbrella of theatre of the real include Lola Arias, Milo Rau, and Rimini Protokol, among others. The documentary theatre of Lola Arias forms a prominent Spanish-language example and emerges within the context of what Jordana Blejmer has termed the 'autofictional turn' in post-dictatorship Argentine literature (2016). The term autofiction is generally considered to have been coined by Serge Doubrovsky (1977), though works that merge reality with fiction, as Nina Longinovic* notes, 'have always existed' (2021: 18).

mediation, the audience gradually – involuntarily, almost imperceptibly – assumes the role of what would be called, in literary terms, an unreliable narrator.

Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo), by contrast, presents an enacted return to Sarajevo as a serious form of mnemonic justice – restitution for the victims of siege – as well as a warning for European communities at-large, with a focus on tensions between Catalan separatists and Spanish nationalists. Sarajevo and Barcelona are textually and visually overlayed, to an extent that it is difficult to separate the two. Rather than offering 'competing foci of interest', here the cities merge into one, singular focus of interest. Through direct address, the audience is again invited to travel alongside those on stage; however, the perspective of the traveller is here not presented as unstable, but rather as one that can be carefully guided. In other words, it might be said that this form of engagement with Sarajevo's history does not engage with the past as a constellation composed of several recollections in dynamic dialogue with each other, but rather as a fixed, but hidden entity, that can either be lit or unlit (remembered or forgotten).

This chapter is composed of two sections in which I discuss the productions individually, though across both I place the treatment of on stage travel into dialogue with the notion of hyper-authenticity as developed by Silvija Jestrovic (2008). Through a focus on the use of direct address, projected video footage, and multilingual dialogue – dramaturgical techniques the productions share – I will demonstrate how the observational pivots made in *GRAD* and *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* reflect their distinct memory politics. Prior to each section, I provide a brief introduction with relevant contextual information on the protagonists' respective autobiographies and the theatre companies that have staged them. In citing the productions, I refer to archival footage that the respective directors shared with me; neither play has been published as a text. I also saw *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* live on 14 July 2022 at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB).

II. Hadi Kurich and Teatro de la Resistencia

Mirhan Kurić (later, Hadi Kurich) was born in 1962 in Niš, Yugoslavia, to Mensur Kurić and Mima Vuković Kurić (a well-known actress). In 1988, at the age of twenty-six, he became the Artistic Director of the Sarajevo National Theatre, where he would remain

in-post until 1992.[176] During his period of tenure, Kurich married actress Ana Kardelis (b. 1960); they would go on to have two sons, Vigor and Stribor.[177] Kurich's paternal half-brother is Irfan Mensur, playwright and director – also director behind the first Serbian staging of *¡Ay, Carmela!* in 1996, which Kurich himself translated.[178] In 1992, shortly after the Siege of Sarajevo began, Kurich and Kardelis left Bosnia for Spain as refugees, bringing with them their sons as well as Kurich's mother, Vuković Kurić. With support from the Valencian government and the major experimental collective Xarxa Teatre,[179] the pair established Teatro de la Resistencia [Theatre of Resistance] in Vila-Real in 1993 (Diago 2016: 46).[180] An early reflection of the director's attitude to the war and national division can be observed in an archived op-ed written for the Yugoslav magazine *Bridges* and later translated into Spanish. He introduces himself as follows:

> I was born in Serbia under the name of Mirhad, out of the marriage of the daughter of an Orthodox priest who was a communist, and a descendant of a Muslim aristocratic family; I myself am married to a Protestant Slovak with whom I used to live in Sarajevo. Who am I then[?...] I am a Yugoslav of a Yugoslavia that no longer exists. ('I still love them all', *LUDUS*, September 1996 [first published February 1994]) [181]

Teatro de la Resistencia's inaugural production, *Opus Primum: un conte de guerra* [Opus primum: a war story] premiered on 15 May 1993, and afterwards toured both nationally and across Europe. It was performed in Bosnian: Kurich has stated that if he were to eventually stage the play in Bosnia, he would do so in Spanish or Catalan (Kurich and Moreno 2021: para. 7-8). The production received excellent reviews in the press, including

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176 Established in 1919, the National in Sarajevo is the oldest (and largest) theatre in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The theatre has 'high symbolic value… [it] represents the central point of development of the Performing Arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina' (Bidžan-Gekić, Gekić, and Nezirović 2017: 321).

177 Both of Kurich's sons have formed part of Teatro de la Resistencia, taking on technical roles such as lighting and set design. Stribor is also a sociologist whose work focuses on theatre and economics: his doctoral thesis, *Artesanía teatral: modelos de creación, organización y condiciones sociolaborales desplegadas en el panorama* (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), employs Teatro de la Resistencia as one of its case studies. See Kuric Kardelis* 2020.

178 For further details, see chapter II, especially p. 94.

179 Xarxa Teatre plays a significant role in the Valencian theatrical landscape. Founded in Vila-Real in 1983, their work falls in line with the experimental shift exemplified by the work of companies such as Els Joglars and Els Comediants. Their productions are large-scale, international, and performed above all in the street (Vilanova Guinot 2007: 19-20).

180 This collaboration between Ana and Hadi represents a shift in attitude, a reaction to the difficult circumstances of displacement. Previously, they had avoided working together. Hadi trained as an actor in Belgrade, but left for Sarajevo in order to forge a career on his own terms (away from his actress mother, and director-actor brother). Ana, in turn, refused to perform in any of Hadi's plays in the Sarajevo National Theatre, so as not to be accused of nepotism (Kuric Kardelis 2020; 'Aplison Producción TV Entrevista a Hadi Kurich', *Apilison*, 11 July 2013).

181 This version of the text was published in a special English of *LUDUS*, the major Yugoslav theatre periodical (*LUDUS: Supplementary English Edition*, September 1996). The original came out in June 1994.

the UK's *Independent* (Isaacs, 'From Yugoslavia with Love and Bullets', 8 May 1995), as well as nascent academic attention in *Catalan Review* (see Battle 1994: 388; Foguet i Boreu 1995a: 207).[182] With *GRAD*, and following twenty years of a theatrical repertoire which has focused heavily on classical productions and adaptations (including *Tartuffe, Hamlet,* and *Don Quixote*), Teatro de la Resistencia returned to the subject of the Yugoslav war for the first time since the 1993 *Opus Primum: un conte de guerra*.

GRAD, whose title means CITY in Bosnian,[183] is a metatheatrical production which shares similarities with José Sanchis Sinisterra's *¡Ay, Carmela!* (1987). It follows two travelling actors that perform during periods of extreme violence, though here the conflict is the Siege of Sarajevo, rather than the Spanish Civil War. The production is largely played out to the audience, with Kurich and Kardelis playing stylised versions of themselves and employing direct address. The production narrates the family's arrival to Spain and includes several brief vignettes: some highlight the difficulties and cultural differences Hadi and Ana encountered upon arrival, and others detail the positive and pleasurable elements of integrating into a new community. There are occasional flashbacks, which take place in Sarajevo in the 1990s. For clarity, I will henceforth refer to the performers as Ana and Hadi when discussing their on-stage personas, and use their last names in reference to their roles as dramaturgs/creators.

Throughout Teatro de la Resistencia's production, the audience is invited to consider the tension between what is as presented as verifiable and what only appears to be so. The members of the public are challenged to question their perception of events and are frequently confronted with unexpected outcomes. During these interactions, farcical undertones and trickery allow for Hadi and Ana to re-claim agency within the context of exile, an event that may be seen as representing an extreme lack of control. The autobiographical account of travel put forth is rendered as inherently dialogic, in which a back-and-forth relationship exists between the protagonists and the community in which they have found themselves. The Kurich family's extensive previous background in

[182] 'Among the great variety of shows presented at Tàrrega, in a high quality celebration, *Opus Primum: un conte de guerra* by Hadi Kurich (ex-director the Centre Dramàtic of Sarajevo) clearly excelled. Performed by the Teatre de la Resistència company, integrated by actors from Bosnia and Castellò, their denouncement of the horrors of war strongly impacted the public […] one of the best shows to be seen at the *Fira de Tàrrega*' (Foguet i Boreu 1995a: 207-208; 1995b: 217).

[183] It is possible that the title is also an allusion to the 1993 play, *GRAD*, directed by Haris Pašović. Performed at the Kamerni Teatar 55, *GRAD* was the first production to premiere in Sarajevo during the siege (see Jestrovic 2013: 129).

theatre, and significant cultural capital, arguably allows them a powerful vantage-point from which to question such social hierarchies.

III. ¿Verdadero o falso? [True or False?]: Hyper-authencity and the audience as mediator

In Silvija Jestrovic's comparative study of Antonio Miró's 2007 catwalk and Cristoph Schlingensief's performance project *Foreigners Out!*, the author proposes the notion of hyper-authenticity as a phenomenon that occurs when the truthfulness of an autobiographically-rooted performance is assessed and calibrated through the expectations, or biases, of the spectators in question (2008: 159-170). While Miró and Schlingensief literally place refugees centre-stage in their two works – for example, by employing asylum seekers as their performers in lieu of professional models (in the case of of Miró) – Jestrovic suggests that the performers' presence is still a 'mediated' one (160), insofar as it is the audience members that impose their preconceived views of what it means to be a refugee, asylum seeker, illegal immigrant, etc., onto those they view on the stage, catwalk, or otherwise. Drawing from Derrida's writing on hospitality, hyper-authenticity is for the author a 'translation strategy of embodying the foreigner through the language of the host' (161) – an act that might be seen as the mirror-image of the autobiographical travel writer who (though without embodying and enacting), writes the host through the language of the foreigner.[184] This does not mean that such productions are abusive or gratuitous; however, it does suggest that the supposedly-centred voices may not be speaking on their own terms. These voices are liable to be used, instead, as mouthpieces of their respective directors' ideologies (160-161). Alluding to Edward Gordon Craig's Übermarionette, Jestrovic writes, for example, that the asylum-seekers in Schlingensief's performance

> became bodies with a marionette-like quality that did not have their own agency but could be manipulated for a particular cause [… Schlingensief] used the exilic body as an artistic device, a metonymic embodiment of the xenophobic approach towards immigrants in a morality play staged for the outside world. (166-167)

[184] Note, for example, that Nixon opens his chapter on travel writing and autobiography with a citation from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Silverado Scuatters* (1883): 'there is no foreign land; it is the traveller only that is foreign' (in Nixon 1992: 66)

Though Jestrovic situates the hyper-authentic as emerging from beyond those spaces traditionally associated with narrative story-telling (e.g. not the realm of theatre and drama), this phenomenon is useful as a litmus-test through which to examine *GRAD*, a production which continuously and consciously subverts audience attempts at mediation.

Driving the production is the notion that the action that transpires on stage, while rooted in the autobiographical, cannot be verified. Events are frequently portrayed as true, only for the audience later to be informed that these have been fabrications. This deliberate obfuscation can first be observed through Kurich's handling of film footage, which is initially presented as an archival document only for its veracity to be brought into question later during the performance. Carol Martin suggests that employing archival materials on stage is a tool used to 'confer legitimacy and a strong feeling of "being there," of the "real thing […] The archive is concrete, historically situated, and relatively permanent; it is material and lasting while theatrical representation is intangible and ephemeral' (2010: 19). For Martin, the danger of this technique is that it allows creators to presuppose a certain neutrality with respect to the narratives they stage. This can result in a production in which what is 'presented [is] not just a version of what happened, but *the* version of what happened' (Martin 2010: 20, emphasis in original). Such a presentation is at odds with the fact that verbatim, documentary, or indeed autobiographical productions are always constructed to a certain extent to fit (and take advantage of) the parameters of a stage (Carlson 1996: 602). *GRAD*, however, problematises notions of the archive as material and permanent: the edges between the supposedly fixed document and the theatrical narrative are continuously blurred.

The production opens with the following tableau: upon a stage empty but for two collapsed figures, shaky archival footage is projected. The footage is of Hadi and Ana's wedding, dated on the lower left of the video as 27 January 1990. The atmosphere in the footage is jovial. The newlyweds are dressed in traditional finery; Hadi sings (quite impressively) a moving Macedonian ballad known as 'Zajdi, zajdi' [Go down, go down]).[185] There is, however, an unusual quality to the footage. The moving image is cut up into several pieces, divided by jagged black lines, suggesting that the footage has been compromised (figures 17, 18) (*GRAD* 00:00:35–00:03:09). It is only when the stage lights

[185] These lyrics are addressed to the sun. It is notable that Hadi chose to sing a Macedonian ballad, a choice which reflects the blend of cultures present at his wedding and in Sarajevo/Yugoslavia more broadly.

are illuminated, three minutes into the video, that it is revealed that the projection backdrop is covered with a mosaic of overlapping white medical uniforms, which themselves create a fragmented image (figure 17) (00:03:10). The video itself has not been compromised, but the backdrop cannot fully reflect it. The flat and disembodied medical uniforms, suggestive of failed humanitarian aid efforts and the lives of those lost during the siege, lend what Mark Fischer would term a 'weird' quality to the footage, or a 'sensation of wrongness' (Fischer 2016: 15) at odds with the general air of celebration.[186] By initially presenting the footage of the wedding as compromised, and only later revealing that it is the medium that distorts, Teatro de la Resistencia begins its process of raising into question the audience's interpretative faculties.



Figure 17: Production still (00:01:30), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia



Figure 18: Production still (00:02:38), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia

[186] For Fischer, the 'weird is constituted by a presence – the presence of *that which does not belong*' (2016: 61).



Figure 19: Production still (00:03:22), *GRAD* (2021), Teatro de la Resistencia

The viewer is presented with two contrasting tonalities: the jubilance of the wedding, and the unnerving effect of the jagged image, which appears violently tattered. At a particularly boisterous moment in the wedding footage – at the crescendo of Hadi's ballad – the film suddenly goes black. A loud gasp is heard, and two collapsed figures at downstage left and right begin to stir. These are Hadi and Ana, delirious and confused. Through sound effects that mimic the sound of shots firing, it is implied that the war has begun.[187] Hadi stumbles over himself, hands held out in front of his body, as though in complete darkness. Ana, similarly, waves a hand in front of her face, but cannot see it. 'Ima li koga ovdje?' [Is there anyone here?'] Hadi screams out, to no response (*GRAD* 00:03:16–03:18). As the two figures continue to struggle, a new projection is revealed: Hadi and Ana on the projected screen, no longer the youths of the wedding video, but their present-self iterations. On screen, they appear solemn and observe the spectacle without emotion. It is soon revealed that their job is to translate. 'Hay alguien allí' [Is anyone there], repeats Hadi on the screen (hereafter Hadi 2), this time in Spanish (00:03:31–03:33). His voice is not inflected upwards. The conversation proceeds, now between Ana, Hadi, and those onscreen: Ana 2, and Hadi 2. They address each other with the formal 'Vi' (equivalent to the Spanish Usted, formal third person singular), underscoring that they do not know, or recognise, each other:

[187] There has also been a jump in time. The Siege of Sarajevo began in April 1992 (and the footage is from 1990).

ANA. Ja!
HADI. Dobar dan!
ANA 2 (*onscreen*). Buenos días.
HADI. Da se predstavim…
HADI 2 (*onscreen*). Mi nombre es…
HADI. Ja sam...
ANA 2 (*onscreen*). No recuerda, ¿verdad?
HADI. Ne. Ne.
ANA 2 (*onscreen*). Yo tampoco recuerdo nada.
HADI 2 (*onscreen*). Pero sabe dónde estamos, ¿no?
ANA. Ne. Ni Vi?
HADI. Probudio sam se. Ne znam da li sam uopšte spavao ili…
ANA. Ja takođe.
ANA 2. (*onscreen*). Quiero decir lo mismo que Usted. No sé nada.
HADI. Šta se vidi sa mesta na kome se Vi nalazite?
ANA. Ništ-
HADI 2 (*onscreen*). No se ve nada.

ANA (*in Bosnian*). Me!
[HADI (*in Bosnian*). Hello!
ANA 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). Hello.
HADI (*in Bosnian*). Let me introduce myself…
HADI 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). My name is…
HADI (*in Bosnian*). I am…
ANA 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). You don't remember, do you?
HADI (*in Bosnian*). No. No.
ANA 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). I don't remember anything either.
HADI 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). But you know where we are, surely?
ANA (*in Bosnian*). No. You don't either?
HADI (*in Bosnian*). I just woke up. I don't know if I've slept at all or if…
ANA (*in Bosnian*). Me too.
ANA 2. I want to say the same. I don't know anything.
HADI (*in Bosnian*). What can be seen from where you are?
ANA (*in Bosnian*). Nothi-
HADI 2 (*in Spanish, onscreen*). Nothing can be seen.] (00:03:37–04:20)

If the play opened with a symbolic union – marriage – what follows can be read as a fracture that operates on multiple levels, both symbolic and literal. The overlapping temporalities and multiple split selves illustrate the identity chaos that emerges from the context of civil war, as alluded to by Kurich in the essay I previously cited. Not only are Ana and Hadi no longer physically together as they were in the initial footage, where they were indeed often in the same frame, they have now also been split into two personas: their Bosnian-speaking selves, and their Spanish iterations. These have different affectations. In Spanish, the two speak clinically, as interpreters removed from the action

on stage. In Bosnian, they are warm, but do not recognise each other, in apparent contradiction with the previous footage.

That *GRAD* opens with two opposing concepts – union and dismemberment; coming together and coming apart – echoes the central historical context, e.g. the breakup of Yugoslavia, the dissolution of the socialist ideal of 'bratstvo i jedinstvo' [Brotherhood and Unity]. Further, the use of archival footage in a play set initially in the former Yugoslavia places the production into a broader conversation concerning the role of wartime media coverage in the public sphere, and how this subject might be broached on stage. The outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia was one of the first – following the Gulf War (1990-1991) – to be covered in real-time, contributing to what has later been termed the spectacle of war viewing; the war becomes a live event not unlike theatre (see Radosavljević 2003: 8). In discussion of media manipulation, Christopher Bennett writes that '[m]edia have arguably been the most destructive weapon in the wars of Yugoslav dissolution […] it is said in the former Yugoslavia that all victims died twice: first on television and then in reality' ('How Yugoslavia's Destroyers Harnessed the Media', *PBS Frontline,* 1998). The extent to which such coverage aided humanitarian responses is, however, unclear. Nik Gowing observes that while '[t]he conventional wisdom is that such vivid immediacy regularly forces some kind of change of policy – especially after horrific events in conflicts like Bosnia', in practice this is not the case: 'real-time television coverage did not, for example, force policies to save the UN Area of Gorazde [sic] from Bosnian Serb bombardment in April 1994' (1994: 5).

The arrival of a bifurcated self via a screen carries interpretive implications, and may be seen as a commentary on the limitations of journalistic war coverage. It is noteworthy that the two videos presented on the stage are of different typologies: one is an archival document, the footage of the wedding; and the other, a fictionalised piece designed for the purposes of the production. The autobiographical 'I' of the performance is made opaque – Hadi and Ana, embodied and on stage, play themselves from thirty years ago; meanwhile, Hadi and Ana, disembodied and on-screen, appear to be playing characters; yet, these characters match their correct ages. That half of the dialogue is unintelligible to what would be a predominantly Spanish-speaking audience complicates matters further: in order to follow the dialogue, the audience must follow what is said on the screen. However, the screened footage is not in fact live-streamed, as it initially appears: there is

a camera on a tripod placed downstage, but it is turned off. In practice, this means that the audience is constantly pivoting in observation: between the 'real' Hadi and Ana (unintelligible, but physically present) and their previously filmed screen-versions (intelligible, but belonging to the past, and it seems – characterised).

The objectivity of the camera – arguably a metonym, in this context, for the war journalist – is a chimera. The audience must observe a simulacrum, rather than the 'real thing', but this does not result in an Baudrillardian hyperreal environment from which the hyper-authentic would naturally emerge. It is not that *GRAD* presents a world where there are only models, but rather that the audience is made acutely aware of the fact that, for their purposes of interpretation (and mediation), they must shift focus – make a perspectival pivot – to the sign instead of its referent.

Hadi and Ana continue to search for each other without luck, calling out repeatedly. When at last they find each other in the darkness, they collapse into each other's arms. They remember snipers, and bombs falling, and Ana screams out for her children. As Ana and Hadi fall to the floor, subtitles appear projected behind the couple: 'Este scenario en el que están Ana y Hadi es su tumbo, su limbo particular. Muertos, nada y nunca más' [The stage on which Ana and Hadi find themselves is their tomb, their very own limbo. They are dead, there is nothing, and nothing more]. (*GRAD* 00:11:55–12:05). As the subtitled slides finish, the pair get up, approach the audience, and tell a harrowing story of how they experienced the siege.[188] Hadi closes:

> HADI. Tiendas saqueadas, barricadas, violencias en las calles, disparos por todos lados…Nosotros salimos pronto de la ciudad, al mismo principio del conflicto. Es difícil de imaginar el modo en que la gente que se quedó consiguió sobrevivir aquello.
>
> [HADI. Looted shops, barricades, violence in the streets, shooting everywhere…We quickly left the city, at the very beginning of the conflict. It is difficult to imagine how those who remained were able to survive all this.] (00:16:35–16:59)

Following a pause, Ana turns to the audience and exclaims exuberantly: 'Esto es teatro!' [This is theatre!] (00:17:01–17:03). Hadi begins to laugh. 'Sí. Las luces pueden cambiar,

[188] This dialogue includes reference to the first peaceful protests in Sarajevo, during which Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić were killed. This specific protest is discussed in Chapter II, see pp. 116-18.

el mobiliario puede cambiar de sitio… lo único que en esta obra no puede cambiar es la trama, porque no la hemos inventado, la hemos vivido. Ocurrió tal como os la vamos contando' [Yes. The lights can change, the set can move… the only thing that cannot change in this play is the plot, because we didn't invent it, we lived it. It all happened just like we are now telling you] (00:17:05–17:32). Kurich's remark falls in line with Hans-Thies Lehmann's notion of the 'irruption of the real' (2006: 99-103). The point of this irruption is not 'the assertion of the real as such […] but the unsettling that occurs through the *undecidability* [of] whether one is dealing with reality or fiction' (2006: 101, emphasis in original). Jenn Stephenson, expanding on Lehmann, writes that

> conventional theatricality arises from the perceptual instigation of a fictional world that is self-contained, ontologically distinct from the surrounding actual world […]. Under the operations of the "irruption of the real," however, this frame is made visible so as to draw attention to its existence and to the constructed nature of its contents, and sometimes more radically to suggest that the frame has been effaced entirely and that the contents of its presentation are not subject to fictionality. (2019: 11)

Notably, however, the protagonists of GRAD do not point towards the narrative frame in order to suggest that their play is 'not subject to fictionality'; rather, the intention here is the opposite. Everything is subject to fictionality. In subsequent sequences, Hadi and Ana actively insist that all their preceding statements are potentially made-up, situating themselves, as it were, 'in a continuous play of roles and mirrors' characteristic of the Pirandellian mode of autobiographical theatre (Pavis 1998: 32). Leaning into the trickster qualities of the traveller, Hadi and Ana go on to fabricate stories and use double-speak in order to achieve an intended reaction; this reaction will depend entirely on the audience's reception of their lies as truths.

Shortly after offering a rapid introduction to the history of Yugoslavia (during which Hadi and Ana put on magician's hats, and Ana points with a wand to a colourful elementary-school level map on the projector), a game begins. This game is presented as 'un concurso… casi telesivo!' [a competition… almost like a TV gameshow!] (*GRAD* 00:29:45–29:48), circling back once more to the notion of war as spectacle. The pair will tell a very personal story, and the audience will have to guess if it is true or false. If they answer correctly, they will win a traditional Yugoslav chocolate, a *bananica*. An early game runs as follows:

> HADI. La chocolatina que veis es la más querida por nosotros porque nos recuerda a nuestra niñez, pero también provoca en nosotros una profunda y dolorosa nostalgia. Es algo que siempre nos recuerda que la verdadera patria, aquella en la que nacimos, en la que vivimos treinta años, en la que nacieron nuestros hijos, está tremendamente lejos. Y a veces… la nostalgia nos puede. [pausa] ¿Verrrrrdadero, o falso?
>
> [HADI. The chocolate bar that you see here is our very favourite, as it reminds us of our childhood. But it also brings about a deep and painful sense of nostalgia. It reminds us, every time, that the true homeland, the one in which we were born, in which we lived for thirty years, in which our children were born, is far, far away. And sometimes… we cannot bear this nostalgia. [pause]. Truuuuuuue, or false?] (00:31:24–32:02)

In the version of the production that was filmed, the audience member chosen by Hadi to respond, at random, classified the statement as 'true', as did many of the others in attendance, evidenced by a show of hands. Ana spins the magic wheel and reveals the answer: the story is false.[189] In this same footage, an audible murmur can be discerned emanating from the public, unclear if laughter, discomfort, or both (00:32:34–32:38).

It worth pausing to consider what is at play when the audience assumes that Hadi and Ana feel incurably nostalgic. This assumption echoes James Baldwin's famous attack on sentimentalism in *Everybody's Protest Novel* (1949). Just as Baldwin criticises the pity lurking underneath Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which he defines as self-satisfied and dishonest, the protagonists of *GRAD* fight against a well-meaning but ultimately paternalistic sentimentalism. Seyla Benhabib's criticism of a humanitarian paradigm that 'reduces refugees to objects of pity and robs them of their political agency' (2018: 6) is here likewise relevant. Lurking underneath the Kurich's disavowal of nostalgia seems to be the implicit statement that they do not wish for sympathy, or what Thalia R. Goldstein and Ellen Winner call a 'function of the fit between the observer and the nature of the other's plight' (2012: 130).[190]

It is by tricking the audience with a relatively banal anecdote – the emotional significance of the chocolate – that Hadi and Ana prime the audience to be suspicious of all the stories that follow. When, moments afterwards, Ana tells a distressing story about how she was

[189] 'Falso, falso, más falso imposible' [False, false, it couldn't be falser if it tried] (*GRAD* 00:32:43–32:46).
[190] I will turn to the difference between sympathy and empathy in brief. In aside, Cecilia Sosa notes a tendency in autofictional Argentine works to 'reject[…] any nostalgic exaltation of the past' (2014: 54), a characteristic this production shares.

separated from Hadi and one of her sons during their escape to Spain, and bombs fell around them, the audience is now distrustful, on edge. The story is classified by the audience as false; this time, it was true, a genuine testimony. The extent to which suspicion – or a sense of betrayal, if indeed trickery might be considered a betrayal – can obscure judgement is particularly notable in the final game, during which Hadi delivers a poignant anecdote about Ana's wedding dress. He shares that the dress was one of the few objects the couple brought with them to Spain, and that if the audience looks closely, they will see that Ana is in fact wearing it on stage. Again, the audience misclassifies the story as false. This mistake is particularly surprising given that during the anecdote, Hadi re-plays the initial wedding footage from the opening scene: the dress is clearly either the same as the one on stage, or an extremely sophisticated replica (one which would arguably be out of place in this relatively low-budget production). In asking the audience to determine the veracity of a story, a new narrative framework is made visible, here one that involves the public. The audience becomes a character in the play, offering an unreliable and confused narrative voice. The paradigm of hyper-authenticity fractures, as this same audience comes to realise the limits to their faculties of interpretation and judgment. The effect is confusing and deliberately destabilising. Through this sequence, the production reveals the consequences of falsifying personal events (which might be more broadly conceived as historical narratives) and how easily this manipulation can be achieved.

It is of note that as the game intensifies, the responses of the audience become increasingly absurd: they consistently misjudge what is plainly evident before their eyes. Having disrupted the apparent societal hierarchy in which the refugee is at the bottom of the proverbial totem-pole, Hadi and Ana re-claim their positions as agents not merely by telling their story, but by displaying their theatrical ingenuity. Rather than insisting their story is true, they reveal instead how easy it is to misconstrue something as false.

With the game finished, Ana and Hadi go on to describe their arrival to Spain in minute detail, now finally joining the audience in pivoting between observer and observed. Once more, the interplay between expectations and reality forms the focus. Hadi explains that the family arrived in Valencia excessively well-dressed, reminding the audience that a natural reaction to leaving one's home forever is to take whatever is of most value. Ana, for example, arrives wearing a nice fur coat. Upon landing, a journalist awaits on the tarmac, preparing a group photograph of the refugees for a Valencian daily. Seeing Ana,

the journalist awkwardly asks her to remove her coat: it doesn't fit, he says, the refugee photo. Similar confusions take place later on, in part instigated by the couple's lack of proficiency in Castilian or Valencian. Hadi and Ana's host-family gifts them a goat, assuming they have come from a rural background. Nobody believes they used to make a living as actors, always reacting as follows: 'pero, ¿qué hacían *de verdad*?' [but what did you both *really* do?].[191]

Hadi and Ana do not present these narratives as grievances nor as value-judgement. What is presented is not an indictment of the class assumptions made by the hosts, a criticism which would replicate the hierarchical structures the protagonists appear to criticise. What is at stake here is transparent communication and a willingness to be proven wrong. This can be understood as the difference between sympathy and empathy (Delgado 2018: 328-329). While sympathy 'erases difference', empathy is, by contrast, 'rooted in a need to listen […] recognizing that others may not think as you do' (Delgado 2018: 328). The audience is neither chastised nor flattered: a third interpretative mode is formed, one in which they can consider themselves as implicated in the narrative and as part of its construction.

Within the context of the narrative structure of the play, these interludes are presented as comedic, the playful tone of the protagonists offering a productive tension with the awkwardness of the stories they relate. The interludes are interspersed with moving, longer narratives that detail the extensive support the family received upon arrival. By the end of the play, the direct-address of the game-show takes a markedly softer and gentler tone. Engaging in a final game of role play, Ana and Hadi interview each other, now intermingling their Spanish with Catalan. This bilingual turn allows the protagonists to portray the linguistic nuances of the Valencian community and, also, to demonstrate their ability to switch languages at will. This switch to bilingualism (really, trilingualism) is an

[191] Literally: what did you both do *in truth*? Hadi and Ana highlight that the assumption that the couple could not make a living as actors was not necessarily a 'classist' one on the part of their hosts, but rather, a reflection of the differences between how performers in Spain and the former Yugoslavia live(d). Hadi notes that, once a Yugoslav actor entered the repertoire of a National Theatre (of which here was one in every city with more than 50,000 people), they effectively became 'funcionarios' [permanent state employees] who lived comfortably with the knowledge that they would have a guaranteed monthly salary and future work (00:52:28-52:40). A similar system in Spain did not (and does not) exist. In this vein, Silvija Jestrovic has discussed how the rich theatrical ecosystem in Sarajevo is not often appreciated abroad – with particular reference to how the international community's over-emphasis on Susan Sontag's *Waiting for Godot* has led to a misunderstanding (a minimisation) of how extensive the theatrical system in Sarajevo was already, before and during the siege (2013: 107-189).

inverse of their roles at the opening of the production, in which they only spoke Bosnian and needed a clinical, screened version of themselves to translate. The audience again plays a role in the creation of the narrative, though now in an extra-diegetic sense, as they are continually reminded of the help the Kurich family received upon arrival. Hadi and Ana explicitly say that none of this (their lives, the play, theatre as livelihood) would have been possible without the Valencian community's significant care and support. In a short trailer for the production, this message is emphasised. Ana speaks directly to camera:

> Mucha gente estaba a nuestro lado. Nos acompañaban a todas horas. Nos llevaron a ver el mar. Nos invitaban a casas particulares para que no nos sintiéramos solos. Los panaderos del pueblo nos regalaban pan. La gente de aquí se volcó con nosotros. Y nosotros nos volcamos con ellos. Ellos dieron, y nosotros damos.
>
> [There were many people on our side. We were accompanied at all times. They took us to see the sea. They invited us to their homes so that we would not feel alone. The local bakers offered us bread. People went out of their way to support us. And we will do the same. They gave, and we give]. (*Canal GVA* 2021)

Echoing closely Federico García Lorca's call to cultural action in his speech 'Medio pan y un libro' [Half a loaf of bread and a book] (1931), in which the author literally refers to bread and literature as forms of sustenance, the Kurich family has transformed the bread it received into theatre, the family's way of giving back to the community. It is notable, in this vein, that the couple's children are also involved behind the scenes: Vigor has provided *GRAD*'s score, and Stribor its tech; both are credited as co-translators.

Kurich employs traditional methods from the genre of autobiographical theatre in order to then subvert them: archival footage is distorted, and audience expectations are shown to be easily manipulable. Intermingling live-stream footage with archival footage, the production emphasises how messages transmitted via media, too, are liable to be twisted to fit ideological frameworks or to confirm already existing biases. The production closes with a series of toasts in which the glasses, Hadi reminds the audience, have been filled with water rather than alcohol ('recordad que esto es teatro' [remember, this is theatre]). However, during these toasts Hadi also details that each glass has been given a single drop of *rakija* [strong liquor – plum brandy] to avoid the bad luck that comes from toasting with water alone. This rakija-water blend, itself a combination of the truthful and the fictive, might be seen as the symbolic core of the production.

IV. Slobodan 'Boban' Minic and La Conquesta del Pol Sud

Like Hadi Kurich, Slobodan Minić (b. 1950), later Boban Minic [sic], was heavily involved in Sarajevo's pre-war cultural scene. Before emigrating, he was the artistic director of the arts and culture section of the metropolis' public radio station, *Radio Sarajevo*. Alongside TV Sarajevo, this is Bosnia's principal news outlet (Hamer 2018: 69); it dates back to 1945 and the liberation of Sarajevo following World War II. As was the case with Kurich, Minic's vocation was intergenerational: he notes, in an early interview, '[g]airebé tots els membres de la meva família són o han estat periodistes' [almost all of my family members are, or have been, journalists] (1995: 10). Minic remained in Sarajevo under siege, maintaining that it was his duty as a citizen to stay. During the siege, he continued to work for Radio Sarajevo despite facing life-threatening circumstances (Minic 2012). It was only when he literally lost his voice due to serious illness in 1994 – his self-denominated 'única arma' [only weapon] – that he left the country for Spain (Minic in Peiró, 'La voz que resistió al sitio de Sarajevo', *El País*, 28 October 2016). In Catalunya, he joined his wife, Dina (also a journalist, for the anti-war newspaper *OSLOBOĐENJE* [Minic 1995: 10]), and their sons, Goran and Boran.[192] Dina, Goran, and Boran, had escaped Sarajevo a year earlier, in December 1993. Upon arrival, the family received help from local organisations, most notably from Catalunya's Gent per le Gent.

Referencing his mother, father, and wife, Hadi Kurich had in 1994 said that his multicultural heritage underscored that he was 'a Yugoslav of a Yugoslavia that no longer exists' (see p. 126). This statement shares striking parallels with one made by Minic a year later, in 1995:

> La Dina i jo formem un matrimoni mixte [sic], jo sóc fill de montenegrí i musulmana i la Dina és filla de musulmans, un dels meus cunyats és croata i l'altre és serbi. Crec que els matrimonis mixtes de tota l'ex-Iugoslàvia no tenen lloc on anar a raure. S'ha volgut dividir el país en diferents ètnies, i què som nosaltres? On hem d'anar a viure?
>
> [Dina and I are in a mixed-marriage, I am the son of a Montenegrin [read Orthodox Christian] and of a Muslim, and Dina is the daughter of Muslims, one of my cousins is Croatian and another is Serbian. I think those in mixed marriages have no place in the former Yugoslavia. They tried to divide the country by ethnic groups, and what are we? Where can we go?] (1995: 10)

[192] The parallels between Kurich and Minic's lives, and between their subsequent (almost contemporaneous) productions, are striking, but that they both gave their sons rhyming names – a practice that is not all usual in the region – particularly and almost unbelievably so.

Re-establishing himself in L'Escala (Girona), Minic has since become a public figure in Spain, giving hundreds of lectures and interviews about his experience of war and exile (Minic 2012: 229). His 2012 autobiography *Bienvenido a Sarajevo, hermano* [Welcome to Sarajevo, Brother] – written in Castilian and published by Icaria – was the inspiration for *Good Night, Sarajevo* (2014), a Spanish-produced documentary film about Minic's life, co-directed by Edu Marín and Olivier Algora.[193] He has been profiled in newspapers such as *El País, El Diario,* and *ABC,* and was for three years a regular columnist for *El Periódico de Catalunya* (Minic 2012: 32). Across many of his interviews, he has highlighted what he perceives as similarities between the rise of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia and Spain. A multidirectional framework can be observed in his memoir, in which he calls Sarajevo 'the second Toledo' (2012: 48) – a comparison that has also appeared in Juan Goytisolo's work (Ribeiro Menezes 2006).

While Minic is credited as a co-creator of *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*, the company behind the production is a separate and autonomous entity. Co-founded in Barcelona by Catalan Carles Fernández Guía (director, playwright) and Argentine Eugenio Szwarcer (designer) in 2010, La Conquesta del Pol Sud [The Conquest of the South Pole][194] is a Catalan company that has demonstrated since its establishment a commitment to addressing histories of conflict through their productions. Their repertoire has explored, amongst other difficult histories and conflicts, the *desaparecidos* [disappeared] in Argentina (*Claudia*, 2015) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (*Nadia*, 2014), as well as contemporary issues such as transgender rights in France (*Raphaëlle*, 2018) and immigration and homelessness in Spain (*Suburbana*, 2019) (*La Conquesta del Pol Sud* 2024).[195]

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[193] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the documentary; however, I want to flag that it is deftly produced and would be a fruitful object of future study. Filmed in black and white, Marín and Algora create an intimate portrait of return, frequently employing close-ups and hand-held shots that never exoticize the subject. Minic's voice-over narration in the film is composed of excerpts from his autobiography, further emphasising that it is his perspective and words that are relayed, not those of the directors.

[194] In reference to Manfred Karge's stage play (1988), which itself plays with the politics of travel and the imaginaries behind it.

[195] There is an interesting tension between La Conquesta del Pol Sud's central aim of covering and staging conflict, and Teatro de la Resistencia's deliberate choice to avoid doing so. A press release for *GRAD* reads as follows: 'Desde el estreno de OPUS PRIMUM [sic] no hemos vuelto a tocar el tema de la guerra. La principal razón que nos llevó a tomar esta decisión fue el temor a un posible encasillamiento profesional y personal. Muchos de los artistas procedentes de zonas en conflicto se ven abocados a hablar solo y exclusivamente de la guerra durante toda su carrera profesional y nosotros quisimos evitarlo. Queríamos respirar libremente y dejar la guerra atrás para no sentirnos encadenados a su nefasta existencia.' [We have not touched the topic of war since the premiere of OPUS PRIMUM [sic]. The principal reason that led us to take this decision was the fear of a possible professional and personal typecasting. Many artists who come from areas of conflict find themselves obligated to talk only and

However, La Conquesta del Pol Sud's production about Minic's life, *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*, was the result of chance: in 2018, Fernández Guía attended a talk at the Sala Beckett (Barcelona) about refugees crossing the Mediterranean, which was to be the subject matter of his next play. Minic was involved in the event, giving a talk. Drawn in by Minic's presentation, Fernández Guía decided to change topics, switching to the Siege of Sarajevo. Following a difficult rehearsal period which predominantly took place during the Covid-19 pandemic – at one point, no three of the main actors were in the same room at the same time – *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* premiered on 29 July 2021 (Interview with the author, 2022).

While not based on either *Bienvenido a Sarajevo, hermano*, or *Good Night Sarajevo*, the production shares with the autobiography and documentary the aim of narrating Minic's trajectory from cultural journalist to refugee, and back again. In the play, the narrative begins in the 1990s and ends at the time of staging (the present day), though flashbacks are, as in *GRAD*, interspersed throughout. Many of the people who appear in Minic's memoir are referenced in dialogue or appear in video footage shown on stage. However, in the production, two new characters are also added: Marc, a young Catalan actor, and Azra, a young Bosnian refugee who escaped Srebrenica as an infant with her mother, arriving then to Spain. Boban's extended family likewise makes a virtual appearance. It is continually signposted that all play themselves (not versions of themselves). Such a framing arguably 'renders the status of a performer problematic, for people become signs of themselves' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in Jestrovic 2008: 167) – an idea I will return to in brief.

The entire play takes place in front of a digital screen. As the characters speak, the enormous screen behind them plays projected images and videos that reflect (mirror) their words. Considerable focus is given to the Catalan secession movement and the political climate within Spain; these are topics absent from Minic's autobiography and the later documentary film. The production has a sleek and minimalist design, with Boban's interjections taking place on the projected screen via live-stream: unlike Azra and Marc, he never appears onstage in-person. The play had a second run in 2022, at the CCCB as part of Barcelona's annual Grec Festival. Unlike *GRAD*, *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*

exclusively about the war, throughout their whole careers, and that is what we wanted to avoid. We wanted to breathe freely and leave the war behind so that we would not find ourselves chained to its horrible existence.] (Kurich and Kardelis 2021).

emphatically insists on the veracity of its story, frequently highlighting its narrative frame not in order to suggest that reality is itself a 'play of mirrors', but that the production is not at all subject to fictionality.

V. Deifying authenticity

It has been argued that documentary theatre often employs a technique understood as the 'big reveal', in which (what appear to be) characters reveal towards the end of a production either a familial connection to those they have portrayed on stage, or that they themselves are the person behind the character in question (Wake 2015: 123; Martin 2013). *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* establishes autobiographical connections from its outset, in what might be seen as a sort of anti-reveal. Each character's arrival onto the stage opens with a biographical introduction; these biographical notes are ones that can be quickly verified in the accompanying production dossier. Marc, for example, arrives and states: 'Jo em dic Marc Soler Rull. Tinc 22 anys i soc actor.' [My name is Marc. I'm 22 years old and I am an actor.] (*Mivion* 00:03:19–03:22). Similarly, Azra opens:

> AZRA: Em dic Azra Suljic. He nascut a Sarajevo, però fa molt de temps que visc a Sant Celoni, des de petita. I de fet la meva família no és de Sarajevo, és de Srebrenica. Suposo que us sona.
>
> [AZRA: My name is Azra Suljic. I was born in Sarajevo, but I've been living in Sant Celoni, since I was young. And in fact, my family isn't from Sarajevo, but from Srebrenica. I guess you've heard of it]. (00:49:57–50:09).

Reference to readily available (auto)biography is employed to underscore that what the viewer is experiencing is verifiable. By extension, references to the narrative frame suggest that the scaffolding of the production will be laid bare for all to see – Marc states, for example:

> Tot va començar un dia que el Carles em truca, i em diu que juntament amb l'Eugenio han anat un parell de cops a Bòsnia perquè estaven fent un espectacle que tractava sobre l'ex-Iugoslàvia. [...] M'ha dit, 'Escolta, que estem fent un espectacle de teatre documental' i jo vaig dir, 'Guau, que interessant! No havia sentit parlar mai del teatre documental.
>
> [It all began one day when Carles rang, telling me that he and Eugenio had gone to Bosnia a few times to prepare a play about the Former Yugoslavia. [...] He said,

> 'Listen, we're making a piece of documentary theatre' and I said, 'Wow, that's interesting! I had never heard of documentary theatre'.] (00:03:37–04:06)

It is not clear where Marc-the-actor ends, and Marc-the-performer begins; it appears to be suggested that they are one and the same. Yet, on the slippages between actor and persona that occur in autobiographical theatre, Marvin Carlson writes:

> [a]utobiographical performance at first glance seems to deny the traditional operations of mimesis and to de-problematize the relations between actor, character, and story, but in fact the machinery of representation guarantees that these relations continue to operate in important, even if less direct ways. Both narrative and narrator are constructions. […] The role the actor now plays is a role which she claims as her own, but it remains a role, still deeply involved in both mimesis and representation. (1996: 602; 604)

Carlson notes that since the 1970s, these 'slippages' have been a source of anxiety for makers of autobiographical theatre, which in turn has led to an extreme self-reflexivity within the genre. This manifests itself by characters frequently pointing out that they are (indeed) characters, and by making constant 'references to the process and the paradoxes of "constructing" and "performing" autobiographical material' (605).

But while the repeated claim 'esto es teatro' in GRAD falls in line with this phenomenon; the explicit narrative frame in *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* is not here concerned with testing the limits of truth and representation. Rather, the phone-call cited above – the interaction between the actor, Marc, and the director, Carles – presents the production's inner workings as transparent, like an open watch, presumably to emphasise its relation to the real. Marc shares, for example, what the director tells him about the role: 'haurias de fer de tu' [you would have to play yourself] (*Mivion* 00:04:08–04:12). The fact that there is audience; that the audience is mediating what occurs on stage; that *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*, after all, is a play – is not dealt with anxiously (interrogated or problematised), but instead, glossed over.

Martin writes that '[t]oday's theatre of the real both acknowledges a positivist faith in empirical reality and underscores an epistemological crisis in knowing truth' (2013: 14). Curiously, *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)*'s conflation of empirical reality and the 'truthfulness' of what it relays appears at odds with the epistemological doubts inherent to the genre itself and, indeed, with those of the production's very own protagonist. In Boban's opening

words, he states: 'Durante toda mi vida, he intentado responder a una pregunta. […] La pregunta es: ¿en qué consiste eso que llamamos *la verdad?*' [Throughout my whole life, I've been trying to answer a single question […] The question is: what is that which we call the truth?] (*Mivion* 00:07:25–07:36). As a response to this question, *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* goes on to frame truth as a question of attention: who is remembered versus who is not; what news is covered versus what news is ignored. This is a message that is again related overtly. Marc shares with the audience that, after becoming involved in the production, he has started to ask ponder: 'En què consisteix la història? […] Quines coses ens han explicat? I, sobretot, quines no?' (00:06:16-00:06:25) [What does history consist of? What have we been taught? And, above all, what has been omitted?].[196] The question is rhetorical – the audience is not tasked with responding.

Alongside the use of direct address and self-referential comments, multimedia is employed as a third method to heighten a sense of the real within the piece. This is most evident through the decision to relay Boban's interjections via live-stream. Given that Boban's livelihood in Sarajevo came from an audio-only medium, this is a striking choice. Susan J. Douglas observes that for those who grew up in an age where radio was the dominant media form,

> [l]istening to radio was like being a child again, having stories read to you and being expected to have – and use – a vivid imagination. And what radio listeners miss most are these, their supple, agile, bygone imaginations. They miss their role in completing the picture […] They miss the mental acting, the engagement, the do-it-yourself nature of radio listening. […] When people sigh about radio, they are yearning for a mass medium that stimulated the imagination instead of stunting it (1999: 4).

This is not at all the effect in this production, where the picture is literally completed, a symbolically fitting choice given the attitude towards mnemonic 'uncovering' – shining a light on difficult pasts – that the production takes throughout. Minic joins the production from L'Escala, in a relatively small studio adorned with newspaper articles, again underscoring the documentary nature of the piece and subtly alluding to journalism as a revelatory practice. The mechanisation behind the live stream is available for all to

[196] This echoes the mood of the documentary form in general. For Derek Paget, the move towards documentary forms across genres 'was part of a "faith in facts", a belief that the world could be made better through information' (2009: 227).

observe: Boban speaks into a microphone, wearing a headset with numerous wires that are attached to a sound device.

While the live stream is not always projected while Boban is speaking, his voice is almost always accompanied by moving images that illustrate what he is saying. Early in the performance, Azra and Marc sit across from each other and listen to an old recording from the *Mivion* radio station, which Boban translates to Spanish. As he greets his (radio) audience and states that 140 days have passed since the start of the siege, the projected image on the screen changes from war-torn Sarajevo to a clip from the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. While the clip is not given a subtitle, it is immediately recognisable due to the iconic image of the flaming arrow from the opening ceremony. It is, Boban states, the day after the Sarajevo library was burnt (25-26 August 1992).

While this is a minor temporal anachronism – the games began in July of that year, ending on 9 August – placing the Barcelona Olympics into a direct dialogue with the Siege of Sarajevo highlights further the multidirectional approach the production takes to transnational memory. It should be noted that this approach is itself rooted in a historical connection: Barcelona and Sarajevo began a formal relationship of support in the wake of the death of Catalan journalist and photographer Jordi Pujol Puente, who had been covering the Sarajevo siege until he was killed by a mortar on 17 May 1992. According to Eric Huack, colleague and friend of Pujol Puente, his death 'was a crucial factor in making Catalans feel that the war was also *theirs*' (Huack in Gascón Barbera and Vladisavljevic* 2020, my emphasis). Barcelona would go on to add an 11th district to its existing ten – the Sarajevo district (Martín-Díaz 2021: 5).

On an aesthetic level, moreover, the production juxtaposes two images with radically different affects. Boban describes Sarajevo's library burning to cinder, an act of immense cultural violence. As he speaks and describes these flames, a different sort of fire is shown – one symbolising global union and solidarity; even optimism.[197] Boban's role in the production, then, is to act as a historical guide, but as a guide he does not just move in

[197] The city of Barcelona sent aid to Sarajevo over the following three years and, later, helped Sarajevo restore its destroyed Olympic Pavilion from the Winter games of 1984 ('Solidarity with Sarajevo', *International Olympic Committee*, 11 June 2019 and 'Barcelona 1992', *International Olympic Committee*, 22 July 2022). Barcelona and Sarajevo at one point considered a joint bid for the 2030 Olympics (Barker, 'Spanish and Bosnian Olympic officials meet at Beijing 2022 to discuss Barcelona 2030 bid', *Inside the Games*, 14 February 2022).

one chronological direction. Like the travel-writer constantly shifting perspectives between internal memories and their new surrounding environments, Boban's dialogue pivots frequently from past to present and from Sarajevo to Barcelona. However, while the audience here notes these pivots, they do not form part of their construction – the audience travels, but in a guided form and through a prepared road.

Meanwhile, Azra's role in the play, broadly conceived, is to insist on the importance of historical memory, to offer personal testimony, and to enlighten Marc, although here, unlike in *GRAD*, there is no satiric edge to this pedagogic endeavour. She speaks to Marc and to the audience in Catalan, occasionally incorporating a few sentences in Bosnian. Standing in front of the projector, she describes the Srebrenica genocide of July 1995, one of the greatest atrocities of the Yugoslav wars, during which the Bosnian Serb army massacred at least 7,475 individuals (Brunborg, Lyngstad, and Urdal 2003: 229). She speaks of the loss of male members of her family, and of the sexual violence and the humiliation endured by the women who survived. Marc then asks her, in what is perhaps the most unbelievable moment in the entire production, why it is important to relay this story:

> MARC. Per que es important aquesta historia per tu?
> AZRA. Per fer presents al que no hi son. Fer-los present de manera que la seva memoria no se esbaixi.
>
> [MARC. Why is (telling) this story important to you?
> AZRA. To make present those who are not here. To make them present in such a way that their memory will not be erased.] (00:59:09-00:59:15)

Shortly following Azra's testimony, two new figures join the scene, now via a pre-recorded projection. These are Minic's sons, Goran and Boran (Borci). As the former speaks and shares his support for Catalan independence, the footage blurs and is replaced with masses waving Spanish flags. The new visual is dated as Palencia, 2019.[198] Goran's audio and the video are accompanied by a low chiming of a bell, barely perceptible, repeated in even intervals as though a metronome. While faint, it is notable that this same sound had been emitted thirty minutes prior, as Boban recounted the death of Josip Broz Tito, the beginnings of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, and the country's

[198] A province located in Castilla y León.

subsequent collapse.[199] As Goran speaks and the bell continues to chime, the frame expands, revealing in the footage a banner that reads 'ESPAÑA SIEMPRE' [Spain Forever] – the platform (motto) of ultra-right-wing party, Vox. The footage quickly then switches once more, now to Barcelona and the 2019 riots, evoking within this context the subsequent sudden curbs on calls for independence in Catalunya. Flames from the riots fill the screen, echoing the previous images of the Sarajevo library.

The repetitive chiming of the bell evokes the sense of a ticking clock or of a countdown.[200] Through the repeated extradiegetic sound, an implicit connection between the two events is posited. The deliberate repetition of (nearly imperceptible) background sounds alongside changing media can be considered an example of psychological priming. Priming refers to a change in behaviour or perception caused by exposure to parallel stimuli unnoticed by the subject in question. Priming can result in an unconsciously formed connection between two (or more) seemingly unrelated objects, feelings, or events.[201] Within the realm of this production, the chime employed as background audio for the civil war in Yugoslavia primes the audience to associate the sound with impending war. Employing the chime again during the video footage of the protests in Catalunya completes the circle.

These dramaturgical decisions should be contextualised within the tense, post-2017 political climate in Catalunya. While the Catalan independence movement has a long-history, tensions have steadily increased in the last decades, culminating in the referendum held on 1 October 2017 (known informally as 1-O). The referendum and subsequent declaration of independence, neither of which were recognised as legitimate by the central Spanish government led by Mariano Rajoy, then-Prime Minister (2011-2018), culminated in the arrests of high-profile Catalan politicians, as well as to the political exile of the President of Catalunya, Carles Puigdemont (to Belgium). What followed was seen, both within and beyond Spain, as a major constitutional crisis, with general strikes and mass

[199] In this early scene, Azra and Marc dance to rock music as Boban recounts positive memories from Yugoslavia: he references strong passports and freedom of movement, excellent healthcare and education, an economic power that rivalled that of Japan, workers' rights, and cultural diversity. As soon as Tito's death is announced, the metronome begins and the music slowly fades out.
[200] This ticking might also be read as evoking Ernest Hemingway's tolling bells in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), which themselves are drawn from John Donne's Meditation XVII in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. The bells are funereal and imply that death is near.
[201] Behavioural scientists have shown that priming affects decision-making and can cause both positive and negative associations (North, Hardgreaves, and McKendrick 1997; Yeoh and North 2010; Hsu and Chen 2019).

protests that continued into late 2019. It is significant that La Conquesta del Pol Sud began preparation for *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* in 2019, against this political backdrop.

At several points in the production, the characters express that independence is vital for Catalunya if Spain is to avoid the violence of the former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia specifically. These statements are made by Boban, Azra, Marc, and Boban's family. Given that Marc and Azra on-stage (and Boban behind the screen) are credited as co-creators of the production (alongside La Conquesta del Pol Sud), *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* arguably avoids the pitfalls identified by Jestrovic in her discussion of *Foreigners Out!,* wherein performers became ideological mouthpieces. In the context Jestrovic describes, 'the subversions of asylum identities were limited, since the people in the container were not in control of the performance' (2008: 166).

Still, and when watching the production live, I found it difficult to shake the sense that Boban, as both character and source inspiration, felt oddly removed from the play his life-story had inspired. Though technically almost-seamless, his disembodied presence via the digital screen– while hardly comparable to Schlingensief's cage – gave his testimony a sense of mediated spectacle. On the night I attended, there was a glitch in the live stream precisely at the play's close, meaning Boban and his wife missed the audience's applause. After some technical fumbling, the image was restored. For the first time, I felt here the irruption of the real – the machinery of representation inadvertently highlighted.

VI. Conclusion

In these pages I have explored two productions with major parallels in their themes and source material, paying particular attention to how their use of direct address, video footage, and narrative framing activates distinct forms of audience mediation. In their mode of engaging with the relationship between travel and memory, the productions might be seen as following opposite approaches. *GRAD* works towards establishing a process of self-reflection, positioning the audience as fellow travellers: the audience's observational pivots are then destabilised, shown to result in frequent misinterpretations. The act of mediation, inherent to the process of travel, is shown to be constant and multi-perspectival, dialogical and dynamic.

Mivion engages with enacted travel as a form of mnemonic justice, emphasising that certain pasts are privileged over others in such a way that creates the risk of history repeating itself. Crucially, by overlaying visuals of Sarajevo and Barcelona, the production makes observational pivots *on behalf of* its audience. This approach leads to a fruitful, multidirectional engagement with the past, but it is also one that does not make of the audience an active traveller in its exploration.

When these productions premiered, they were outliers: previously, Spanish playwrights writing on the subject of Yugoslavia had preferred to avoid overt mention of the country in their works. Instead, Yugoslavia was typically rendered as a nowhereland, a generalisable moral desert in which the most depraved of human actions could take place. This phenomenon is observable even in the case of Teatro de la Resistencia's aforementioned inaugural production, *Opus Primum: un conte de guerra* of 1993.

By employing autobiographical accounts of Bosnian refugees who travelled to Spain as source material, *GRAD* and *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* arguably heralded a new trend. Since their respective premiers, the productions have been joined by several works that adopt a similar approach. In 2023, director Joan Arqué premiered Anna Maria Ricart's new play *Hay alguien en el bosque* [There is someone in the forest] in the Teatro de la Abadía (Madrid). Here, the performers relayed the testimonies of (now-adult) Bosnian children who were given up for adoption in Spain; they were the children of raped Bosnian women. In this production, footage of the Siege of Sarajevo was again portrayed on a screen that gave way intermittently to scenes from the Barcelona Olympic games of 1992. In 2024, a play loosely based on Clara Usón's *La hija del este* [The Daughter of the East] was performed in Barcelona. *La filla de l'est* (title in Catalan) takes the life of Ana Mladić as source material. The daughter of Bosnian war criminal Ratko Mladić, Ana Mladić committed suicide at the age twenty-three, in act that was perceived as a reaction to her father's political history. *Donde el bosque se espesa* [Where the Forest Thickens] of 2017, the subject of the next chapter, delves deeply into Yugoslavia's history, focusing not only on comparisons between twenty-first century tensions in Spain and the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, but on a broader historical constellation that includes Croatian fascist movements during World War II and the history of the disappeared under Franco.

However, *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* and *GRAD* remain unique within this landscape insofar as their protagonists are portrayed by the exiled subjects themselves. As such, the productions sit uneasily between theatre of the real and something more akin to the performance 'event' described by Jestrovic, the natural home of the hyper-authentic. The 'paradox of hyper-authenticity', as described by the author, is that the authenticity of the marginalised subject is mediated by the spectator; I have shown how these productions deal with this paradox in distinct ways. *GRAD* emphasises the potential cracks in the audience's mediation strategies, adopting a bouffon-like approach that envelops the public into the spectacle and makes them part of a greater farce. *Mivion (Ràdio Sarajevo)* calls attention to its narrative frame to point towards authenticity (as broadly conceived) and transparency, but with its sophisticated technological apparatus, stylish set design, and poeticised testimony, its invisible 'machinery' is arguably of a higher magnitude than that employed by *GRAD*. Like the 'rival centres of authority' and 'competing foci of interest,' referenced by Rob Nixon in his discussion of travel writing, both productions engage with the instability of the traveller's perspective. One production opts to expose this perspective's instability and thereby embrace its chaos, and the other responds by providing an apparent solution, a meticulously crafted road.

CHAPTER IV.
Shifting Spaces: Travel and Transformation in *Donde el bosque se espesa* (2017)

'You are not just travelling across space; you are altering it a little, moving it on.'

- Doreen Massey

I. Introduction

Doreen Massey's quote, cited above, is the opening gambit to her article honouring the work of sociologist Stuart Hall. In the piece ('Travelling Thoughts'), Massey narrates a journey between London and Milton Keyes, but also between Jamaica and Manchester, to show how space does not 'sit still' as one travels (2000: 225-232). Thousands of years ago, Heraclites made a similar point with his story of the river.[202] In this chapter, I will be looking at how transnational spaces shift and expand in tandem with the movements of Charlatana, a travelling character in *Donde el bosque se espesa* [Where the Forest Thickens] (2017), an EU-funded production in which the legacies of ultra-nationalist movements in Spain and the former Yugoslavia literally meet (in the form of their descendants). Co-authored and co-directed by Laila Ripoll and Mariano Llorente, the production follows the collapse of a nuclear family (Bosnian father, Zoran; Spanish mother, Antonia; and their daughter, Ana) in the aftermath of two major discoveries: first, that Antonia's grandfather was not a Spanish anti-communist, but an Italian fascist with Croatian heritage; and second, that Zoran is not a Bosnian refugee, but a Bosnian Serb war criminal.

I put forth two central arguments in this chapter, one specific to the production and one that can be extrapolated to other theatrical analyses. The first is that extant academic scholarship on the play has neglected the role of Charlatana, focusing instead on the more obvious transformation-hamartia of Zoran, who is presented at the start of the production as a meek, doting father and, at the end, as an irremediable murderer. By shifting focus to Charlatana, I address this gap and demonstrate that this character's constant role-play opens a complex space for memory mediation, and one which directly implicates the audience. I further show that the characteristics of her tavern (her apparent home) allow for explicit links to be made between Francisco Franco and Ante Pavelić, and between Spain's Valley of the Fallen and Croatian Nazi camps from World War II.

[202] 'It is impossible to step into the same river twice'. For a discussion of the numerous interpretations and translations of Heraclites' statement, see Narecki 2012: 66-67.

My second and broader point is that the production shifts from a realist to postdramatic mode as Charlatana travels through[203] space. Following Jeanette Malkin, I show that this postmodern physical vocabulary is what allows Charlatana to embody a productive, awkward, and liminal position that renders it impossible to categorise (in ethical terms) her relationship to the violence occurring on-stage. In discussing these stylistic transitions, I occasionally support my arguments with references to Polish theatre of the post-war period along with academic criticism on the subject, as these offer a framework for an understanding of the production's visual language. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore fully the ways in which Ripoll and Llorente engage, particularly, with Tadeusz Kantor's legacy, these brief allusions will offer some clarity on the dramaturgical choices made by the directors, and amplify the space of discussion for future studies.[204]

II. Historical Context: The Valley of the Fallen

On 24 October 2019, Francisco Franco's remains were exhumed from El Valle de los Caídos [The Valley of the Fallen] and moved to the Mingorrubio cemetery in El Pardo.[205] An event that would go on to be covered globally, the exhumation took place within the larger context of Spain's so-called memory boom and the post-2007 years.[206] Although the result of decades of work by activists, politicians, journalists, and academics, the decision to exhume was ultimately contentious: it was met with fierce criticism within Spain, particularly from right and far-right political parties.[207] The day of the exhumation saw protesters gather at Mingorrubio, members of whom included devotees of the *Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco* (FNFF), a propaganda association and archive dedicated to the preservation of Franco's memory (Ferrándiz 2022: 221). While the FNFF might be considered extremist but fringe, its general viewpoint is not: the results of opinion polls demonstrated a consistent and significant divide among the Spanish public. An October 2019 poll by *El mundo* placed the figures as 43% in favour of exhumation

[203] Massey criticises the formulation of travelling *across* space, noting that this adverb implies that space is a material 'surface' and not, as the author conceives it, as a 'contemporaneity of trajectories' which are in constant dialogue (2000: 228).
[204] For an analysis of Kantor's legacy in Spain more broadly, see the work of Julia Nawrot (2016; 2018).
[205] Later renamed El Valle de Cuelgamuros [Valley of Cuelgamuros].
[206] Though the memory-boom can be traced back to the late 1990s (Labanyi 2007, 2009; Boyd 2008), 2007 marked the year of the Historical Memory Law (Law 52/2007) which, itself contentious, provoked a new round of debates surrounding the politics of exhumation.
[207] Vox president Santiago Abascal used evocative and emotionally charged language, accusing the PSOE of a campaign designed to defile the dead and dig up old hatred (Carvajal 2019b). Ironically, the event itself drew criticism even from those in favour of exhumation, with journalist Antonio Maestre terming it 'un día de la vergüenza' [a day of shame] due to the pro-Francoist insignia and behaviour permitted and televised (Maestre 2019).

and 32.5 against (Carvajal 2019a); meanwhile, *El español* tracked opinions over a six-month period (July 2018 - January 2019) and revealed figures in the range of 46.3 to 48.9 (in favour) and 30.6 to 34.7 (against) (Ramírez 2019a). A later poll in *El español*, much closer to the day of exhumation, revealed 'un empate […] casi absoluto' [an almost absolute tie] with the respective figures at 41.9 and 42.1% (Ramírez 2019b). The votes fell in line with political parties, with 82.1% of (far-left) Unidos Podemos voters in support of exhumation, compared to only 7.9% of Vox voters (Pascual 2019).[208]

The context of the Valley is as follows: constructed over two decades (1941-1959), the site was formally presented by Franco as a resting place for victims on both sides of the Civil War. In practice, the manual work was largely undertaken by Republican prisoners of war; many of these prisoners perished during the building process.[209] In relocating victims, mass graves across Spain were systematically dug out by officials and later moved to the Valley crypts; historiographers have estimated that over 33,000 bodies were moved (Ferrándiz 2022: 214). Located in El Escorial, a town on the outskirts of Madrid, it is a site of epic proportions and structured alongside the natural inclination of the mountain, positioned as though emerging from nature itself.[210] Over the basilica towers a 150 metre tall Holy Cross, the largest in the world.

The presence of a de facto mausoleum to Franco in this space has been perceived as an injustice. The decision to exhume can therefore be understood as a critical shift not only in Spain's attitude towards its own recent history, but also as an act that re-signifies the mnemonic role of the Valley itself (Goldberger 2022: 232-244). However – and here I turn to the transnational entanglements which form the core of this thesis – the new site of Franco's body is not without its own complicated associations. Apart from his wife, Carmen Polo, the company in which Franco now finds himself at Mingorrubio includes Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo (1891-1961) and his errant son, Ramfis Trujillo (1929-1969). Mingorrubio is not, however, the only contested burial site in Madrid. In nearby San Isidro lies Ante Pavelić (1889-1959), the ustaša [ultranationalist] leader of the Croatian

[208] I have focused here on opinion polls of the general, voting-age public in Spain. For an in-depth study of poll results divided by political parties, see Gardiner 2022: 25-43.
[209] The official figure of casualties has been the subject of debate and of revisionism. There is no consensus on the exact number, which ranges from fourteen to the thousands (Hepworth 2014: 468).
[210] Escorial has a long relationship with the Spanish Empire and its monarchy. The town is the home of the Escorial Palace and monastery, which dates back to the sixteenth century and was constructed by mandate of Felipe II [Philip the Second] over a period of twenty years (Ibaretta 2023: 263). By extension, the Valley of the Fallen was seen by some as 'Franco's Escorial' (Clark in Fuentes Vega 2017: 83).

Nazi puppet-state, Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (NDH) [Independent State of Croatia]. Pavelić's brutality towards Serbs, Jews, and Roma was infamously of such extreme nature that even German forces recoiled (Gumz 1998: 39).

Located in the oldest cemetery in the capital city, Pavelić's grave is a 'potent site of Ustasa memory' [sic] and frequently visited by Croatian NDH sympathisers (Walton 2021). It is regularly cleaned and covered in bouquets; these rituals can be understood as memory acts that both 'appeal to continuity' and are 'active in the reproduction of memory' (Hallam and Hockey 2017: 57). The behaviour of these anonymous mourners leaves behind a pristine 'sacred space' (Chidester and Linenthal in Wright 2005: 54) that stands in stark contrast to Pavelić's bygone estate in present-day Croatia.[211] On the latter, Jeremy Walton writes:

> […] I visited the ruins of his official residence, Villa Rebar, on the slopes of the Medvednica mountain north of Zagreb. It rots anonymously at the end of the unmarked dirt road, inhabited only by racist graffiti and a hodgepodge of litter: broken DVDs, condom wrappers, beer bottles. (2021)[212]

As Xosé Núñez Seixas notes, the burial sites of dictators are 'extremely malleable as objects of public and private remembrance […] susceptible to being turned into places where nostalgists, admirers, and "dark tourists" can meet' (2021). But unlike Trujillo, whose only serious ideology was *trujillismo*, his own deification (Krohn-Hansen 2005: 101), Pavelić and Franco were politically united and their historical paths intermingled. It was thanks to the Vatican-sanctioned ratlines that Pavelić was first able to escape to Argentina in 1948 and, later, to settle down quietly in Madrid in 1959, a city in which he would be 'guaranteed a measure of safety by the Franco regime' (Levenda 2012).[213] While the organised activities of the FNFF cannot be compared to fringe actors (possibly tourists?) visiting Pavelić's tomb in Madrid, it is clear that both San Isidro and Mingrorrubio have been re-signified as memory sites of the far right. The historic

[211] In her analysis of the role that cemeteries and graves play in memory formation, Elizabethada Wright notes that a sacred space 'produces meaning [… they] are places where power relations are both reinforced and resisted' (2005: 54).
[212] This is not to say that glorification of Pavelić is non-existent in Croatia. The most glaring examples are the regular services to commemorate his death, held in churches in Zagreb and Split (see Hajdari 2017). However, and given the focus on space in this chapter, I here maintain a distinction between behaviours at burial sites/tombs and commemorative practices held independently or away from such spaces (e.g. in churches).
[213] Pavelić had survived an assassination attempt in 1957 in Argentina, by Serb Blagoje Jovović, hence the search for a new 'safe haven'.

associations between both leaders – 'Caudillo' and 'Poglavnik' [equivalent honorifics] – raise complex questions about the legacies of collaboration between Spaniard and Croat fascists in the second quarter of the twentieth century, and the ratlines which connected Europe with Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. In comparison with the infamous route via Genoa, it is often forgotten that Madrid constituted a major neofascist hub and connecting point to ratlines that led to Latin America (del Hierro 2021: 171-194).[214]

Pavelić's tomb has not escaped media attention. Largely pursued by journalist Pablo de Llano, the author has published several extended pieces not only on Pavelić' legacy, but also that of his daughter, Višnja (de Llano 2019; 2020). Višnja Pavelić lived in relative obscurity in Madrid until her death in 2015; in the final years of her life she went on the record to defend her father's actions, with the caveat that these interviews remain unpublished while she was still alive (de Llano 2020).[215] Višnja Pavelić's disturbing comments reached an audience just as a further memory debate was growing within Spain, which in this case concerned how to collectively handle the memories of perpetrators within the context of mass grave exhumation (Ferrándiz and Hristova 2021: 39-67).

The ghosts of perpetrators, and the question of how their immediate families and descendants can grapple with their memory, form major motifs in *Donde el bosque se espesa*.[216] Laila Ripoll and Mariano Llorente's production can be seen as exploring what Kathleen Stafford terms 'perpetrator postmemory' (2014: 2), an expansion of Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. Intervening specifically within the context of Holocaust memory, Hirsch focuses on the belated memorial lacunae inherited by the 'generation after' (the descendants of survivors) of those affected by mass trauma. Postmemory, for Hirsch, 'characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor

[214] It is worth noting that both Videla and Pinochet took inspiration from Franco in avoiding sanctions for human rights violations (Delgado 2015: 184)

[215] Višnja Pavelić has an inverse counterpart in Ana Mladić, the daughter of Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladić. Ana committed suicide at the age of 23, and it has long been hypothesised that this was in reaction to discovering the extent of her father's actions during the war. Mladić's life was fictionalised in Clara Usón's 2012 novel, *La hija del este* [The Daughter of the East].

[216] I refer to both the script and filmed production in this chapter, and when citing abbreviate both to *DBE*. In order to distinguish between the references, I cite using page numbers to denote the former (eg *DBE*: 5), and a time stamp to denote the latter (eg *DBE*: 0:07:36). The year of both is 2018.

re-created' (1996: 662). Crucially, the subject experiences 'a sense of belatedness and disconnection' (663). Stafford posits that a similar absence can be observed in the descendants of perpetrators. However, the treatment of such problematic memories has not been a frequent endeavour in Spanish Civil War novels,[217] nor in activist work:

> While many children and grandchildren of Franco's victims have participated in postmemorial work in recent years, it has not been a high priority for the offspring of Spanish Civil War perpetrators of both right and left persuasions. This is understandable, of course: the iniquitous past of one's parents or grandparents is not often the subject of quest. An ethical mandate to recuperate the memory of the crimes of ones' grandparents is not very strong in most of the Spanish population, or the entire human race for that matter. (2014: 6)

While this remark may have once been equally applicable to the Spanish stage (see Floeck and García Martínez 2011: 105), recent productions show a thematic shift, with playwrights and directors such as Antonio Álamaro, Pedro Álvarez Ossorio, Juan Mayorga, and Lluís Pasqual all turning to narratives where perpetrators play a central, not peripheral, role (Hernando Vázquez 2018: 116-17; Monah 2019: 31-39). This choice has not always been met without criticism (Delgado 2018: 331-332). *Donde el bosque se espesa* can be seen as part of this broader theatrical trend. Like Stafford's central point of study, Andrés Trapiello's novel *Ayer no más* [Yesterday No More] (2012), the production places the perspective of perpetrators and their descendants centre-stage.

III. *Donde el bosque se espesa*

Staged by Spanish theatre company Mimicón[218] and with support of a Horizon 2020 grant, *UNREST*: *Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe*, *Donde el bosque se espesa* had its first performance in Móstoles' *Teatro del Bosque* on 22 June 2017.[219]

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[217] Note the exception of Javier Cercas' 2019 *El monarca de las sombras* [The Monarch of Shadows / Lord of All the Dead (trans. by Anne McLean 2019)].

[218] The company is known for bringing avant-garde European theatre tendencies into their work as well as for staging traumatic memory across various geographical contexts.

[219] *UNREST* received just under 2.5 million euros in EU government funding for the period 2016-2019 (Cordis Europa 2016) and the central objective of the project was to pursue how agonistic memory might be employed in public discourse as a more productive form of addressing collective memory than other prominent modes, such as antagonistic memory. The partner institutes included UK's University of Bath, Aarhus University (Denmark), as well as cultural centres in Spain, Poland, and Germany. Laila Ripoll is a logical choice of collaborator within this transnational context: one of the original 1991 group founders of theatre company Mimicón, Ripoll has since become one of the foremost playwrights and directors tacking difficult memories on the contemporary Spanish scene (Rodríguez Solás 2018). Within her corpus, the Yugoslav wars are not a new subject, having already appeared, if obliquely, in *La ciudad sitiada* [The Besieged City] (1997). Her very first work, it marked 'un antes y un después' [a before and after] in

The production explores what the grant holders refer to as agonistic memory: 'a mode of remembering that brings social and political conflict to the fore' (González Martín and Hansen 2021: 151). It does so through the portrayal of a mixed-marriage couple (Spanish wife Antonia, and Bosnian husband Zoran) that comes under turmoil due to the discovery of the latter's ambiguous past, revealed in photographs and letters left behind by Antonia's recently deceased mother. Presented as a sort of detective-thriller, the production plays heavily with those motifs frequently found in theatre and film about the Spanish Civil War: blindness as a metaphor for an unwillingness to see (read: acknowledge) the past, metaphorical ghosts in the closet presented as literal ghosts – in the sense that the dead come alive – and the Pandora's box and its inevitable opening.[220] If the tropes are familiar, Mimicón's originality resides in the heavily intermingled presentation of the Spanish and Yugoslav civil wars. Moving away from the potentially flattening narratives of comparison and 'dangerous analogies' that can be found in political discourse (Krastev 2009: 32-35),[221] Mimicón presents these conflicts as literally mixed through bloodlines.[222] In this way, it avoids simile and moves instead into the realm of metaphor. Within the reality of the play, families affected by the Spanish Civil War are not like those affected by the Yugoslav wars, they are the one and same.

her career (Ripoll in Katona 2015: 153). Similarly, the treatment of the Spanish Civil War remains a frequent subject across many of her works, including in the plays which together form the *Trilogía de la memoría* [Memory Trilogy] (2001-2010) and *El triángulo azul* [The Blue Triangle] (2014). *Donde el bosque se espesa* premiered on 22 June 2017, only a year into *UNREST*'s activities. A filmed version was submitted to the 2018 Goya Awards and put up for consideration in nineteen categories (though it was not shortlisted for any). Nonetheless, the play was well-received in reviews and a published edition released in 2018, with prologues by Fernando Ferrándiz (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicias) and Emilio Silva (Asociación de la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica) [Spanish National Research Council and Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory], respectively.

[220] The poster contains the image of two hands holding a closed box. The surtitle, 'Algo del pasado y de Europa duerme dentro de la caja, y ahora la caja va a despertar' [There is something from the past and from Europe sleeping inside this box, and now the box is going to wake up], clearly alludes to Hesiod's Pandora. In Francisco Ferrándiz' prologue to the published playtext, he also discusses the 'caja de Pandora' [Pandora's box] as a central starting point in Mimicón's dramaturgical process (*DBE*: 8).

[221] Ivan Krastev focuses his analysis on comparisons between conflicts in the EU and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but his points are relevant beyond this context. For an example of the potential confusions that can arise from political analogies specifically comparing Spain and the Balkans, see Alison Ribeiro de Menezes' discussion of Juan Goytisolo's metaphors in *Cuaderno de Sarajevo* (2006: 219-231, especially 223-226).

[222] Cecilia Sosa has written on the dangers of mnemonic (and political) traditions that privilege bloodlines above all else, employing theatrical trends in Argentina as case studies (see 2012, especially 135-146). In a different context, *Donde el bosque se espesa*'s emphasis on bloodlines might be seen as reactionary or even essentialist. However, the transnational quality of the play's complex web of familial connections expands, rather than limits, what Sosa terms the 'bloodline framework' (2012: 139) – by blurring transnational boundaries and family ties, all characters have a stake in the memory discourse. This includes Charlatana, whose provenance remains unknown.

As Lars August Fodstat notes, theatrical paratexts such as playbills form a variety of functions; they can 'inform, guide, motivate, provoke or confuse […t]he text and layout works as a source of first impression, framing and contextualizing the visible and audible sense impressions [sic] that constitute the theatrical performance' (2006: 151, 157). Here, the paratexts form an incomplete picture. Throughout and in culmination of the grant, members of *UNREST* published an array of materials outlining the results of their research and *Donde el bosque se espesa*'s reception. Mimicón's pedagogical package and playbill, as well as *UNREST*'s academic publications on the play, foreground the historical context of the production and explore audience reception across various contexts (González Martín 2020: 159-174; González Martín and Lauge Hansen 2021: 149-178). However, in privileging the overt and heavy-handed representation of the production's central 'perpetrator', Zoran, these publications ignore a complex and mnemonically ambiguous space, that of the tavern-come-Hell inhabited by Charlatana, the production's antagonist and self-styled host.

Charlatana is the most volatile traveller of the play: she moves between life and death, between the Spanish and Serbo-Croatian languages, between the twenty-first century and the 1990s and, further back, to World War II. It is only in Charlatana's tavern where direct address is employed, collapsing the boundary between the characters and the public. Charlatana's world can be viewed both as an Augéan non-lieu as well as a resting point for historical perpetrators and victims alike, with echoes of The Valley of the Fallen, Mingorrubio, and San Isidro (note that Pavelić himself appears as a character). This spatial and ethical blurriness provides a compelling baseline from which to problematise the perpetrator and victim binary – ostensibly the central aim of the production (González Martín 2020: 159) and even of *UNREST* itself (Cento Bull, Lauge Hansen, and Colom-González 2021: 33-34). Yet, and despite appearing in twelve of the production's thirty-two scenes, Charlatana's role is not mentioned in Diana González Martin and Hans Lauge Hansen's critical synopsis of the play (2021: 152-153) nor in any of *UNREST*'s interviews conducted with participants (ibid: 156-173). By way of comparison, Zoran's name appears 78 times in González Martin and Lauge Hansen's chapter (2021: 149-178). Charlatana is likewise absent from the plot summary provided in the online playbill given by the Teatro Español, where the production toured in 2018. In the company's separate pedagogical pack, available on the *UNREST* website, her ontological status is reduced to a dream ('the pub [sic] exists only in Antonia's imagination' [González Martin 2019: 7]). Ironically,

in a play concerned with the erasure of memory, a central character – and the only one explicitly shown to have experienced wartime sexual violence – is erased.[223]

This chapter addresses this gap and thus expands the remit of the existing research on this play – I refer here to both the published script and filmed version (both 2018). Following a focus on Charlatana's dual role as perpetrator/victim, I posit that by extension the tavern itself becomes a space for transcultural negotiation. As a space for such negotiation, the references to Jasenovac of World War II and Sarajevo of the 1990s refract memories of the Spanish Civil War, recent exhumation projects, and Franco's regime more broadly. Unlike the rather neat descent from beloved father to irremediable perpetrator exemplified by Zoran, or the heavy symbolism of the blind Antonia journeying towards sight as she learns more about her past, Charlatana's tavern is not a place for such clean-cut distinctions or metaphors. What she offers instead is a palimpsestic view of memory, one in which 'repetitions and similarities across time disturb the singularity of the event' and create a 'temporality no longer contained by a historical telos' (Silverman 2015: 47).

IV. Movement and the establishment of liminal spaces

Apart from the scenes in the tavern, which move aggressively between different temporal zones and are interspersed throughout the production, the 'domestic plot' (my terminology, i.e. what occurs in the domestic space) is chronological and proceeds as follows: Spanish Antonia and Bosnian Zoran live happily together with their young daughter, Ana. When the play opens, Antonia's mother, Emiliana, has just passed away, leaving behind a box filled with unusual objects. These objects include letters and photographs of unknown origins. This small inheritance is shared by Antonia and her sister, Isabel; the sisters are not on speaking terms and Isabel does not wish to explore the meaning behind the objects. Prodded by her daughter, Antonia begins to investigate the photographs, compelling her and Ana to embark on a trip whose stops will include destinations of the present (Rome, Lourdes) and of the past (Mauthausen, Jasenovac). During this trip, mother and daughter discover that Zoran is not in fact a Bosnian refugee

[223] Apart from those articles written by the UNREST team, at present there is only one other full-length article on *Donde el bosque se espesa*, by Miriam García Villalba (2020: 223-241). The analysis is weak and confused – Ante Pavelić, for example, is referred to as 'un soldado polaco' [a Polish soldier] (2020: 226; 230).

from Sarajevo, but a Bosnian Serb, četnik [guerrilla Serb nationalist], and war criminal. Over the course of the journey, Antonia is also revealed to have (tenuous) Yugoslav roots herself. She discovers that she is the granddaughter of Emiljan Rukovina (her mother's name – Emiliana – is, it turns out, a patronymic), an Italian ustaša of ambiguous (but likely Croatian) origin who joined Franco's movement and fought in Spain. The man she believed to be both her grandfather and an anti-communist, Rafael Cobreces Galilea, was in fact a 'rojo' [red] who was killed in Mauthausen in World War II and is not related to the family. The play draws to a close with Ana and Antonia returning from their voyage; Zoran has disappeared, presumably on the run. Despite the lack of biological ties, Rafael Cobreces Galilea is reclaimed as the 'real' father/grandfather. It is notable that this act of reclaiming takes place within Charlatana's tavern, which, apart from providing the setting of the journey throughout, also opens and closes the play.

This play was created as part of a research project with social aims; as such, it is unsurprising that elements of the domestic plot exhibit a didactic undertone and that these scenes suffer from an over-emphasis on relaying historical facts at the expense of dramatic action.[224] Nonetheless, these domestic scenes are visually interesting insofar as they offer a striking contrast with Charlatana's world. In the domestic space, the characters' relationships with the past are rigid and fixed, though also comforting and familiar. Most of these scenes take place around a kitchen table, with the nuclear family seated and discussing matters that range from the mundane – Messi and football – to the extraordinary – the objects inside the grandmother's box. These scenes are staged in a realist mode and are characterised by minimal movement. By contrast, Charlatana's scenes are dramaturgically much more elaborate and physically volatile. In the opening scene, the actress Mélida Molina – whose characterisation of Charlatana was inspired by Marlene Dietrich (González Martín 2019: 7) – raucously addresses the audience:

> CHARLATANA. (Ál público.) Señoras y señores, *dame i gospodo*… *¡Dobrodosli!... Dobrodosli* …Bienvenidos… a nuestro café, a nuestra taberna… a nuestro

[224] The company acknowledges this issue in the pedagogical pack: 'During the audience interviews several stakeholders made comments on the length of the performance. Many of them found it too long and difficult to follow, precisely because of the high number of dates, historical events and characters involved, and the excessive length of ZORAN's speech in the final scenes. To stage the play it would be important to consider cutting down some fragments to make the chain of events flow' (González Martin 2019: 17). The film version was cut to 91 minutes and is available on *Filmin*.

> maravilloso bosque de fresnos. Uy cuánto *mrtav*[225] veo por aquí…. cuantísimo *mrtav*…[226]
>
> [CHARLATANA. (*To the audience.*) Ladies and gentlemen, *ladies and gentlemen [italics indicate Serbo-Croatian]*… *Welcome!... Welcome*… Welcome… to our café, to our tavern… to our marvellous ash tree forest. Oh how many *dead people* I see here… how many *dead people*...] (*DBE*: 17)

From Charlatana's first appearance, it is made clear that she occupies a highly stylised and symbolically rich space, distinct from the familiar indoor areas that Ana, Antonia, and Zoran inhabit. The choice of the tavern is an evocative one; it immediately suggests proximity to the sea and, by extension, water – the feminine element par excellence (Neimanis 2012: 96-115) and also the central metaphor underpinning *écriture feminine* ('we ourselves are sea, sands, corals, seaweeds, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves… seas and mothers' [Cixous and Clément 1986: 89]). Traditionally associated with port cities, taverns offer a place for sailors and wayfarers to rest, but also to engage in illicit activities, such as prostitution (Karras 2004: 153-158). Both literally and metaphorically, then, the tavern is where the masculine and feminine meet. Apart from its maritime location, the tavern shares similarities with the bar – these are spaces of conflicting connotations, on the one hand denoting leisure, on the other, danger and excess (alcoholic or otherwise). They have historically been spaces to congregate and discuss clandestine politics (Gilmore 1985: 264). Anthropologist Richard Rottenburg writes in this vein that the bar is 'a social space betwixt and between everything. It belongs neither to the past, nor to the present. It belongs neither to here, nor to there, and it most certainly belongs neither to "us" nor to "them"… [it is] a social space and time in transformation, where inherited frames of orientation are remade' (2000: 87).

The profoundly transient nature of the tavern can be further be seen through the prism of Marc Augé's notion of the *non-lieu* [non-place] (1992). Characteristic of postmodernity, *non-lieux* are places through which people pass, but never fully inhabit. Examples given by Augé of non-places include airports, escalators, shopping malls; these are transactional, commercial areas in which in which anonymity reigns and interpersonal connections are rendered impossible by the existing suprastructure. Such (non-)places are characteristic

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[225] [sic]. The Serbo-Croatian is slightly off here – a direct translation of 'muertos'. Read 'mrtvaca' or 'mrtvih [ljudi]'.

[226] Please note the published playtext does not include diacritics. I have added these to the surnames of real people, but otherwise left the dialogue untouched. I abbreviate *Donde el bosque se espesa* to *DBE* for in-text citations (see footnote 216).

of a world 'promis à l'individualité solitaire, au passage, au provisoire et à l'éphémère' (Augé in O'Beirne 2006: 393) [surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral' (1995: 78)].[227] However, in constantly evoking memories of several civil wars, the tavern is in essence also a *lieu de mémoire* [memory site], an entity from which an abstract and persistent mnemonic network emerges. This is not a paradox. For while Nora's terminology has frequently been misconstrued as necessarily indicative of physical places, objects, or structures (Smith 2009: 31-36), his landmark conceptual project points instead to those sites – material or immaterial – where 'memory crystallises and secretes itself' (1989: 7). *Lieux de mémoire* emerge, importantly, outside of the confines of official commemorative projects (such as, for example, archives and monuments) and at the same time reflect a 'barely accessible, self-imposed bond' with the past (1989: 24).

As a both non-place *and* a site of memory in which the Yugoslav and Spanish worlds collide, the symbology of the tavern is thus significant.[228] Given the anonymity associated with *non-lieux*, and the polysemic associations of *lieux de mémoire*,[229] the tavern also offers a potent environment in which to re-signify identities and to blur the boundaries between perpetrators and victims. Under Charlatana's rule, the tavern is a malleable space,[230] capable of transitioning seamlessly between time periods and locations. It is also grotesque space of banalised violence and weaponised humour. The use of the grotesque as a form of satire, which within the context of Spanish theatre inevitably evokes the dramatist Ramón del Valle-Inclán, is a frequent feature of Ripoll's work. In *Donde el bosque se espesa*, it reaches a new extreme. One of Charlatana's first actions is to point a finger at

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227 Translation by John Howe.

228 Within the context of Spanish theatre, the tavern also echoes back to Alfonso Sastre's seminal 1966 *La taberna fantástica* [The Fantastic Tavern]. Sastre's sociocritical play is entirely set in a tavern, *El gato negro* [The Black Cat]. It follows a group of *quinquilleros*, craftsmen on the margins of Spanish society. Notably, the protagonist, Rogelio, is on the run from a crime that he did not commit; however, in his escape, he ends up descending into a world of crime that solidifies his fate. Sastre's portrayal of the tavern as a space in which the frontier between the innocent and the guilty can be traversed with ease may have been a point of departure in Ripoll and Llorente's use of the setting.

229 Nora writes: 'contrary to historical objects […] *lieux de mémoires* have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs. This is not to say that they are without content, physical presence, or history; it is to suggest that what makes them *lieux de mémoire* is precisely that by which they escape from history. In this sense, the *lieux de mémoire* is double: a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to its full range of possible significations' (1989: 23-24). I cite from the English translation by Marc Roudebush.

230 Theorists – such as Marc Augé and Michel de Certeau – distinguish between place (*lieu*) and space (*espace*); however, I am here following the English definition of space (as in: 'an area that is used or available', *Britannica Dictionary*) to avoid the semantic confusion which would arise from calling the tavern both a 'place' and 'non-place'. That said, it should be noted that while the tavern is a *non-lieu* for Charlatana's visitors, it is indeed a *lieu* (place) for her, as she is always there (see O'Beirne 2006: 38-50, especially pp. 43-47).

an audience member and ask: '¿Y a ti, nena, también te enterraron en en el bosque? ¿qué, te violaron antes? ¿Sólo entre siete?' [And you, sweetheart, did they bury you in the forest, too? What, they raped you first? Only seven of them?] (*DBE*: 17).[231] The character's attitude towards these acts, and in fact towards her addressees, is ambiguous. The taunting of the girl/audience member is followed by a physical re-enactment of the rape, throughout which Charlatana's verborrhea continues uninterrupted. If the audience is to accept the premise that Charlatana speaks to a real victim of rape (though here displaced onto an audience member), this would appear to be a form of psychological torture. At the same time, it is implied that Charlatana herself has been violated ('Eso no es nada, no te quejes… si yo te contara…' [That's nothing, stop complaining… The things I could tell you...] (*DBE*: 17)) and in the mimed re-enactment, Charlatana plays the victim, not the rapist.

Given the enduring links between taverns and prostitution (Karras 2004: 153-158; Shugg 1977: 295-296),[232] Charlatana can be seen not only as the host of the tavern, but also as its Madame. Here, Molina's aforementioned allusion to Marlene Dietrich brings forth further associations: in Orson Welles' 1958 *Touch of Evil*, Dietrich plays Tanya, a Mexican brothel owner. Whether by accident or design, in *Donde el bosque se espesa*, Charlatana's outfit resembles that of Tanya in Welles' film (figures 17, 18).[233] Positioning the character as both victim of sexual violence and its enabler exemplifies Primo Levi's notion of the grey zone and the ease with which an ordinary person may commit atrocities:

> […] the harsher the oppression, the more widespread among the oppressed is the willingness, with all its infinite nuances and motivations, to collaborate: terror, ideological seduction, servile imitation of the victor, myopic desire for any power whatsoever, even though ridiculously circumscribed in space and time, cowardice, and finally lucid calculation aimed at eluding the imposed orders and order. (1988: 28)

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[231] I also want to flag that in a post-2016 Spanish context, Charlatana's words evoke immediate associations with the La Manada [wolf pack] case, an attack during which a young woman was gang-raped by five men at the San Fermín festival in Pamplona. The mishandling of the trial (the men were initially not convicted of rape, but sexual abuse) led to widespread protests across Spain (the 'Hermana, yo sí te creo' [I believe you, sister] movement) and to international coverage. The trials were dramatised in the form of the verbatim-play, *Jauría*, written by Jordi Casanovas and directed by Miguel del Arco (2019; reprised in 2024). See Delgado 2019; Delgado 2024. Calixto Bieto's staging of the opera *Die Soldaten* also opened with reference to La manada (Delgado 2018b).

[232] These studies trace links between taverns, waterfront, and brothels back to Medieval Europe and Early Modern London, respectively.

[233] Dietrich herself represents a political paradox: despite publicly disavowing the Nazis, she was admired by Hitler and Goebbels alike, and courted by the latter (Cosey 2022: 179).



Figure 20: Marlene Dietrich in *A Touch of Evil* by Orson Welles (1958)



Figure 21: Production still (00:17:09), *Donde el bosque se espesa* (2017), Mimicón

It is striking that while the resignification of Zoran (the father-perpetrator) happens entirely in his absence, as Ana and Antonia piece together the puzzles from the photographs left behind, Charlatana is re-signified from moment to moment and in real-time, jumping from victim to perpetrator, and back again, before the audience's eyes (*DBE*: 47-50, 67-69, 96-98). She mocks the systematic rape of Bosnian girls and the blanket murders by snipers in Sarajevo: 'Va el chiste: ¿Qué hace una niña en Sarajevo en un columpio? ¡Marear a los francotiradoires!' [The joke goes: why is the Sarajevan girl [playing] on a swing? To make the snipers dizzy!] (*DBE*: 36). However, halfway through the production, and in the most explicitly violent moment of the entire play, she is raped by three anonymous soldiers. She is then covered in gasoline and set on fire, left to writhe on her bar table as the set goes up in flames (*DBE*: 107-108).

The character's ethical ambiguity reaches an apotheosis in the second half of the play, which sees Charlatana impersonating Adolf Hitler and chatting with Ante Pavelić, whom, though played by one of her rapists, she literally controls like a puppet. Shortly afterwards, Charlatana becomes Almira, a Bosnian woman killed in the Siege. Her transformations are erratic and do not always link obviously to the domestic scenes which immediately precede or follow them. With an identity that is constantly in flux, it is difficult to discern the extent to which the character has agency – or if she can even be held accountable for her actions. As both puppet master and puppet, Charlatana is a palimpsest upon whom divergent histories are written over and over, each of which haunts the next and obscures any neat ethical reading. By extension, the space she inhabits – the tavern – can be seen as reflecting Mark Silverman's notion of palimpsestic memory (2015). Silverman employs this image to denote 'figurative "staging"[s] of memory by which memory traces overlap, intersect and are transformed' and wherein the specific connotation of the palimpsest 'reveals how time and space are reconfigured through a *ceaseless process* of straddling and

superimposition of elements, and condensation and displacement of meaning' (2015: 22, my emphasis). In sum, the tavern is a *lieu de mémoire* that evokes both Jasenovac and Mauthausen; it is also just as much the playground of Pavelić and Hitler as it is the resting place of the *desaparecidos* (Spanish and Bosnian). At the same time, the tavern is also a *non-lieu* insofar as it is defined by anonymity and the constant flux of new arrivals. This spatial ambiguity has its own ethical implications, raising the dual possibility that the victims in the tavern are both honoured (insofar as they are remembered), but also violated once more, through an eternal proximity to the perpetrators that orchestrated their murder, sexual violence, or both. While disquieting, the tavern may therefore be seen as a clear mirror-image for Franco's Valley of the Fallen, even though the scenes within it predominantly appear to take place in sites from the former Yugoslavia.

To keep from devolving into pure chaos, this particular palimpsest, or mystic writing pad (Freud in Silverman 2015: 24-25), has its own rules. While initially unfamiliar, the rules are nonetheless consistent. Leaving behind the realism characteristic of the domestic plot, the scenes in the tavern push *Donde el bosque se espesa* into what Jeanette Malkin calls 'postmodern memory-theatre' (1999). Here, the relationship with time is fundamentally altered. Charlatana's movements are characterised by the 'structures of repetition, conflation, regression, echoing, overlap, and simultaneity' emblematic of this form (Malkin 1999: 21). This new temporality extends to anyone who enters the space, whether this be Charlatana herself or Antonia, Ana, or Zoran. In this final section, I will discuss how the postdramatic language established in the tavern is particularly fruitful for an exploration of transnational memory.[234] Specific types of movement present in the tavern (frantic repetition, life-size puppetry, militaristic dance), but nowhere else, are actively disquieting, serving to shock the audience and emphasise their inability to respond.

V. Movement and form

Differentiating between memory-plays and postmodern memory-theatre, Malkin writes that the former type exhibits 'paradigms of a basically unified (personal or group)

[234] There is some debate about the terminology – postmodern theatre, post-dramatic theatre, postdramatic theatre – and whether these all refer to the same form. Postdramatic is offered by Hans-Thies Lehman in his major contribution, *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999, though only published in English in 2006). For a discussion of these various terms, see translator Karen Jürs-Munby's Introduction to the English version (2006: 1-15).

consciousness, employing coherent dramatic enunciations in order that a past be illuminated [through memory]' while, in the latter, enacted memory 'diffuse[s], decentres, [and] problematise[s]' the present (1999: 21). In stylistic terms, postmodern memory-theatre tends towards the visually chaotic, a chaos that serves to make the viewer feel uncomfortable:

> Postmodern procedure – repetitive and obsessive, fragmentary and dislocated, imagistic, scrambled, sometimes incomprehensible – might be seen as a way of inducing anxiety, of evoking memory fragments and conflations that provoke audience engagement […] Heiner Müller has spoken of sensual onslaught, or "flooding", as one of the aesthetic principles to be aimed at in contemporary theater. (1999: 31)

The tavern clearly exhibits such flooding, or an 'overabundance of disconnected stimuli: conflicting discourses, intruding images, overlapping voices, hallucinatory fragments' (Malkin 1999: 21). It is a carnivalesque space not without rules but rather its own logic, or 'self-imposed rules' (Lindahl 1996).[235] These rules are established by Charlatana: as she moves, other characters (apparently involuntarily) mimic her movements. She leads processes of memory mediation, even when she appears to be entirely powerless.

While the familial scenes are characterised by stasis, minimalism, and a controlled economy of movement, the tavern is from the outset a space of physical volatility and chaos. Llorente and Ripoll significantly expand upon their own stage directions from the published playscript, which provide merely a sketch (*DBE*: 17). In practice, Charlatana does not enter the space; she dances through it. As she does so in the opening scene, she is followed by a circle of men wearing paper bags over their faces. With each erratic move that she makes, they mirror her; this marks the beginning of the ongoing motif of the tavern-set scenes in which Charlatana moves and others follow. This mirroring effect is most evident in the previously referenced encounter between Charlatana/Hitler and Ante Pavelić, during which the latter is berated for his excessive brutality.[236] This encounter

[235] Lindahl adapts Bakhtin's theory, arguing that while carnival might superficially offer a space for freedom, ultimately hierarchies remain unchanged: 'on the darker side, the lower classes – in duplicating the power structure of their leaders – simply reaffirmed their submission to the social order' (1996: 65).
[236] This interaction is misread by García Villalba, who suggests Pavelić is an anonymous Polish soldier and that the scene underscores the extent of Polish brutality in World War II (2020: 230). It might also be noted that throughout the scene an enormous Croatian flag is projected behind Pavelić and Charlatana/Hitler.

draws from a much-cited report by Heinrich Himmler (Reichsführer [Reich leader] of the SS) in which he expressed disgust at the ustaša's use of force (Gumz 1988: 39):[237]

> HITLER. A ver si nos aclaramos, Pavelić, a ver: ¿era necesario empalar a niños?
> PAVELIĆ. Hombre, necesario tal vez no, pero nos quedó bonito.
> HITLER. ¿Y violar a niñas de trece años delante de sus padres?
> PAVELIĆ. Bueno, lo podíamos haber hecho a escondidas, pero hay cosas que uno hace para que las vean.
>
> [HITLER. Let's see if we can clear things up, Pavelić, eh: was it necessary to impale children?
> PAVELIĆ. Mate, maybe it wasn't necessary, but it sure looked good.
> HITLER. What about raping thirteen-year-old girls in front of their parents?
> PAVELIĆ. Look, maybe we could have been a bit more subtle, but some things are done out in the open to make a point.] (*DBE*: 67)

The scene takes the form of a brief slapstick sketch, with each retort by Pavelić dismissed by Charlatana/Hitler with a swift slap, deliberately portrayed as missing his face by about a foot. She ultimately slaps herself instead. The absurd interaction provokes audible laughter in the recorded version of the play (*DBE*: 0:52:10–0:52:15). Through Charlatana's seemingly spontaneous incarnation as Hitler, the audience is collectively positioned as a bystander, or indeed what might be reconceptualised as a witness.[238] As Grzegorz Niziołek writes, here with respect to the (postwar) spectator of Polish theatre about the Holocaust; crucially a spectator who has lived through this event: '[t]he source of the shock is not the traumatic event itself, but recognition of one's indifference towards it' (2019: 33). Niziołek's remarks are employed to elucidate his concept of 'affective influence' – a model that describes how the spectators' sudden realization of their lack of empathy in turn becomes its own form of (self-)witnessing – but though discussed within the specific context of post-war Polish theatre, this model of affective influence can also be observed in *Donde el bosque se espesa*, precisely in the tavern scenes.

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[237] There is further evidence of German unease regarding the Croatian's behaviour. A report sent to Himmler on 17 February 1942 by the Gestapo reads 'The Ustase [sic] committed their deeds in a bestial manner not only against males of conscript age, but especially against helpless old people, women and children' (in Fitzduff 2021: 36).

[238] There is a strong element of powerlessness here. In his volume, Niziołek writes: '[w]itness offered by the theatre […] cannot be any symbolic compensation for the fact of previous passivity, indifference, fear and stupidity. Such witness cannot help to 'work through' the past; nor does it belong to the ritual of mourning. It is powerless – and even the hubris of performance studies and optimism of the anthropology of theatre […]. cannot assist here. The witnesses of theatre […] will not salvage anything. They are not in a position to represent anything. Will not bring catharsis. But they exist. They existed. They are linked to the past by a particular symptom – one of many experienced by the community of bystanders (2019: 5).

It is not a coincidence that Charlatana's dialogue with Pavelić is all played out to the audience. The direct address is unilateral: this is a performance, rather than a conversation. This parallel showcase of extreme violence and comedic gags renders the audience's role problematic, as the hesitant laughs attest. (It might be also said that given these extreme tonal shifts, the audience does not know how to respond.) The merging of forms renders the process of observation and interpretation both difficult and awkward. In discussion of the work of Tadeusz Kantor and Jerzy Grotowski, and drawing on Niziołek above, Magdalena Marszałek writes that these 'tense, sometimes sadomasochistic, relations between actors and spectators [put] the audience into the position of voyeuristic or mocking gawkers' (2022: 239).[239] Once more, this provides a stark contrast to Zoran's characterisation and relationship with the audience, where there is arguably no (self-reflective) shock on the audience's behalf, only condemnation.

Comedy is integral to this disquieting effect and, with respect to Charlatana's movements and gags, takes on a postmodern form. Here again, the directors move away from their own stage directions. In the script, Charlatana wears her Hitler costume and is described as holding in her hands a sock-puppet: '*tiene en sus manos un muñeco de guante, ataviado inequívocamente como Ante PAVELIĆ, cejas espejas y gorra militar* [she holds a sock-puppet in her hands; it is unequivocally dressed as Ante Pavelić, with thick eyebrows and a military hat'] (*DBE*: 67). In production, however, the puppet is eliminated in favour of an actor. However, his puppet origins remain clear: as Charlatana marches militaristically across the stage, Pavelić, a puppet-human hybrid, sits limp atop her table, his head and arms dangling as though lifeless. It is only when Charlatana lifts him up by the back of his suit that he can speak and, between each retort, his head threatens to fall back down. Pavelić

[239] Note, however, that Niziołek argues that these directors employ different modes of situating the audience as witness. He writes: 'Grotowski strove from the beginning […] for a dialectical overcoming of historical trauma: he would order the range of dilemmas and conflicts, guiding the spectacle along the trajectory of an emotional curve, where the spectator would cross from the attitude imposed upon him or her of presumed indifference towards someone else's suffering, towards the affective reactions of pity and horror, discernible as religious experience. Kantor, especially before *The Dead Class*, would operate the other way around: he would break down all patterns of affective reaction, put his audiences on the wrong scent, register experiences of horror as comedy acts, and set in motion processes for exposing the 'uncanny'. Grotowski created the illusion of an act of working through, thanks to the power of the experienced affect. Kantor entangled the spectator in a system of repetitions that left him or her disorientated, where the possibility of working through experiences of the past disappeared from the field of vision.' (2019: 56). In my view, the scholarship on *Donde el bosque se espesa* has understood the play as following Grotowski's model, as described by Niziołek – insofar as it has focused on the 'working through' theoretically allowed for by Zoran (e.g. in its mode of agonistic memory). However, Charlatana herself create a space in which such a 'working through' appears impossible, especially through her combination of comedy and extreme violence.

is not a very good puppet: his mirroring movements are delayed, and his serial mispronunciation of 'Führer' irks Charlatana-as-Hitler ('*Fuđer'*, he says incorrectly).[240] Though not noted in the script, in the production Pavelić repeats the word over and over to no avail.[241] The 'urge to repeat', as seen in previous scenes where the tavern customers mirror Charlatana's movements, has long been seen as one of the hallmarks of trauma, yet here it is a historic perpetrator doing the repeating. Returning to Malkin, the production shows 'no unity of enunciation, no closure, no easy way to "read" or organize the sensual and discursive overload' (1999: 9). Trauma extends across ethical boundaries, and its 'exposure' does not provide a restorative effect, as it manifests in repetition and overflow.

Apart from the clever allusion to the Croatian NDH as a Nazi 'puppet-state', the choice to render Pavelić as a puppet-human hybrid has further interpretative implications. As Didier Plassard and Carole Guidicelli note, 'the easy way marionettes and puppets can cross the boundaries between lifeless objects and living creatures makes puppetry the ideal artistic expression to picture liminal states between life and death' (2022: 11). There is a rich history of the use of puppets in theatre about conflict (Stoessner 2005; Astles 2017; Markovits 2020). Here, however, the puppet is replaced by a human playing a puppet (recalling Grotowski's *Akropolis* [1962] and, to a certain extent, Kantor's *Dead Class* [see Romanska 2012: 262-267]).[242] As Bryce Lease notes, the puppet-human hybrid can be theorised across multiple axes, but these all point to its ability to merge distinct states, in a way that recalls the archetypal traveller described in the introduction (see pp. 15-22). For Kantor, for example, the puppet can be the 'anti-sublime figure that remains fixed to life; the one who has suffered biological death but persists within the matrix of the performance's symbolic network' but also 'the leftover of subjectivization that literally stick to the bodies of the actors; an antithesis between form and content, wherein the absence of life reveals its presence' (Lease 2015). If the puppet can bridge the divide between life and death (Posner, Orenstein, and Bell 2014: 2-5), then the actor-playing-

[240] This said, he might also be considered archetypal. As Posner notes, 'one of the most recurrent refrains uttered by nearly anyone who has ever held a puppet is that the puppet is unruly, that it wants to do thing that differ from what we would impose upon it' (2014: 6).
[241] A minor poetic license. It is unlikely that Pavelić, fluent in German and Italian, would have mispronounced the name, but the gag works. There is irony here, however, as most of the Spanish cast serially mispronounce the word ustaša, with the most glaring example being that of the (Spanish) actor playing Zoran, Juanjo Cucalón.
[242] In *Akropolis*, the actors portray puppets, while in *Dead Class* the distinction between human and object is blurred (Roitman 2022: 7).

puppet appears likewise, by, extension, both dead and alive (both animate and inanimate). This marks a second pivotal rule of the tavern, which is that the distinction between the two states is arbitrary, if indeed it exists at all. Life and death have no meaning as the passing of time does not occur. The tavern becomes a site of mnemonic negotiation, a place to re-examine memories not as memories, but in real-time. Here, the dead can talk back – though one might not necessarily wish to hear what they want to say. Similarly, death in the tavern happens and yet has no repercussions. As Charlatana reminds her rapists after being set on fire, their endeavour is a futile one: 'a mi no puedes matar, soy solo una metáfora' [you cannot kill me, I am only a metaphor] (*DBE*: 108).[243] Her statement is circular – embodied and present, the audience experiences her as just as 'real' as any of the other actors on stage.

The tavern is thus a form of limbo, and in keeping with Primo Levi's notion of the grey zone, it echoes a transit camp. As David Meghnagi has observed, Levi turns not to Dante's inferno but to limbo to describe his experience of the Fossoli concentration camp (2016: 14). Consider, for example, how the music, movements, and limbo-like nature of Charlatana's tavern appear to mirror Levi's description of Fossoli:

> Hour after hour, this first long day of limbo draws to its end. […] A band begins to play […] it plays *Rosamunda*, the well-known sentimental song […] suddenly the squads of our comrades appear, returning from work. They walk in columns of five with a strange, unnatural hard gait, like stiff puppets made of jointless bones; but they walk scrupulously in time to the band. (2015: 508)

The Pavelić-Hitler repetition cycle reflects not only the 'stiff puppets made of jointless bones' to which Levi alludes, but arguably also Kantor's *Wielopole, Wielopole* (1980), which came to Madrid in 1981 to inaugurate the annual season at the Teatro María Guerrero (Sánchez Montes in Kobialka and Zarzecka 2015: 176-77; Nawrot 2018: 44-45). Kantor ironically employs the Polish military march 'The Grey Infantry' [Szara piechota] as the backdrop to a regiment of marionette-like soldiers failing to march in tune. What might be seen as Ripoll and Llorente's subtle allusions to the work of Kantor – Charlatana's

[243] The reference to metaphor is worth highlighting here – it is the central device Silverman employs in discussing the notion of palimpsestic memory: '[t]he true power of metaphor is not that it simply substitutes one thing for another […] it connects them (or, to use Baudelaire's term, creates 'correspondences' between them) and, in the process, reinvents both.' (2015: 23).

rape by the soldiers similarly evokes that of *Wielopole, Wielopole*'s Helka – further expand the geographic borders of the tavern, reinforcing its role as a transnational palimpsest.[244]

Within this transnational limbo, Antonia can speak both to her recently deceased mother as well as with war criminal Marko 'el poeta' [the poet],[245] who is in fact an earlier iteration of her husband, Zoran. However, each encounter in this limbo is tainted by the tavern's polysemic associations, until such a cacophony is created that it is impossible to distinguish whether the characters are in Spain, or Yugoslavia, or both. Apart from mixing Serbo-Croatian and Spanish, Charlatana increasingly dilutes the national origins of the 'sentimental song[s]' (Levi 2015: 508) she intermittently sings, such that one stage direction reads: *La CHARLATANA canta otra vez su cancion, pero esta vez se une a su canto el fantasma de EMILIANA, convirtiendo la cancion balcánica en un cantar inequívocamente español* [Charlatana sings her song again, but this time Emiliana's ghost joins her in singing, turning the Balkan song into an unequivocally Spanish one] (*DBE*: 89). In a later scene, when Antonia finally enters the tavern just as it will transform into Jasenovac, the music is similarly blended: *'suena una canción popular, polifónica, de marcado aire eslavo, que poco a poco se transforma en un quejido flamenco, pesado y jondo*' [A popular song can be heard; it is polyphonic and has a markedly Slavic air. Little by little it transforms into a moan, a heavy and deep Flamenco] (*DBE*: 97). Notably, the music moves in the opposite of the direction of travel. As Antonia goes to Jasenovac (where she will discover that her grandfather was an ustaša fighter associated with Pavelić's regime), the music turns from Balkan to Spanish, rather than the inverse. It should here be noted that despite the international scope of *UNREST*, the production is primarily aimed at Spanish audiences and at addressing ongoing memory debates within this context. While there are similarities between the atrocities committed in both regions, González Martín notes that

[244] It is also worth highlighting that Kantor's original production in Florence was created in collaboration with Italian actors, a priori establishing the stage as a transnational space (Witts 2018); furthermore, in the earlier *Dead Class* (1975), Kantor mixed Polish, German, Hebrew, Yiddish on the stage – this linguistic blend evoked 'a frequent lack of mutual comprehension' even within the context of a polyglot nation (see Kuharski 1998: 129). Kantor had a significant impact on Spanish theatre during the country's transition period (Nawrot 2016: 153-174) – all these references may have been points of inspiration/departure for Ripoll and Llorente.

[245] While not overtly specified, the reference to poetry suggests a link between Zoran/Marko and the Bosnian Serb war criminal, Radovan Karadžić. Karadžić lived for years as a fugitive following the collapse of his national project until he was eventually arrested in 2008, charged by the ICTY with committing crimes against humanity and genocide. For over a decade, Karadžić (who had originally trained in psychotherapy) practiced alternative medicine and wrote poetry, all under the pseudonym Dragan Dabić. Zoran's decade of hiding and his multiple names further associate him with this figure.

> the official remembrance processes in the two countries have been almost complete opposites: while in BiH several trials of perpetrators—mostly Serbian—have taken place, no perpetrator belonging to the Nationalist Side during the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939 has been tried in court, either during the Francoist dictatorship (1939–75) or in the democratic period. (2020: 160)

By blurring the boundaries between Ana and Antonia's present, and the realities of Pavelić /Jasenovac, Hitler/Mauthausen, the production thus creates a 'screen memory' for Spain's past (Rothberg [on Freud] 2009: 13-14). Neither Franco nor his own camps are ever explicitly mentioned, a noticeable absence within the context of a such a meticulously researched history play. However, and while it remains unsaid, the tavern itself can be seen as standing in for the Valley of the Fallen, as a cemetery in which perpetrators and victims exist in close proximity. While there is no reference to Pavelić's tomb nor to Mingorrubio/San Isidro (the production predates the exhumation), the relationship between Franco and the Croatian right is disclosed by a historian whom Ana and Antonia meet immediately following the Pavelić/Hitler scene. Antonia's grandfather [Rukovina] is further revealed to be in a picture alongside the war criminal transliterated as 'Vjekoslab Luburik' (*DBE*: 70) – in other words, Vjekoslav 'Maks' Luburić. Alongside Pavelic, Luburić is likely the most high-profile of all Croatian escapees to Spain, the former leader of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp and one said to have tortured the prisoners himself. Luburić, like Franco, haunts the play: he appears only in photograph. In this image (which the audience does not see) he is accompanied by a man the historian cannot identify, implicitly suggesting this man could be anyone. This haunting, mirroring effect is underscored by Charlatana's subsequent appearance. Following this encounter, she sings:

> para hacer de nuestra choza balcánica un hogar
> habitable
> yo enterré mi relato
> para que mi relato
> no se impusiera a tu relato
> . Hice callar el dolor insoportable de mis muertos
> para que el dolor de insoportable de tus muertos pudiera también dormir.
>
> [so as to turn this Balkan shack into a place
> to live
> I buried my story
> so that my story
> would not impose itself on your story
> I silenced the impossible pain of my dead
> so that the impossible pain of your dead can also sleep.] (*DBE*: 76)

We can see how in Charlatana's song the symmetries between the two regions are crystallised, but that the onus of remembering is shifted subtly in the direction of Spain. Charlatana has made her decision to bury her story, while the next move is left open (implicitly to the audience, through the use of direct address). The enjambment across verses 1 and 2 presents the Balkans as a place that is not yet finished, and by extension as a *non-lieu*: it is a 'shack' (a word that suggests incompleteness) still to be forged. The incessant epistrophe of *relato* [tale], meanwhile, certainly underscores Charlatana's role within the production as the central storyteller, but her control over the story remains as unstable as her identity. Like the Pandora's box that is described as opening of its own accord (see footnote 220), the *relato* is framed in the play as an object that can be buried, but which nonetheless retains agency (it can 'impose itself'). It is dead, but at any point it may come alive. Meanwhile the polysemic associations of Charlatana's language leave her intent murkier still. The triple repetition of 'para' [in order to] acts as a paronomasia with the second-person imperative of *parar* [stop] (the implication being: Stop/Stop/Stop). Even the semantic implications of *relato* collapse in on themselves when examined closely, as they echo the first person of *relatar* [to narrate]. While claiming to be burying the story, Charlatana (we recall – from *charlar*) does precisely the opposite: I tell you/ I tell you/ I tell you. To reformulate Lacan, it might be here said that 'language is structured like the unconscious'. This linguistic confusion is appropriate for a character who is perpetually managing a balancing act – whether between perpetrator and victim, death and life, or Spain and Yugoslavia.

VI. Conclusion

> 'siempre quise saber qué clase de hombre era. O qué clase de adolescente, más bien... Siempre quise saber por qué se marchó a la guerra tan joven, por qué luchó con Franco, qué hizo en el frente, cómo murió.'
>
> [I always wanted to know what kind of a man he was. Or what kind of an adolescent, even… I always wanted to know why he went to war so young, why he fought alongside Franco, what he did on the Front, how he died]
>
> Javier Cercas, *El monarca de las sombras* [The Monarch of Shadows] (2020)

As Andrés Trapiello and Javier Cercas' novels attest, the desire to understand one's ancestors does not disappear once their 'iniquitous pasts' (Stafford 2014: 6) have been exposed: the desire is only intensified. But while *Donde el bosque se espesa* similarly presents

itself as engaging with a form of memory that 'brings conflict to the fore' (González Martín and Hansen 2021: 151), in its finale, these same conflicts appear to have been neatly resolved. By the time Ana and Antonia return to Madrid, Zoran has conveniently disappeared. The implication is that he will find another family and deceive anew; meanwhile both mother and daughter can comfortably move forward in the knowledge that they are absolved of unsavoury links with historical perpetrators. They reject the (biological) fascist Italo-Croatian grandfather, Emiljan Rukovina, and reclaim Rafael the communist as their true ancestor. Emiliana's final exclamation 'y no se hable más' [this will not be discussed further], while presumably intended to denote defiance, has a certain stifling quality and echoes the famous, incessant cries of Bernarda, Federico García Lorca's dictatorial matriarch: 'Silencio, he dicho' [Silence, I've said] (also the last words of Lorca's play). Emiliana's words stand in contrast to those feelings evoked by Charlatana's movements and her tavern; namely, the idea of theatre as 'a revolt of memory against an onslaught of forgetting' (Gluhovic* 2005: 151).

In this chapter I have explored how Charlatana, a character thus far treated as marginal in academic scholarship on *Donde el bosque se espesa*, is in fact perhaps the best placed to expose the complicated, opaque nature of the perpetrator/victim divide and to make plain its porous borders. The representation of the tavern, both horrifically violent and yet at times commemorative of the victims that rest in it, echoes the dual role of the Valley and the ongoing polemic regarding exhumation of the dead from all sides of the political divide. Following Levi, I have argued that the characterisation of the tavern offers the viewers a space in which that which separates victims from persecutors can be examined with 'a lighter hand' (1988: 25) – a hand which eludes demarcations between these categories. The tavern's simultaneous status as a site of memory and as a non-place is a productive point of departure for the blurring of such boundaries.

Rejecting the realism present elsewhere in the play, the tavern presents to the audience instead Russian doll-like structures in which humans play puppets who themselves play humans [the actor plays the sock puppet who plays Pavelić]. I have alluded to points at which Llorente and Ripoll may have found inspiration in Polish theatre for this puppet-human hybrid; further work on these parallels would be fruitful to enhance an understanding not only of this production, but also of the transnational dialogues that have reverberated across European theatres in the past decades. In the case of Spain, a

shift instigated by the memory-boom towards a focus on perpetrators and their descendants may usher in a new theatrical vocabulary, perhaps one that moves away from the verisimilitude present in the historical plays of the late democratic period of the twentieth century.

By focusing on one character that is, like memory itself, constantly 'on the move', I have shown how the act of travel forges new spaces for mnemonic mediation. Charlatana's ethical ambiguity may be seen as reflecting that of the archetypal traveller she evokes, the figure who has guided the research of this thesis. As Edward Edinger notes, Hermes 'does not always need to be truthful. He can be ambiguous and false and cunning, and that gets him into places that absolute light and clarity could never enter' (1994: 30). It is precisely Charlatana's cunning transformations that allow her to illuminate what others would prefer not to see.

Conclusion

There is a metaliterary joke embedded within Ovid's narrative of Mercury's murder of Argus, the hundred-eyed guard of Io, which is that Mercury literally bores Argus to death by re-telling the story of Daphne and Apollo, a story the shepherd (and, by extension, *Metamorphoses* reader) already knows well.[246] The repetition of the familiar tale, here told with new names but following the same narrative structure, lulls Argus into closing each of his hundred eyes, allowing Mercury to finally kill him, and therefore free Io.

I have always felt somewhat sorry for Argus, who is ultimately one pawn of many in the amorous battles between Jupiter and Juno. While I cannot say whether Ovid's framing is a commentary on the transformative power of repetition (DiLorenzo 2001) or of its dangers as a literary device (Konstan 1991), I am drawn to Bartłomiej Bednarek's reading (2023), which disputes the widely held idea that Argus is a failed, uninterested listener of 'limited perceptions' (Feldherr 2010: 23). Bednarek argues, instead, that Argus is a 'voracious consumer of tales' (2023: 230) whose child-like descent into slumber represents the height of literary surrender. In other words, it is precisely the shepherd's attention to and belief in Mercury's story that transports him to another realm – the realm of dreams. And dreams, as is known, are the primary metaphysical metaphor for life, a status they share with one other space alone: the stage.

Independently of how one reads this episode and Argus' subsequent characterisation, the salient point with respect to this thesis is the following: for Mercury to achieve his dual goal of enchanting Argus and liberating Io, he must first engage in the act of recall and then, that of adaptation. His task is to tell a known story, rendered just different enough to still appear novel and engaging. It is important that Argus does not immediately recognise the tale, lest this alert him to the narrative frame and remind him that he is

[246] The gods engage in frequent acts of revenge, often fuelled by spite, jealousy, and frustrated sexual desire. In brief, Juno is enraged one day to discover Jupiter's rape of Io, a naiad (river nymph). Jupiter transforms Io into a white heifer to hide her, but Juno sees through the ruse and dispatches the hundred-eyed shepherd Argus to constantly watch over Io, as Argus famously only ever sleeps with up to two eyes shut. Taking pity on Io, Jupiter sends Mercury to free her, which the god does by putting on a shepherd's disguise, playing his flute, and narrating the tale of Pan and Syrinx, which closely resembles that of Apollo and Daphne from earlier in Book I (a narrative repetition that is either extremely boring or compelling, depending on interpretation). Mercury beheads Argus as soon as he falls asleep – Io escapes and traverses the globe in fear, until finally reaching the Nile, where she is transformed back into a nymph by Jupiter, at last free. (Book I, vv. 610–748). The meta-poetic element of this tale (Mercury's re-narration) has been the subject of several interpretations. See Kaplan 1999, Feldherr 2010, Bednarek 2023, and Tarrant 2005.

meant to be on-guard. (Note, also, that Mercury wears a disguise). In listening to the story, Argus closes his eyes to the outside world, a fateful choice. The literary repetition is more than just a joke; it is, as Bednarek suggests, a form of poetic creed.

It is in this spirit that I want to think about some of the repetitions that emerge from this thesis; not for the sake of enumerating them, but of discovering what emerges from their retelling – and of demonstrating what can only be observed from this vantage-point; that is to say, the end.

A collection of repetitions may be considered a pattern, and patterns are best observed across a unified whole. In this thesis, I have followed the figure of the traveller with the guiding hypothesis that two patterns would emerge: first, that the corpus of productions overlaying the histories of Spain and the former Yugoslavia is richer than extant scholarship suggests and frequently interconnected, and two, that in light of the 'travelling turn' in Memory Studies, the traveller holds interpretative potential that has not yet been fully explored in a theatrical context. The archetypal antecedents of the traveller, as rendered in the Greco-Roman tradition and passed down through this tradition's revival during the Renaissance, alert the modern reader-spectator to the potential mediative power of this figure: Janus-like, the traveller is able to pivot between past and future, the divine and the mortal, and silence and speech. As in Book I of the *Metamorphoses*, the travellers here recall and adapt, creating repetitions that are strangely familiar, but also strangely new.

In discussing the nine productions that together form the case studies in this thesis, I have shown that the way in which travel is portrayed on-stage, but also pursued in its immediate peripheries (through tours, translations, paratexts), tells us something about how memory 'moves'. The dynamic aspects of memory – never unidirectional, always active – have been rigorously explored and defended by scholars working in Memory Studies; these same aspects, I suggest, are activated and strengthened by their literal counterparts – what I have broadly termed here the traveller player. While not intended be a theoretical category per se, my point with this epithet is to highlight that the relationship between travel and memory is not a metaphorical shorthand alone.

The social, political, and cultural context of the works examined have been crucial in exploring this hypothesis. While scholars have examined the influence of the Spanish Civil War on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav politics (Pavlavković), the spectre of the Spanish Civil War in Spanish news coverage of the Yugoslav dissolution of the 1990s (Hristova-Dijkstra), the sexual politics of Spanish plays about the Siege of Sarajevo (García-Manso), the translations and stagings of Early Modern Spanish texts in Serbia (Stojanović), among many other related studies cited in these pages, this is the first project to explore the artistic relationship between these two nations in a dialogical and comparative manner. By looking at both sides and perspectives, I show the affective differences in how these two regions have adopted (and perhaps distorted) the other's histories. The Spanish Civil War in Yugoslavia has been mythologised – as in many other countries, but here particularly so due to the significant political weight of the veterans. In the moral vacuum of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the Spanish conflict of the 1930s – rightly or wrongly conceived as a global ideological battle of good versus evil – offered a utopic canvas upon which the rise of regional nationalisms and ethno-strife could be denounced. In Spain, by contrast, the Yugoslav dissolution did not have such a clear historical reference, as intimate knowledge of the country was largely afforded only to those few artists who had the opportunity to work abroad and/or who were exiles (Núria Espert, La fura dels Baus, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Rafael Alberti). As such, Yugoslavia's history was also transformed in Spain, frequently flattened into a land of horror which appeared to point in two temporal directions: the traumas of Franco's dictatorship, as well as towards debates and anxieties surrounding future regional secession. Across both sides, these historical, perspectival transformations can be observed in the productions discussed in this thesis.

A logic of inverses informs the approach in Chapter I, where I examine the interpretative power of travel by removing it from the equation, and by homing in on a period of international sanctions and regional isolation. The almost suffocating absence of movement – again, on and off the stage – at the 1993 Yu Fest stood in extreme contrast with its supposed theme of voyage and discovery. In light of John Culbert's arguments surrounding paralysis and modernity, however, these halted dramaturgical moves begin to gain sense: these can be perceived as indicative of an unwillingness to engage with the past, as the past is here perceived as a never-ending cycle of violence and disillusionment. This unease manifests itself physically (somatically, even) through abandoned voyages,

slow-motion movements, and textual references to the futility of travel. Though I have focused on the representation of Early Modern Spain in the specific context of Serbia of 1993, the analyses of *Kolumbo, Don Kihot*, and *Fuente Ovejuna* have broader implications: these demonstrate that Culbert's paradigm extends fluidly into the domain of the theatre, though drama does not feature prominently – nearly at all – in his cited study.

Future lines of research might consider the role of paralysis in theatre staged in the aftermath of global crises of the twenty-first century, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Middle East. Within the Balkans, a study might include Ljubiša Ristić's 2023 staging of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Arguably already an extremely static text – the sisters never reach Moscow – Ristić heightens the sense of paralysis further by amplifying the temporal range of the production. In his version, Act I takes place in the tsarist era (1901), Act II during the October Revolution, Act III during Stalin's purges, and Act IV in an apparent present-day, which crucially sees the sisters attempting to travel to Ukraine as aid workers. A focus on paralysis may elucidate the memory politics of this production and, in turn, how Serbia's engagement with Russia's history post-2022 has been manifested in the theatre.

While the travellers in chapters II, III, and IV explore diverse terrains, several connections between them emerge. The unparalleled, twenty-year success of the Sarajevan version of *¡Ay, Carmela!* has gained renewed journalistic attention in the years since the death of actor Dragan Jovičić in 2020 and the subsequent establishment of an exhibit dedicated to the production in the city's Historical Museum. Though presented in the museum as a standalone phenomenon, I have demonstrated that several travels – here comprised of people, scripts, and earlier regional productions – were fundamental for this final, long-lasting Carmela to take place. The interpersonal difficulties faced by Gordana Gadžić and the late Ivica Vidović were the circumstances that culminated in the creation of Teatar Rugantino and the company's tour, which itself paved the way for the Bosnian version to gain traction.

When examined as a whole and not in isolated parts, the enormous success of José Sanchis Sinisterra's play in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia needs to be read within the broader transhistorical context connecting the Yugoslavs (the so-called 'our Spaniards') and the International Brigades. It was the travels of these 1,910 volunteers that created the

circumstances for a theatrical phenomenon to occur sixty years later, and to gain a foothold in the target culture. It is therefore no coincidence that the final, bilingual version of *¡Ay, Carmela!* literally brought civil war veterans back to the theatrical space.

Before Hadi Kurich provided the very first Bosnian translation of *¡Ay, Carmela!* for his half-brother, Irfan Mensur, and Belgrade's KULT Teatar in 1995, he had already engaged in act of transnational exchange. Within a year of arriving to Spain as a refugee with his family in 1993, he had staged his bilingual *Opus primum* for Valencian audiences. Since then, a major shift has occurred within Spanish theatre about the Siege of Sarajevo, a shift which Kurich's earliest and latest production illustrate well. The pivot from rendering Sarajevo (and Srebrenica, and Bosnia more broadly) as an infernal no-where land to a site of almost documentarian specificity is not itself the object of study of Chapter III; however, this move has by extension altered the way in audiences are invited to travel to this highly charged mnemonic space. By examining two concurrent productions that utilise several of the same dramaturgical techniques (direct address, documentary footage, collapsing temporalities) and parallel geographic framing (Spain-Sarajevo), I show that the on-stage, autobiographical narrator must engage in the same task as his or her literary counterpart, switching constantly between observer and observed, and between exposition and interpretation. By using hyper-authenticity as a litmus test to explore the moments in which these pivots occur, I suggest that one production stages a return to Sarajevo as a form of community building, while in the other, this same return functions as a historical warning.

While a relationship between *Donde el bosque se espesa* (2017), with its carefully annotated didactic aims, university affiliations, and government funding (EU; Horizon 2020), and the volatile, anti-establishment provocations of KPGT in 1993 may not immediately appear obvious, nonetheless connections can be drawn. When Miroslav Krleža's Columbus sees the shores of America in the horizon, he realises there is no such thing as a New World, a realisation magnified by Ristić through anachronistic music and the stage-set of a moored boat. There is something of this same disillusionment when Ana and Antonia, travelling to Jasenovac and Mauthausen, see behind the beloved father-figure the histories of generations of perpetrators, from Spain and the former Yugoslavia alike. Similarly, Laurencia's direct address to the audience after her rape in Saša Gabrić's *Fuente Ovejuna* – spoken in the context of Spain in the fifteenth century, written by Lope de Vega

in the seventeenth, and enacted here in the twilight of the twentieth – is arguably repeated by Charlatana, when she faces her modern Spanish audience and narrates the extent of her sexual abuse. The primary difference here, however, is that Charlatana – through shape-shifting, but also through shifting the spaces around her – is able to cross the invisible divide between perpetrators and victims, thereby evading a strict ethical characterisation. The chaos of Charlatana's movements, in turn, create a chaotic space in which not only is a new vocabulary needed (the vocabulary of postmodernism), but also in which evocative historical comparisons can be drawn between the Spanish, Croat, and Serbian ultra-right. That the character has been comparatively neglected in academic terms is revealing: the marginal and liminal space created Charlatana has in turn led to her own marginalisation.

In taking Spain and the Former Yugoslavia as my regional case studies, I tested the interpretative limits of the traveller within the context of a rich history of theatrical exchange that has often been misunderstood or minimised. Still, this project should be considered a starting point, rather than a destination. The dialogical focus on civil war has necessarily restricted my corpus to productions that occurred only in the aftermath of the final Yugoslav wars, that is to say, productions from the 1990s and onwards. The great deal of 'Ibero-Yugoslav' cultural exchange that occurred over the twentieth century, especially within the context of BITEF, is an area of research that needs additional mining. This said, the methodological approach proposed in this thesis can also be applied to a broader scope of geographical contexts. I want to close with offering one such example, with reference to a production that could not fully be addressed in this thesis, but which could form a future research project.

I refer here to a lost Yugoslav television drama based on Rafael Alberti's 1956 play, *Noche de guerra en el museo del Prado* [A Night of War in the Prado Museum]. Published from exile in Argentina in 1956, Alberti's subversive play formally premiered in Italy in 1973, and famously was only staged in Spain following the death of Franco, at the María Guerrero theatre in 1978. However, archival records held in Croatia confirm that a Yugoslav version was filmed for television in 1965, significantly predating the official world premiere. Directed by Bogdan Jerković for Radio Televijiza Hrvatska [Croatian Radio Television], the tape has unfortunately not been preserved; I have been able, however, to locate the screenplay, which was translated by puppet-theatre expert, Borislav Mrkšić.

The translated play echoes the Spanish text closely, which sees characters from paintings in the Prado Museum come alive on one night in 1936, the same night these paintings are secretly moved from the museum to protect them from shelling.

While at present many factors concerning this film remain a mystery, the methodology I have proposed here has the potential to elucidate the circumstances behind its genesis. Jerković, an innovative but side-lined figure on the Croatian experimental theatre scene, lived in the 1960s in Parma, Italy, where he directed several productions and was later awarded honorary citizenship for his artistic contribution. Crucially, Jerković's stay in Parma coincided with Alberti's Roman period. In keeping with the idea of forging an archive that combines official and altogether more marginalised sources, the next step in researching this lost film would involve following Jerković's travels: visiting archives in both Zagreb and Parma alike, and conducting oral history interviews with those artists he collaborated with in the 1960s. It would be important here to consider those individuals and texts that may initially seem marginal. August Cesarec's brief encounter with Rafael Alberti, cited in Chapter II (p. 82), would be a fitting point of departure. Cesarec, who has been credited with bringing Federico García Lorca to Croatia upon his return from Spain and subsequently ushering in a series of translations of his work (Knježević 2022), includes in his 1938 memoir, and immediately following his conversation with Alberti, a brief story about the Prado Museum. In this story, Cesarec imagines the paintings in the Prado conversing and moving through the streets of Madrid, in a dream-like sequence that closely resembles the narrative structure of Alberti's play. Whether or not a coincidence, this literary parallel provides grounds for further research into the curious movements of *Noche de guerra en el museo del prado*. Such a project would not only enhance an understanding of theatrical connections between Spain and Yugoslavia, a road this thesis has followed, but also of how these connections travelled through Argentina and Italy, often within the context of exile.

On those who are at home while journeying, classicist Karl Kerényi writes: '[b]eing open to everywhere is part of their nature. Nevertheless, they form a world its own right, a middle-domain, where a person in that volatized condition has access to everything' (1987: 14-15). Hermes 'volatizes himself' (13) by turning into mist, and it is this condition of being both 'in the air' yet frequently unnoticed that characterises the travellers whose paths this thesis has followed. By mapping the transnational enactment of civil war in

Spain and the former Yugoslavia, I have shown that within the domain of the theatre, travellers are uniquely positioned to carry and meditate memories beyond their original geographic markers – even if these efforts do not always end up forming part of official narratives or archives. Astril Erll writes that memory is 'in constant, unceasing motion' (2011a: 12) and Kerényi, that Hermes is 'completely absorbed by movement' ([1942] 1987: 14). The parallels between these characterisations reflect the dialogue this research has attempted to foster.

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