

## EUROPE AFTER 1989: ETHNIC WARS, THE FASCISATION OF SOCIAL LIFE AND BODY POLITICS IN SERBIA

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This paper deals with the specific area of representational practices in which the media production/appropriation of reality in Serbia played the decisive role in the process of the fascisation of social life and every day practices in Serbia – before and during the wars in former Yugoslavia.

It concerns how the *chosen discourses of appropriation* of social memory, collective trauma and the re-creation of the Enemy-Otherness in image and event can become an integral, “self-participatory” agent in the pro-Fascist construction of the social reality – through the very image/concept of the “reality” itself, which then becomes the lived experience of people exposed to the constant working of the image/concept.

The *power of the over-representation* of the social reality can therefore be seen as the strongest discursive instrument of a political order. Its power lies in the position of the selective legitimisation/delegitimisation of social memory and social “presence”: through narration/negation of social trauma, shiftable presence/absence of violence, the constitution/virtuality of the public sphere, and the formation of the “collective consciousness.” The legitimising power of this dominant discourse lies in the construction of the collective consensus as the cultural/political code of language.

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The process of the social and political transformations in Eastern and Central Europe since the Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, labelled rather euphemistically as a “transition,” brought with it the phenomenon of violence as an acute social and political problem, although in its milder forms both forms of violence – gender and ethnic – were present in all other countries of the Eastern block as well. Their over-all persistence in post-communist regimes reveals their structural dependency, which allows them to be defined as societies of highly charged ethnic/racial, and sexual politics (Enloe, 1993).

One could even say that in the times of crisis and basic social transformations, the deconstruction of the previous gendered order is one of the most fundamental factors of change, and an effective instrument of the global restructuring of power. Furthermore, since the most influential concept in post-communist state-building processes was the patriarchal nation-state concept, the ideology of state and ethnic nationalism (based on patriarchal principles) inevitably became the most dominant building force. Various forms of hegemonistic nationalisms, national separatisms, chauvinist and racist exclusion or marginalisation of (old and new) minority groups are, as a rule, closely connected with patriarchal, discriminatory and violent politics against women and their civil and social rights previously “guaranteed” under the old communist order (Papić, 1994a).

The absence of women from politics in post-communist transitions reveals the damaging effects of the communist patriarchal legacy – which gave women legal rights (to work, equal pay, education, divorce, abortion), but strategically prevented them from becoming active political subjects of their own destiny. The disappearance of a communist “equality paradigm” and the old-new conservative ideology of State, Nation or Religion in each post-communist country was crucially based on the strategies of the *retraditionalisation*, *instrumentalisation* and *naturalisation* of women’s identities, their social roles, and symbolic representations.

The structural connection between ethnic and gender violence is most clearly seen in the case of former Yugoslavia. The genocidal brutality of the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia shows how ethnic hatreds have been provoked/produced in order to construct the *new* frontiers of Enemy-Otherness through the fluid and mixed lines of religion, culture, ethnicity and gender, thus reflecting the contemporary redefinition of racial hostility (Eisenstein, 1996). Furthermore, ethnic nationalism, or more precisely, *ethno-fascist nationalism*, is based on a specific gender identity/difference politics in which women are simultaneously mythologized as the Nation’s deepest “essence,” and instrumentalised in their “natural” difference – as the Nation’s life/birth saver/producer. This allows one to conclude that the wars in the former Yugoslavia could not be interpreted as the result of the tribal and “eternal” barbarian mentality of its peoples, but as a contemporary phenomenon of violent, post-communist strategies for the redistribution of ethnic/gender power by defining new ethnic and sub-ethnic borders *between men*, and their respective (often militarised) elite-structures (Papić, 1994b)

Also, the nationalist abuse of women (Muel-Dreyfuss, 1996) shed light on the phenomenon of totalitarian ethnic nationhood as a naturalised fraternal order, in which women are doubly subjugated: as *insiders* they are colonised



and instrumentalised in their “natural” function as the Nation’s sacred “essence” and “birth-machines;” as *outsiders* they are reified into the target of destruction, as a mediated instrument of violence against other men’s Nation and cultural identity.

The abuse of women and their bodies in the “pure” nation-building processes results in two inter-dependent forms of violence against women: highly restricted identity “demands” (no abortion) for women-insiders, and extreme violence (consistent, as in cases of rape) against women-outsiders. The external destruction of one social/cultural identity system in war is the most brutal form of deconstruction, but life under the processes of malign-ed/ant internal mutations is, perhaps, equally disastrous because it systematically diminishes and humiliates the basic human values of decency, honesty, tolerance, individual morality, or even more basic assumptions, such as the concept of time (past, present and future), personal identity, or the simple ten commandments (love thy neighbour, thou shall not kill). In Serbia one could see these values all disappear, only to be replaced with alien substitutes – and taken for the “real” thing.

Briefly, in ex-Yugoslavia four basic identity levels were in extreme turmoil, under violent and (only seemingly) chaotic deconstruction/construction: Self-identity, Gender identity, Civic/Urban identity, and the identity of the Other. In all these four dimensions of public/private identity the following “forces” are circularly and claustrophobically intertwined: Nation, Tradition and Patriarchy – acted out through the following instruments or “channels:” closure, fear, exclusion, conflict, violence, revenge, extinction, displacement, disempowerment, brutality, insecurity, unpredictability, poverty.

Speaking of Serbia, one could say that all four of these identity levels were in turmoil not due to any outside, but only due to internal forces of nationalist and patriarchal “aggression.” Although (on the surface) Milošević’s regime still maintained a strange mixture of nationalist and “socialist” ideas and values, the decisive process is one of a peculiar retraditionalisation – a tightly combined dynamic of fundamental civic disempowerment and state/nationalist/patriarchal authoritarianism which bases its power on the revival/survival of the rural/feudal/collective identity that delegates/transfers enormous power to the Leader, which (accidentally or not) in the ancient Serbian language actually has a triple meaning: the Duke/Master/Leader.

The feminist slogan “the personal is the political,” in a deeply ironic sense, became part of the official, state-nationalist policy in Serbia. First of all, it translates as “the personal *belongs* to the State politics,” but, since (years before the war) politics in Serbia had been identified with the National/ist Cause, Destiny and Glory, its precise translation is “the personal *is* national/ist.” In

every nationalism, and particularly in its aggressive/ethno-Fascist form, men are those who make/create/form the “soul” and the “engine” of the vision/interpretation of the exclusionary, war-oriented “essence” of the Nation, and women are systematically made invisible, unless they become the much publicised victims of the Enemy-Nation. This invisibility may appear advantageous since they are at least not under constant pressure from nationalist slogans, recipes and advice on how to become “real” Serbian women. But, in fact, this position of women’s “non-presence” in the public sphere is itself the sign of a strong Serbian patriarchal culture and politics (Papić, 1994). They are not even to be talked about publicly – except in the “natural” context of nationhood.

The nationalist revival of the patriarchal tradition invoked, strengthened and (combined with the communist patriarchal legacy) formed the “new” Serbian nationalist patriarchy, very much marked by the features of Milošević’s rule. One could even say that Serbian nationalist patriarchy is, to some extent, its own contradiction, since he despotically subjugated *all* members of the “female” Nation. More precisely, from the beginning he consistently politically disempowered all political institutions and therefore all men (except himself) in order to exclude any possible competition of “equals.”

On the other hand, the unstable social circumstances and the extremely difficult living conditions in Serbia (Bolčić, 1995) have activated enormous reserves of women’s energy in their over-mobilisation for survival (Milić, 1995), the hyper-intensified form of their subjugated empowerment in this vital adaptation to a time of crisis, war, and violence. By activating their “natural” survival potential, women actually carried Serbia’s heaviest burden of the social and economic crises during the period of UN sanctions, and therefore, willingly or not, actually played the part of Milošević’s most faithful “ally.” The fact that his despotic charisma has been associated with certain types of women faithfully “adoring” him from the beginning, might be read as follows: the majority of women in Serbia have been, in fact, seduced by One Man as despotic patriarch and they therefore have complied with the expected, “monumental” epic Serbian women’s destiny of being self-sacrificing mothers, dutiful daughters, unselfish mothers-in-law, open-hearted aunts, hard-working cousins, reliable neighbours, friends and supporters.

The overall civic void which was consistently filled with the disempowering hegemony of the nationalist collective homogenisation, the constant life-in-crisis conditions, the near-war situation, the economic, political and legal destruction of society in Serbia, the autocratic power structure of one man which disempowered every other political institution and force, the mythologized total investment in Great History and Great Sacrifice – in Serbia re-



sulted in a specific gender dynamics which cannot be seen as the one-dimensional oppression of women by men but as something more complex. It is contradictory and significantly different on a public and a private level in terms of its practices and discourses. On the public level, both in practice and in the dominant nationalist discourse, women are legally, economically and institutionally almost totally disempowered. But, in contradiction to what they would think and declare, men are not empowered on both public levels. Only on the level of manifest ideological nationalist discourse are they the dominant, ruling, militant and heroic actor-gender, because Milošević's despotic destruction and dissolution of the social/civic institutional/political fabric on the level of public practice made them almost as disempowered as women. They have invested, delegated, and transferred all aspects of their own public power to the mysterious, unpredictable and uncontrolled power of One Man.

This structural emasculation of men's power on the public level makes the gender power-dynamics on the private level even less one-dimensional. The men's public disempowerment makes them privately powerless more than ever before. The distribution of power on the private-everyday level – has lost its traditional dichotomic character because men's power structure in everyday life has deteriorated and almost all means of their private power over women has dissolved except for the dominant ideological discourse. However, the increased incidence of men being violent to women is, of course, an alarming sign of how men are coping, or failing to cope, with this sudden and obviously unwanted gender egalitarianism. This gender egalitarian solidarity is, in fact, the result of one other equality – the equality of living under despotic powerlessness.

So, if we are to compare the same women's "escape into privacy," a phenomenon visible in all other previous communist countries, I would not say that in the case of Serbia their "escape" was an escape at all, or nostalgia for simple private rewards after the socialist public overburdening. The case for women in Serbia is different. In the period of extreme existential insecurity they were offered only one choice: the traditional *women's strengthening strategy by complying* with the deepest, most "natural" patriarchal expectations of women – their self-identification with a re-traditionalised, basic patriarchal power structure. As so many times before, women took what was pathetically offered to them – to "save the nation" by making their "own" family survive. The private empowerment of women in this process is, in itself, an extremely costly achievement, and what is more – it actually helped the despotic nationalist political system that caused and provoked the very crisis they tried to struggle with, to survive.

*Media Production of Reality in Serbia and The Chosen Discourses of Appropriation: The Integrating Power of Fascism*

Terror and repression in Serbia have been carefully planned, but they have never been systematically applied except to the media; this has left social areas in which one has simply not been noticed as a serious opponent of the regime. The wars in former Yugoslavia were being planned long before the first TV pictures were first broadcast in June 1991. Those pictures showed the realisation of a hegemonistic Serb policy articulated in the mid-eighties; it was obvious that the “Yugoslav People’s Army” would take the side of Milošević’s genocidal ideology. War had been presented to the people of Serbia as “the only option” already in 1989, when Milošević went off to Gazimestan and there renewed the *Kosovo myth* and announced “possible war” before a million Serb men and women. Like Hitler at a rally of SS units, Milošević *descended from the heavens* (sceptics would say landed in a helicopter) onto the *holy ground* of Gazimestan, in order to inform us that the time had come for new heroic battles – i.e., war.

That was a period of popular fascination with Milošević, he became a mega-phenomenon, his pictures everywhere, people familiarised his image with the new Serb Icon. The people – the inhabitants, not necessarily Serbs – of Serbia indeed went through a phase of absolute fascination with the Leader “Slobo,” and made possible the Fascist homogenisation of the collective. Everyone submitted to it: men and women, old and young, educated and uneducated. Women would repeat; “he is so beautiful.” Why did the majority of Serbian women side with Milošević? It is because they too embraced a schizophrenic role, an absolute separation of their private and public identities. They wished to be “mothers of great warriors,” they wished to sacrifice themselves. In patriarchal societies they cannot imagine themselves outside this role of being a victim. Also, many prominent “democratic” personas from the opposition, have indeed gradually internalised some of the elements of fascism: the “Serb holy nature” of certain territories, the heroic Kosovo past, the holy objects of the Church, or the attitude of surprise regarding “why NATO is suddenly bombing us for *no reason at all*.” In other words, during the past few years also the independent circles have lapsed into the Serbo-centric *narcissistic rhetoric* they have learnt from the “infallible” regime.

The re-invention of Serb patriarchal society was, therefore, developed at epic, political, literary, scientific, sentimental, Christian and pagan levels – people really believed that “with Slobo” they would finally reach a Serbian mythic all-embracing unity. What united the people was not so much a mythical vision of the future Serb Heaven, but a substitute for more reasonable



instruments to help people confront the great issue of *fear* that began after 1989. That was almost perfect political instrumentalisation with basic Fears: of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Yugoslavia's break-up and the "void" heralded by the collapse of the hegemonistic Yugoslav nation. Milošević exploited this to the full. He sent a message to the men that they were to fight "heroically" for the preservation of Yugoslavia, while to the women the message was to shut up.

*Fascisation of Social Memory, Collective Trauma and The Exclusion of Otherness*

As an instrument of constructing pre-war eruptive emotions that would finally lead to the psychological fascisation of people's minds, much effort was expended to evoke and revive the Serbian World War II trauma of 1941-45. Much was also done also to revive the Orthodox faith among the population of Serbia, but the symbolic identification with World War II was probably the most effective method of homogenisation: by providing a continuous visual presentation on TV every day – for instance of the exhumation of mass graves in Herzegovina. The intention was to use the media so that people would once *again internalise* the traumas of Ustasha crimes. The exhumation of the bones was in reality a way of preparing the ground for the new mass graves that were dug after 1991. Propaganda was created proclaiming that "the Serbs are the biggest victims," who therefore have the "right" of revenge and the "right" to wage new wars and commit crimes. Karadžić, for example, stated that "Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina have the right to preventive defence." In other words, he *amnestied in advance* the crimes that were to come, by exploiting the traumas associated with the unearthed bones from 1941.

So there was a particular *peregrination of the trauma* (Papić, 2000) just as there was a shift in time of national identity – back into the past – and a shift of responsibility for war crimes exclusively to the Croat Ustasha side, while Serb Chetnik crimes were methodically set aside. Reality was divided schizophrenically into a virtual reality of the media and the ordinary reality of the war, with the media reality for many people becoming far stronger than anything they saw with their own eyes. This is all part of a *re-invention of the chosen trauma* at the level of *the public* political phenomenon and through the state media: a carefully planned revision of the historical balance sheet. The media did a great job of preparing people to accept war as a "natural," "historic," etc. series of events. The media did consistently forge the Serbs' *indifference* towards the Other(s), the trauma became so internalised that Croatian and Bosnian victims could never reach the sacred status of the allegedly "primeval," "greatest," Serbian, victims of 1941-42.

One could perhaps describe this even as a *fictionalisation of the chosen trauma*. Moreover, it was not only a fictionalisation of trauma, but also, at the same time, a *displacement of the trauma – in time and in space*. This was a very sophisticated transfer of the local Bosnian-Herzegovinian drama way back from 1941-42 to *across* the river Drina, to the population in Serbia which *had never experienced* that trauma, and who were supposed to go through “reliving” it, in 1991.

*Layers of Responsibility: Bones and Relics*

Another aspect, the common post-1989 revival of Orthodox Christianity, is also closely connected with these processes. The Serbian Orthodox Church once again started to teach people how to become “good” Serb men or women, for example with long Orthodox ritual processions around Serbia carrying the holy relics of Tsar Lazar, who died in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. For months these relics travelled across and all over Serbia, they were ceremonially carried from – and thus clearly fusing – the year 1389 to the year 1989. So, here we do not have only fictionalisation and displacement of trauma, but a much greater political tool: *the compression/decompression of time – time fusion and confusion*. The relics “confirmed” that to be a Serb is in fact a vocation, an invitation to become a victim, since Serbs are in fact a “heavenly people.” What was repeatedly written in the print media or shown on TV referred to a narrative model of a “lack of understanding for the injustices committed against the Serbs;” hence, in parallel, to the “Serb right” to refuse to live in peace with other nations who “for centuries” have behaved in an evil way towards them.

So, to conclude briefly, all these years we went through a whole set of preparations for war: verbal and visual, emotional and cognitive, mental (or even mystical) and public, horizontal and vertical, time and timelessness, spatial and a-spatial – all these aspects were actively included in the overall *fascisation of public and private life* in Serbia. The war actually arrived late: the indifference to and “tolerance” of future genocide in people’s minds were psychologically ready for activation as early as 1989. It was already accepted that even some “less good Serbs” would also be sacrificed: those who do not *fully* belong to Greater Serbia. Those were the days and years of a specific phenomenon in Serbia, seemingly naive or rational, which I am freely labelling as *Turbo-Fascism*.

It is, of course, known that Fascism is a historical term; that the history of Nazi Germany is not the same as that of Milošević’s Serbia. However, in post-modernist and feminist theory we speak of “shifting concepts,” when a new



epoch inherits with some additions concepts belonging to an earlier one, like, for instance the feminist notion of *shifting patriarchy*. In my view we should not fear the use of “big terms” if they *accurately* describe certain political realities. Serbian Fascism had its own concentration camps, its own systematic representation of violence against Others, its own cult of the family and cult of the leader, an explicitly patriarchal structure, a culture of indifference towards the exclusion of the Other, a closure of society upon itself and upon its own past; it had a taboo on empathy and a taboo on multiculturalism; it had powerful media acting as proponents of genocide; it had a nationalist ideology; it had an epic mentality of *listening* to the word and *obeying* authority.

The prefix “turbo” refers to the specific mixture of politics, culture, “mental powers” and the pauperisation of life in Serbia: the mixture of rural and urban, pre-modern and post-modern, pop culture and heroines, real and virtual, mystical and “normal,” etc. In this term, despite its naive or innocent appearances, there is still fascism in its proper sense. Like all fascisms, Turbo-Fascism includes and celebrates a pejorative renaming, alienation, and finally removal, of the Other: Croats, Bosnians, and Albanians. Turbo-fascism in fact demands and basically relies on this *culture of the normality of fascism* that had been structurally constituted well before all the killings in the wars started.

Here is an example: Serbia introduced an economic ban on Slovene goods, i.e., – on all objects symbolising the Slovene as the Other with whom Serbs had had contact! The integrative force of fascism is here evident: the order from above and through “populist sentiments” in the media, people were not to consume Slovene milk, any more. This strategy discouraged people from buying an *object* because it would mean they “love” a *subject* – Slovenes. In this way the strategy was very successful: Slovenes were transferred from *co-citizens* or a compatriot position to a symbolic position of the “milk” which must not be *touched*. This process of objectifying and excluding the Other *via an object* that symbolises the whole ethnic group, quickly becomes part of the “common values,” under the Law of Common Sense. That is how people in Serbia (long before June 1991, when the war started) were taught to hate the “Slovene Body.” Without that politically constructed *aversion* towards the body of the Other, until the Body of the Other becomes an *Abject Body* – the massacres and murders of so many Croatians, Bosnians and Albanian bodies would not have been possible.

On the other hand this *spatial transfer* of trauma played a significant part. Briefly put, the Drina River, which divides Serbia from all other western parts of ex-Yugoslavia, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, played an enormous symbolic role in dividing the two realities: war and destruction stopped just at the west side of the Drina River. That reality never entered Serbia in its full mon-

strosity, and so the Drina River became a symbolic border beyond which empathy no longer existed. The Serbs of Serbia had no feeling of responsibility for anything that occurred on the far, west side of the Drina, since the people over there symbolically were no longer human beings – they were abjected-objectivised enemies. That makes the Serb crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina the last result of a destroyed reason, a destruction of all reason: it is not just a repetition but a *reinforcement*, and continuation of the Fascist crimes of the past Second World War. It is, in my view, a very malignant *continuation* of the “reawakening of old ghosts,” who are now no longer ghosts, but new victims, live people suffering, and it will go into the following generations.

Paradoxically or not, from the late eighties this *normality of evil* against the Other belonged to *the normal everyday life* in Serbia. The above mentioned processes and changes were necessary in order for it to become so. This was the result of a sophisticated policy of collective amnesia that made individual consciences feel “free” to be suspended by a collective Super-Ego. In these processes of issuing, “licenses to kill” were systematically issued by the state TV, private and commercial TV programs, it was the dominant form of political discourse, and an open message from the “holy messages of the Serbian Orthodox Church.” These Serbian institutions and individuals did construct during eighties some kind of *super-conscience* that permitted oblivion and the suspension of empathy, memory and tolerance toward the Other. We are still far away from any understanding that there exists a whole range of *layers of responsibility* for the crimes committed: for example, responsibility for remaining silent, for forgetting, for hatred and for media propaganda. The responsibility for remaining silent is the most complicated, since silence includes agreement, but also *awareness of repression* – and even a shadow of doubt.

#### *Male And Female Bodies And Their Representation In Serbia During The 1990s*

First of all, the male body underwent a deconstruction of the peaceable and relatively urbanised identity that it had achieved under socialism. Secondly, the male under Tito’s regime always inhabited the border between rural and urban: he lived in the village and worked in the factory. He was a sufficiently hybrid creature to retain many epic and pagan elements that would later be transformed into the masculine ideal of the warrior under Milošević’s regime. Milošević very carefully constructed the “Serb hero” and all *male fantasies* – he permitted the highest heroism *in words*, particularly in *his own words* – in fact, the Milošević as the greatest national Leader did not necessarily have to do much *in reality*. His powerful image and existence were sufficient.



Also Dobrica Ćosić, writer and “Father of the Nation,” did a serious job of articulating the “Serbian Soul;” he had only “given the word” and through his words the genocidal fantasies of the collective were fulfilled. Once again, schizophrenically, the “heroes” were *civilians* who only delivered messages of war – they did not cut throats or murder, but gave the orders for those things to be done. All males in Serbia were subject to a media brainwashing in the course of which they had to identify with the Leader: i.e., the male population was gripped even more strongly by fascination with the Leader than was the female.

Milošević’s war regime was designed for patriarchal males, for whom, as in every patriarchal society, only males are subjects: women are objects (ornaments or trophies). Vera Erlich’s fundamental anthropological study of the pre-Second World War patriarchal family system in the Balkans – of the Dinarić patriarchal *zadruga* society – in which, for example, the eldest female has the *ritual duty* to kiss and wash the feet of the youngest male. Moreover, there are obscure signs of the homoerotic sides of Milošević’s regime. I recall the image conveyed on television at the start of the 1990s, when the Leader went to visit Kosovo. In the first village he visited we saw this ritual: the oldest villager stepped forward from a line of ceremoniously assembled most important men – i.e., the symbolic *wise man* who traditionally embodies the (male) authority of the whole community – in order to kiss Milošević’s hand. This is not only homoerotic but also infantile, since the whole community is submitting symbolically to “paternal authority.” We are dealing here once again with the avoidance of all individual responsibility: the “father of the nation” is responsible; we “little children” did not know what we were doing, we just obeyed “Daddy.” Male identification with the Great Leader also opens a space for molesting women: what matters is what the males from the local tavern think; women are *not* important all. But there is a paradox: the Serb warriors are so humbly obedient to Big Father Milošević, that they in fact accept the *female* role as defined by classic patriarchal societies: they are passive, they have no right to speak, they fear the Father’s anger, they submit to his desires. The warriors-volunteers *de facto* played the role of the frustrated patriarchal *wives* of their ideological leaders.

### *The Body of the Warrior*

We are talking here mainly about the poorer strata, lumpen-proletariat or rural poor, which gave birth to Bokan and Arkan as well as many members of *The (Serbian) Eagles*. These were the only ones who really did set off over the Drina to “defend Serbdom,” while the great majority, which will never be

accused of the crimes committed, sat at home and enjoyed *Arkan's Travels* and the "Balkan Cinema." A special layer of sadists went off to terrorise, loot and murder, but only at weekends – as a kind of "short break." Others joined various paramilitary units and so became part of the "great body of the Army." The body that killed, therefore, was *that which fully merged into the collectivity*; that which fully gave up its individuality. Its "reward" was that the violence it wreaked led to *local public affirmation*. One should not forget the role of the mystifying Orthodoxy and Russophilia that provided the warriors with "missions" – which, in other words, *sanctified* the body that killed. In contrast to the government that did not dare to *legalise* the "heroism" of its killers, the Church rewarded them with symbolic capital.

The only "heroes" the state legitimised were politicians or intellectuals in their political service. Arkan's men and other such death-squad volunteers until recently received no money or privileges from the state: in legal terms they were "outsiders," invisible as a social group. Yet, through another schizophrenic splitting, they were the centre of the Greater-Serbia phantasm – the story telling! That is why many people in Serbia could invent justifications in the form of "We did not" take part in the war: not only because there has been no *official* recognition of the "services" of the ethnic cleansers, but also the warriors, local heroes and killers were few in number compared to the majority of Serbs, who watched and supported the war from their armchairs.

### *The Female Body under the Ruins of Milošević Nationalist Reign*

The journey into the past did not avoid the female body either. It had to suffer the return to tradition and the deeper patriarchal glorification of the Serb warrior "mentality" and the male body. Women remained silent and censored themselves so that they would not be subjected to violence. Silence became a universal norm: sons and fathers remained silent before their daughters, brothers before their sisters, women before other women. The sediment of the socialist emancipation of women *once again* worked in Milošević's favour: his wife Mira Marković – at least in the beginning – exploited her image as a sociologist and emancipated woman. The rights of women in Serbia were thus suspended without their noticing. In any case, they were far too concerned with inflation and elementary survival. When all other social institutions in the system fell apart, when there were no more child benefits, when men lost their jobs en masse or were mobilised, the whole burden fell on the family and on the women. Women queued, secured food (kinfolk from the village played a crucial role here), cooked, looked after children and the eld-



erly, and may have also worked in the grey economy. Within the family, but only in that *private zone*, women became stronger than ever – i.e., they took on the Big Mother role.

*What has happened with sexuality?*

Sexuality existed only in Serb “neo-folk” music, where it was/is greatly magnified. Examples of the allegedly “Happy” Serbian Woman’s Body, a plump body acting out permanent submission and joy over its sexual accessibility, are furnished by a whole series of so-called “turbo-folk queens” (singers). They play a mixture of Serb and oriental melodies, at first in oriental and rural settings, with belly-dancer movements (later on they would travel and be *displaced* exclusively into urban settings (but not having left behind the belly dancer’s aura). This mixture of traditional folk music, oriental influences and female singers “giving themselves willingly” did not have the objective to just arouse tavern emotions and relax the clientele, but precisely to inflame and re-affirm pro-Fascist emotions – sending a clear *sexual message* that, in fact, life is beautiful, like the music that these Serbian women sang. Moreover, that “our women” are undoubtedly the most beautiful women in the whole world and that sex is great and functioning despite these difficult times in Serbia.

The singers were, in a way, the *Representation of the Chosen Over-Sexualized Serbian Women* (exclusively Serbs, or they would hide their different ethnic origin), who alone have the right to invite and excite Serbian Men through *music* – to the Fantasy of Sexuality. They are there to “comfort” men in a difficult time, even the rapists, in the sense of showing them they are *still potent*. Violence is wreaked solely upon the bodies of women of *other* ethnicities. Serb women were not raped “systematically.” In the national propaganda they are presented as Mothers and Sisters – so they are raped only sporadically, secretly and at home.

There is a hierarchy in Serb violence against women. The greatest is violence against Albanian women, which is not even recorded, since they have no rights whatsoever – they are “things” (the whole of Serb war fascism was trained in the apartheid system that Milošević’s Serbs introduced against the Albanian ethnos during the 1980s). Violence against Croat and Muslim women is a matter of a warrior’s “prestige” and “positive” self-affirmation. Violence against Serb women is usually presented as an “excess” or otherwise hidden. Concerning the over-sexualization of the female pop-singers’ bodies, I should state that the very fact of the empty space left on the Serbian folk scene by the disappearance of non-Serb singers also represented a kind of free licence for

violence against the bodies of those who were “not there,” those eliminated Others.

It is important to point out that the greatest symbolic and material politics of the destruction of the Body of the Other was carried out *much earlier* – at the end of the 1980s in the south of the former Yugoslavia, with the suspension of Kosovo’s autonomous’ rights; while the real war violence began at the start of the 1990s in the north, in Slovenia. As in all schizophrénias, reality took time to reach the centre of its virtual obsession: chronologically speaking, Kosovo was the last to be engulfed by war and Greater-Serbian occupation, which precisely bases itself upon the Kosovo *myth*.

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