

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Anti-nationalism

post-Yugoslav resistance and narratives of self and society

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor in Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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October 2000

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the people won't feel better if the stick
with which they are beaten
is called the people's stick

Mikhail Bakunin

[well..., it looks like we do...]

the soldier came knocking upon the queen's door
he said I am not fighting for you anymore
the queen knew she'd seen his face somewhere before
and slowly she let him inside
he said I've watched your palace up here on the hill
and I've wondered who's the woman for whom we all kill
but I'm leaving tomorrow and you can do what you will
only first I am asking you: why?

Suzanne Vega – The Queen and the Soldier

(from the album *Suzanne Vega* © 1985 A&M Records)

table of contents

preface

introduction: ethnography, theory, politics—passionate detachment

1. a post-Yugoslav study: there's a world going on underground
2. the unauthorised nutshell digest
3. living just enough for the city—fieldwork in practice
4. (anti-)nationalism and my mirror phase

1. (anti)nationalism as discursive practice

1. discursive practice and articulation
2. power, agency, and discursive practice
3. the impossibility of discursive closure
4. post-Yugoslav nationalist discursive practice
5. post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist *altérité*
6. terminology, epistemology, and ethnography
 - 6.1 nothing is simply post-: 'post-Yugoslav'
 - 6.2. resistance and the 'anti' in 'anti-nationalism'

2. narratives of self, memory, big/small stories

1. narratives of self in practice
 - 1.1. narrative identity
 - 1.2. narration, practices of coping, resistance
 - 1.3. identity, narrative and memory
2. narratives of self and discursive shifts
 - 2.1. crisis and acute identity renegotiation
 - 2.2. big/small stories: coping and repositioning
 - 2.3. story lines: evoking authoritative discourses
3. remembering and forgetting
 - 3.1. rewriting narratives
 - 3.2. the uses of misremembering
 - 3.3. someone's truth, the whole of someone's truth, and nothing but someone's truth
 - 3.4. alternative narratives, alternative memories
 - 3.5. modes of narration

3. Yugoslavia—dealing with the national question

1. the glorious pasts of 'natural' homelands
2. the emergence of the Yugoslav idea
3. the inter-war kingdom: Yugoslavia take one
4. the second world war: contested narrations of horror
 - 4.1. Ustaša fascist rule in Greater Croatia
 - 4.2. Četniks and Partisans – from grave to grave...
5. post-war Titoism: Yugoslavia take two
 - 5.1. one formula for the national question: 'Brotherhood and Unity'
 - 5.2. the politics of nationality: the balance of Croats and Serbs
 - 5.3. the ambiguity of Titoism: unity and decentralisation
 - 5.4. the end of an era: Yugoslavia's swan song
 - 5.5. the ambivalent role of nationality in Titoist Yugoslavia
 - 5.6. Yugoslav modernity: the horror of indetermination

4. Croatian and Serbian nationalism: articulating past and present

1. 'transitions' to poverty
2. clearing Serbian grounds: How The East Was Won
 - 2.1. the beginning and the end: Serbian nationalism and Kosovo
 - 2.2. Serbian intellectuals and the discursive shift: the Memorandum
 - 2.3. the devil you know: comrade Sloba takes control
 - 2.4. the craft of re-articulation: Serbian nationalism, Yugoslavia and the Party
3. meanwhile—disintegration, elections and war
 - 3.1. Slovenia, Serbia and the last Yugoslav supper
 - 3.2. following the postcommunist tide—a wave of elections
 - 3.3. and the winner is ... war
4. Serbian nationalism as discursive practice
 - 4.1. Serbian nationalism and the articulation of old and new suffering
 - 4.2. (dis)continuity and the vampire: versions of the Yugoslav past
5. Croatian nationalism as discursive practice
 - 5.1. a thousand year dream—nationalist discourse and polarisation in Croatia
 - 5.2. who are the people? narrating difference
 - 5.3. constructing unity: the homogenisation of the nation
 - 5.3.1. *correcting history gone wrong: (re)naming and the power of definition*
 - 5.3.2. *raising the bone count: the ambiguity of (dis)continuity*
 - 5.4. Croatian nationalism and narrations of the Yugoslav past
6. constructing discrete national cultures: versions of past and present

5. before and after: clashing narratives of self, society and war

1. ethnic cleansing as a war objective and a war strategy
2. struggles for definition: what was it all about?
3. anti-nationalist narratives of the wars
4. broken narratives: before and after
5. coping with experiences of loss
6. 'everything went mad': the liminality of life during wartime
7. memory and continuity in anti-nationalist discursive strategies

6. national identity before and after: anti-nationalist everyday perspectives

1. situating a story: some peculiarities of nationality before and after
2. understanding evocations of nationalist discourse
 - 2.1. belief, tradition and trauma
 - 2.2. story lines: how deep is your love?
3. nationalism and the struggle against ambivalence
4. narrations of nationality: how it became an issue
 - 4.1. 'that went without saying': stories of elements not moments
 - 4.2. remembering your first time: narrating how nationality entered everyday life
5. the golden age: reconstructing the irrelevance of nationality
 - 5.1. stories of innocence
 - 5.2. implications for the foreign gaze
6. nationality colonising the mundane: language and love
 - 6.1. language before and after (and how to deal with it)
 - 6.2. love and nationality (and how to deal with it)
7. anti-nationalist narratives of city minorities
8. half-subjects: identity and non-politics in Yugoslavia
 - 8.1. living the Yugoslav dream?
 - 8.2. too late now for alternatives...

- 5.4. Balkan and bimbos: the turbofolk factor(y)
 - 5.4.1. narodnjaci and the post-Yugoslav rollercoaster
 - 5.4.2. the strange life of narodnjaci in Zagreb
 - 5.4.3. 'Balkan' in Zagreb: from demon to exotic?
 - 5.4.4. 'Balkan' and the aesthetics of distancing in Beograd
- 6. Balkan orientalism, familiarity and strangeness
 - 6.1. the stranger within oneself
 - 6.2. 'Balkan' and 'Europe' on both sides of normality

9. sister identities: (anti)nationalism and feminism

- 1. (post-)communism and gender relations
- 2. post-Yugoslav nationalisms and gender
- 3. age of extremes: gender roles in times of nationalist war
 - 3.1. gendered violence and nationalist war
 - 3.2. war rape and nationalism
 - 3.3. the outskirts of gender patterns in war
 - 3.4. anti-nationalist responses to war rape
- 4. what about feminism?
- 5. anti-nationalism, gender and feminism
 - 5.1. protest and misogyny
 - 5.2. divided loyalties: woman and/or national?
- 6. feminism and the narrative break
 - 6.1. feminism and its situated meanings
 - 6.2. narratives of continuity I: care of self and others
 - 6.3. narratives of continuity II: Yugoslav legacies and global strategies
- 7. autobiography and safe spaces

10. Jugonostalgija

- 1. (anti-)nationalism and the politics of remembering and forgetting
- 2. blaming nostalgia: regimes and anti-nationalist *altérité*
- 3. disentangling Yugoslav identity and some of its discontents
 - 3.1. Yugoslav identity, the census and ambiguity
 - 3.2. salvaging Yugoslav identity in Beograd
 - 3.3. strategies and labels of identification
 - 3.4. anti-fascism, ideology and the Yugoslav state
- 4. *Jugonostalgija* take one: 'at home' in a common Yugoslav cultural space
 - 4.1. Yugoslav bodies in movement
 - 4.2. Yugoslavia as diversity: nomadic aspects of Yugoslav belonging
- 5. *Jugonostalgija* take two: remembering better days
 - 5.1. remembering the times before we were poor pariahs
 - 5.2. popular culture and memories of the good times in Yugoslavia
- 6. *Jugonostalgija* take three: yearning for a better life
- 7. popular culture and everyday lives: the Balašević phenomenon

11. anti-nationalism and individual narratives of self

- 1. is that all...? summing up some central themes
- 2. 'a person as a person'
- 3. responsibility and disobedience
- 4. individualism/collectivism: personal integrity and the lack of it?
- 5. the individual and the peculiarities of anti-nationalist resistance
- 6. anti-nationalist narratives of belonging



The post-Yugoslav states in the late 1990s (map reproduced from Silber and Little 1995:vii)

This text is the product of a piece of research that was rooted in many contradictory factors, coincidence being an important, but not the only one. Let me highlight three others that have been persistently present: curiosity, indignation and anger.

Perhaps this research took shape in quite a different way from what usually happens. I did not decide to apply for a PhD and then choose to work in the former Yugoslav states. Rather, I was making plans to work in that region—as an NGO activist—and then, encouraged by Andy Dawson, I considered the possibility of carrying out research. Hence, through an unpredictable string of choices and coincidences, PhD-research became one of the vehicles, along with activism, through which I was able to give shape to my interest in post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist alternatives. I am the first and only person in my extended family to ever come near a university, and I consider myself extremely lucky to have been able to go through this experience combining academic and activist engagements. I am endlessly grateful to all those who have made this possible for me and who have supported me throughout. In addition to my supervisor Andy Dawson I would like to single out Jody Barrett, without whom this text would have been many mistakes and at least fifty thousand entirely superfluous words richer. Thanks also go out to mijn familie en vrienden in Belgie, prijatelji u Zagrebu i u Beogradu, and friends and colleagues in England and elsewhere. They know who they are and I see it as a privilege and a duty to thank them all in person.

As my friend Bartjes remarked, and as confirmed on more than one occasion by my parents, wherever I go now, it is clear that a large lump of Balkan clay got stuck to my boots (and for those who do not like the Balkan thing, please do not be offended and read Chapter Eight). In fact, as I write this, I am preparing to leave for fieldwork in Bosnia immediately after I finish this thesis.

Carrying out the research and writing this text has left me with fewer illusions and more wrinkles. It provided fewer answers and more questions. But it hasn't soothed the indignation, nor the anger. And certainly not the curiosity.

[introduction] ethnography, theory, politics: passionate detachment

revolution is great—it's fun
it makes for such good value television
freedom to kill, to die, and live like us
I can't wait for the next one
Alexander Balanescu Quartet – Revolution¹

There's more than one answer to these questions
pointing me in crooked line
And the less I seek my soul for some definitive
The closer I am to fine
Indigo Girls – Closer to Fine²

1. a post-Yugoslav study: there's a world going on underground

Most people in the post-Yugoslav states will remember the last decade of the past millennium as a painfully significant one. The end of the communist regime, and of Yugoslavia itself, was brought about through the articulation of opposing nationalist discourses and through violent campaigns on a scale which many had considered impossible. One thread will certainly run through these memories: the experience of war, whether as a direct victim or perpetrator of the violence or as a (former) inhabitant of the states implicated in it.

Academic life goes on (who am I to speak...) and the 1990s also witnessed a veritable flood of publications on the rise of nationalism in the post-Yugoslav states - works that have been located mainly in the field of history, political sociology, and journalism. Foreign 'outsiders' have written extensively on this issue, and local academics have produced a plethora of texts, many of which have so far remained inaccessible to a foreign audience because of language and/or distribution limitations. In the academic field of anthropology, foreign scholars have contributed mainly by way of journal articles, many of which are largely library- and archive-based³. I have only come across a few recent monographs based on long-term ethnographic research in the region. Examples include Magid's transcription of Beograd life histories (1991) and Bringa's Bosnian village study (1995), both published during the post-Yugoslav wars, but based upon material collected long before the break-up. Call me a nationalist, but I know of three anthropologists from the Netherlands who have contributed as well. Bax (1995) deals with the religious and political struggle over a site of an alleged apparition by the Holy Virgin in Bosnia. Van de Port's study (1998), researched before and during the early months of the conflicts, addresses the role of Gypsy bacchanals amongst Serbs in Novi Sad, gradually making way for insights into a much wider set of issues. Duijzings (2000), finally, brings together a series of studies, mainly set in and around Kosovo, researched through several periods of ethnographic fieldwork from the mid-1980s onwards. His initial focus on religious dimensions proceeds to open up a far more encompassing range of topics with the outbreak of war.

¹ From the album *Luminitza* © 1994 Mute Records.

² From the album *Indigo Girls* © 1989 Epic/CBS Records.

³ See for example Bowman 1994; Denich 1994; Hayden 1992, 1994, 1996a; 1996b; Sofos 1996; for an ethnographic example see Duijzings 1996.

The small number of ethnographically based writings by foreign scholars is surprising in the light of the quantity of such publications on national identity in other postcommunist states. The risks involved in doing fieldwork in a context of war or immediately after might be a factor. This might also explain why recent ethnographic work that has been done 'on former Yugoslavia', was often carried out amongst representatives of the 'international community' in Bosnia, or abroad with refugees or émigrés from the post-Yugoslav states⁴. To my knowledge, apart from the monographs mentioned above, writing on issues of post-Yugoslav everyday life has been left mainly to scholars from Serbia, and particularly to their colleagues from the Zagreb Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Croatia, who carried out their work 'between destruction and deconstruction' (Prica 1995:7)⁵. Moreover, there has been an avalanche of post-Yugoslav journalistic and/or literary works, such as background media reports, novels, diaries and collections of refugee testimonies⁶.

Interestingly, while most scholarly work offers a rather homogenous picture of post-Yugoslav nationalist dominance, it is mainly in the latter publications, from outside the disciplinary boundaries of the social sciences, that we can catch a glimpse of the existence of *something different*. Two sorts of ambiguities, usually glossed over in other approaches, emerge. First, there is the strongly contradictory and ambiguous nature of the dominant nationalist discourses themselves and of their seemingly unproblematic hegemony. Second, and most importantly, we have the existence of alternative discursive practices, and their actual and potential subversive power.

It is this flip side of the story that is explored in this text. On the basis of over twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork amongst citizens of the capital cities of Serbia and Croatia, this study explores post-Yugoslav *anti*-nationalism as a set of discursive practices articulated in response to a number of phenomena that have had an overwhelming influence on their lives in the 1990s. In doing so, I highlight the fact that, despite nationalist efforts to represent the Serbian and the Croatian contexts as internally homogenous, there was dissent, there was *altérité*. Talking about 'the' Serbian or 'the' Croatian point of view (e.g. Povrzanović 2000:153), necessarily robs a whole range of people who might or might not feel a sense of belonging to those categories from the possibility to represent their alternative perspectives.

I argue that these dissident forms should be seen primarily as responses to the post-Yugoslav wars and the dominant nationalisms, and provide a source of material for alternative narrations of self. Thus, the object of study is anti-nationalism as a set of discursive practices, not the people who would then be called anti-nationalists. Different post-Yugoslavs deployed these discursive practices to different extents, in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons, and towards a variety of goals. Anti-nationalism, dare I say it, was a discourse which provided subject-positions for contextually specific, alternative narrations of self. In particular, this study explores narrative mechanisms, patterns in the ways in which individuals established a non-dominant sense of continuity within their biographies in order to cope with and position themselves in relation to nationalism and war.

2. the unauthorised nutshell digest

Let me briefly spell out, in broad lines, the narrative flow underlying this text. After sketching some contours of the theoretical framework that informs this study, I briefly locate a number of central aspects of Serbian and Croatian nationalist discourses in the

⁴ See for example Chandler 1999; Kolar-Panov 1996; Škrbiš 1999; Winland 1995.

⁵ See for example Feldman, Prica & Senjković 1993; Jambrešić-Kirin & Povrzanović 1996; Povrzanović 1997; Čolović 1994a, 1994b. For an overview of 'Croatian war ethnographies' and a commentary on its controversial positions/positionings by an insider, see Povrzanović 2000. See also Prica 1995.

⁶ Too many to mention here. I shall refer to this work throughout this text.

light of the former Titoist nationality policies. I then focus on the narrative break brought about by a whole conglomeration of events, including the assertion of the different nationalisms as dominant discourses of identification, the end of Titoism, and the wars which shaped the break-up of Yugoslavia. Importantly, this includes an analysis of the ways in which people experienced the rise of the different nationalisms. This is a study of anti-nationalism, and I want to take seriously the long-standing anthropological idea that national identity is socially constructed. In my view many previous studies have taken this constructedness for granted—it is, after all, *bon ton* in the social sciences—without taking up its implications for their actual approach. In an attempt to tackle this problem head on, I include an analysis of people's stories of how national identities *became* an issue in their everyday lives.

Analysing dissident post-Yugoslav narratives of self and society, this study critically examines several themes within the anti-nationalist discursive field in more detail. I look closely at the assertion of 'urbanity' and the role of the cultural construct 'the City' in the critique of nationalism and war, which was often explained in terms of rurality and 'peasant culture'. Moving slightly more to the inter-republican level, I lay bare some patterns in the symbolic geography of Balkan orientalism and its counterpart in pro-European discourses. Both the 'Balkan'/'Europe' and the 'City'/'Village' dualisms are ethnographically explored as essentialising discursive strategies of negative self-definition. Given the fact that women, and feminists in particular, constituted the backbone of anti-nationalist activism, I include a look at the significance of feminism and its situated meanings within the post-Yugoslav context. I then turn to the mechanisms that structure narratives of self in relation to contested memories of everyday life and popular culture in former Yugoslavia. In relation to the above-mentioned critical reinterpretation of the changing significance of national identities, this analysis results in a re-appraisal of the controversial notion of *Jugonostalgija*. Finally, I bring together different threads that run through this study, and highlight the centrality of the tension between individualism and collectivism in anti-nationalist discursive practice.

One might ask, why would someone want to study a largely silenced and marginalised minority discourse in a context where the dominant nationalisms were producing such dramatic and real consequences? I believe that the marginal case of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism can provide a contribution to several domains of strategically situated knowledges (Haraway 1988:581). Ethnographically, as I have argued above, while the former Yugoslav states have hardly been out of the news during the 1990s, an insight into post-Yugoslav everyday practices of anti-nationalism puts the media information overload into critical perspective.

Theoretically, in its own marginal and partial way, this text aims to take issue with some debates in the social sciences from a rather unusual angle. I explore issues to do with narrative, nation, and identity, engaging throughout with contemporary social theory – particularly post-structuralist insights. However, rather than reproducing some of the deterministic implications of those theories, I hope to fuse them with a strongly agency-oriented approach. This in itself is hardly revolutionary, as it seems to be simply 'what (good) anthropologists do anyway', but this text hopes to depart from well-trodden paths by actually giving the discourse/subject or structure/agency format itself ethnographic substance. Rather than discussing such debates in strictly theoretical terms, I aim to demonstrate that, because of the peculiar context in which they found themselves with its extreme pronunciations of the tensions between collectivity and individuality, the persons I worked with were often *aware* of this problematic interplay—and that they reflexively engaged with it as 'lived' discourse.

Politically, I critically engage with nationalist discourses of identity, thereby disclosing and (re)constructing a number of actual and potential voices of post-Yugoslav dissidence. If we take resistance seriously, without fetishising it, ethnographic research allows for insights into submerged practices and alternatives, before they are silenced by the hegemonic representations that constitute history (see Okely 1996:211-214).

However, I hope to go beyond the mere deconstruction of nationalist symbolic and material violence, and add a further twist to contemporary debates surrounding resistance and multiculturalism. By providing a small contribution to an understanding of anti-nationalist discursive practices under extreme circumstances, this study aims to problematise a wider range of issues within globalised discourses of peace, tolerance, and inter-ethnic co-existence (see Žižek 1990; 1992).

3. living just enough for the city – fieldwork in practice

Fieldwork for this study was carried out between December 1996 and the end of September 1998: nine months in Serbia, and twelve in Croatia. However, as a result of intensive travelling and NGO activism throughout different post-Yugoslav republics, during, before, and after my 'official' research period, I include fragments of anti-nationalism developed in Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and some snapshots from diasporic contexts. My ethnographic research focused on Serbia and Croatia, because the respective regimes based there were the two main players in the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. Despite, or rather because of, strongly intertwined historical-cultural patterns, the Serbo-Croatian conflict was a main fault line in the post-Yugoslav wars. My interest in anti-nationalism led me to analyse two sides of this frontline, exploring overarching post-Yugoslav patterns of dissidence, and the interplay between the two main discourses of Serbian and Croatian nationalism. For research-technical reasons, most of the fieldwork was carried out in Beograd and in Zagreb, because that is where the main centres of organised dissidence in Serbia and Croatia were located.

Avoiding wherever possible a narrow comparative framework, this study is a piece of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995). I would follow Marcus insisting that the term 'multi-sited' does not denote a strictly geographical characteristic. Rather, it refers to the role of movement in what we study *and* how we study it, as it conveys a focus on 'the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time-space' (Marcus 1995:96; see also Hannerz 1996). Central to this study, we have discursive practices not strictly linked to any place; on the contrary, I look at deterritorialised sites developed precisely in opposition to oppressive nationalist discourses of spatial fixity. The contours of these sites were not preordained, but emerged from the fieldwork itself (see Clifford 1992:99-101); and if most of the actual research was done in Beograd and Zagreb, this only brings about a circumstantial spatial fixity, allowing for the detail of intensive participant observation, while working towards an understanding of a non-localised discursive practices.

Fieldwork included, first of all, living in those cities for a long time, riding their trams, walking their streets, breathing their air, eating their food, drinking their drinks, smelling their smells, hearing their sounds, watching their sights, and meeting their people. In that respect, this text tells a partial story, that of *my* Beograd and Zagreb experiences. Of course, I reconstruct other people's stories as well, the ones they wrote down and the ones they told each other and me. The reconstructed and reconstructive character of this study follows from an attempt to what Marcus termed 'experimental ethnography', which explicitly 'depends on pre-existing, more conventional narrative treatments, and is parasitic on them' (1998:197)⁷. On a more pro-active level I was

⁷ Two notes on the writing of this text. Firstly, for obvious reasons, all the names of the persons in this study have been changed, and details about them, their families and friends, and about some of the organisations have been withheld or deliberately kept vague. Secondly, I write in the past tense, rather than in the ethnographic present. I am aware that the latter is a representational convention which conveys considerable authority to a text, and, as Hastrup has argued, it is often the most appropriate form of representation in anthropological writing, because it places the text on the level where it belongs: that of anthropological analysis (1992). However, I would argue that there are sound reasons to make an exception to that rule in this study. In the first place, I am dealing with a situation of ongoing dramatic change, familiar to the reader through extensive media coverage, and I believe that the use of the

engaged on and off in a refugee organisation in Beograd, and I worked intensively in a Zagreb-based dialogue project in a war-affected area. I read papers and magazines (and kept a collection of press-cuttings, supplemented by the one that my father made from Belgian sources—dankjewel papa!), listened to the radio, occasionally watched TV, attended demonstrations, watched films, read books, and... simply hung out with people and got on with life—as one does. I sought very little contact with the non-Yugoslav abroad, but I had housemates and friends, as I couldn't live somewhere for such a long time without having a number of people around me who cared about me and whom I cared about. Finally, I had little money but more of a life than I did in the subsequent months during which I wrote this text.

As we shall see throughout, this study relies heavily on people's narratives. Different people, amongst whom were NGO-workers, dissident academics, feminist activists, artists, subcultural youths, anti-fascist activists, political militants, and so forth—most belonging to several categories simultaneously. There was also a wide range of non-activist individuals whose main common denominator in this study is the mere fact that they graced my life with their, sometimes brief, presence. Some people would have remained anonymous had they not become friends, others were acquaintances of friends, and still others were representatives of organisations or public figures in their own right. Although I did carry out a number of recorded interviews, this was mainly limited to some of the latter: those who did not have the time to meet me on a more regular and informal basis. I was interested in any discursive practice which struck me as potentially subversive of nationalism—more about this at the end of Chapter One—and I kept what could be called an 'anthropological diary' on a laptop. Even so, it became increasingly clear to me, as it will hopefully do to the reader throughout this study, that narration was only one part of the picture, and that non-narration, and strategic uses of silence, were crucial as well.

One thing has to be clear: it was never my intention to construct a *Post-Yugoslav Encyclopaedia of Anti-Nationalist Identities*. This would be an impossible task, requiring oversimplification and botanical zeal for categorisation. Doing so would not only be a futile exercise, but it would also replicate the discomfort with ambiguity and the struggle against it so typical of discourses such as nationalism. What I would prefer to do is to build some understanding of the *mechanisms* underlying post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism. It is the 'how' that fascinates me. I am interested in the ways in which these dissident discursive practices articulated alternatives, and how they revolved around the dialectic between continuity and discontinuity. I hope to achieve a piece of work which is interesting not so much as the perfect ethnographic study of an exotic group of Others, but rather as an insightful analysis of a set of politically relevant discursive practices.

This text aims to construct a set of partial truths (Clifford 1986:18) which do not, however, celebrate partiality for partiality's sake. Rather, my ethnographic strategies of 'mobile positioning' and 'passionate detachment' are partial because of 'the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible' (Haraway 1988:585, 590). Although a large part of this study is dedicated to the deconstruction of nationalist discourses (and, in particular, an analysis of post-Yugoslav examples of such deconstruction), and although this implies an eye for the historical contingency of *all* discursive practices (including my own), I am also committed to providing a 'good' account of 'what really went on'.

ethnographic present would fail to convey such a sense of turbulence. Secondly, and most importantly, this study is about how people *deal* with such drastic shifts, which, by definition, requires that I take the temporal and transitional dimension of their practices into account. I found that the use of the past tense was part of such an exercise.

4. (anti)nationalism and my mirror phase

A reflexive awareness of my own role in the construction of this text doesn't necessarily carry much weight, apart from possibly clearing my conscience, if I don't recognise the process of this positioning itself (Haraway 1988:585-587, see also Hastrup 1992:122). Throughout this text it will be clear to the reader, as it was to my informants, colleagues, friends and comrades during the fieldwork, that I am committed to a critique of nationalist discourses in all its forms. This commitment is not just a 'bias' that I have to mention here because I write after the 1980s; rather, although some of it was present before, it is also a *result* of my involvement with people in the post-Yugoslav states. Thus, by focusing on a subordinate and subversive phenomenon I do not just replicate what is becoming one anthropological tradition, but I also explicitly wish to distance myself from problems related to another one: super-relativism. While one of anthropology's greatest historical contributions might have been to infuse academic and political debates with a much-needed, healthy sense of relativism, it is increasingly clear that overdoing it runs the risk of paralysing criticism. Certainly in the domain of 'cultures' and 'nations', this approach has resulted in a deeply problematic situation whereby anthropological insights have been taken up, used and abused by exclusivist discourses of oppression (Balibar 1991; Malkki 1994; Handler 1985; Okely 2000). With Haraway, I would argue that 'relativism and totalisation are both "god tricks" promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully...' (1988:584).

Now, this positioning does imply, of course, another risk: the danger of romanticising and fetishising 'resistance' in whatever form it may come. Through critical deconstruction of dissident strategies, this study hopes to avoid this risk as much as possible, for I believe that the depiction of a marginalised group of people as right and righteous *by definition*, only adds to their marginalisation on the wider scale. As opposed to what I sometimes see as cramped political correctness in the 'West', I would argue that it is only by taking marginalised discursive practices seriously, which means they can *also* be criticised, that we show them respect beyond 'noble savage' images (see Herzfeld 1996:164). In this way, some of the anti-nationalist narratives in this study contain elements of, say, exclusivism, elitism and narcissism. Taking their positionings seriously, and trying to learn from them, implies a critical engagement with those elements, while at the same time locating them within a wider context *where they were marginalised*. In Haraway's words:

'The standpoints of the subjugated are not "innocent" positions. On the contrary, they are preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge. They are knowledgeable of modes of denial through repression, forgetting and disappearance acts [...] "Subjugated" standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world.'
(Haraway 1988:584)

In all of the above ways, this study aims to *learn* from the post-Yugoslav crisis by ethnographically marking out certain patterns within anti-nationalism in terms of contemporary social theoretical insights. And while we're at it, I am aware that there is not one word in this study which is not part of a political exercise, and I wouldn't want it any other way. After having been put on the spot so many times, in Serbia, in Croatia and elsewhere, after having been grilled, time and again, about the national background of my family, I am more at loss than ever for an answer when yet another person probes me about my 'deeper' national loyalties...

So here we go for reflexivity and autobiography. In terms of the state-administrative categories, my genetic make-up does consist of a complex mix of Dutch and Belgian material; my mother was literally born *on* the border, in fact, in an enclave comprising a couple of houses, so that when her mother looked out of the window with the new-born, the field she saw (her field, that is) was in another state. It was only at university that I

learned a name for the context of everyday life in that village: if ever there was a third space, this is one (Bhabha 1990a). I grew up in a village near Antwerpen, in Flanders, in Belgium, but spent the last seven years in a series of different places that belong to Belgium's very large 'abroad'. I had Dutch citizenship until I was seven, when my father changed his into Belgian for practical reasons, and therefore carried my brother and me along with him. There was one point when I considered the legal possibility of undoing this, when I thought it could save me from doing military service. However, I decided to go instead for conscientious objection. In the end, this was neither necessary nor possible anymore, as conscription was abolished just when it would have been my turn. Which makes me wonder, as I am writing this, what is more important? I am not convinced whether including autobiographical information such as this is simply, necessarily, and only, clarifying and enriching a text of this kind. For me, the trouble with the conventional author-related 'data' is that I have no way to know if these were the factors that actually made me do what I did and write what I wrote. While it might be relevant to the reader to know about my citizenship, my gender, my socio-economic background, and so on, maybe s/he would derive more crucial information from knowing how tall I am, how I met my first girlfriend, which novels I read, what I think about freedom and loneliness, what my all-time favourite songs are, where I am going to watch England-Portugal tomorrow... While the relatively new anthropological conventions of autobiography certainly mark an improvement over their previous absence (Okely & Callaway 1992), in some ways they might also represent a spill-over of the desire to fix human experience into neat categories, so prevalent in anthropology and in much of what it studies (Oliver, Jansen & Heller 2000).

What I am trying to get at is that maybe my conscientious objection that never happened holds more information for the reader than my 'fit' into a range of, say, state-imposed administrative categories. Of course, this text is not about me but about post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism. However, it is very much about *my* post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism. Rather than spelling out my personal-political perspectives any further, I hope that this study and the very way in which it is written convey them as little as possible where inappropriate, and as much as possible where needed. Also, I hope to present a text that is good enough not to be judged on the basis of my parents' national blood group.

Now this line of thought is *such* an educated-young-white-man-with-background-in-West-European-country kind of thing (see Žižek 1992:42-43). But when I say that I want to learn from post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism, I mean much more than that. As I have argued before, I want to choose sides in this text, and although I don't know the name for the positioning I aim for, I know what is on the other side: indifference and conformism. This study is dedicated to citizens of the post-Yugoslav states who resisted, not just the national Other, not just war, not just the regime, not even just nationalism, but also the apathy of their co-citizens at what was being done to others in their name. By focusing on discursive practices of anti-nationalist resistance and taking into account Povrzanović' warning that we should not ignore the 'lived experience of war' (1997:153), I also hope to make clear that this resistance was always situated. Clearly, the access to such alternatives was unequally spread amongst individuals, and, as we shall see throughout, the context of Serbia and Croatia during my 1996-1998 fieldwork was hardly one of complete freedom. However, resistance existed. I would like to pay particular tribute to those people who had the courage to act against the nationalist grain in situations that remained anonymous to outsiders like myself, to the many who engaged in minute acts of resistance through care and solidarity, risking their comfortable positions by defying compliance and conformism but never being caught on camera, let alone in an ethnographic study.

If there is one question I have been forced to ask myself throughout this research, it was: 'What would I have done?'. Not that I ever found an answer, but *I had* to ask this question, because I strongly believe that exoticising xenophobia and nationalism as pathological phenomena on the fringes of the New World Order is not only empirically

incorrect but also ethically dishonest. Such cultural anaesthesia (Feldman 1994) provides an easy way out for those who prefer not to deal with the multiple connections and resonances of seemingly distant patterns of symbolic and other violence with the situation in the regions of their background. Let me tell you: what I learned was just as much about myself, about Belgium, about England, about the 'West', as it was about the post-Yugoslav states and their citizens.

[chapter one]

(anti-)nationalism as discursive practice

All the nationalist sees in others is his own image:
the image of a nationalist.
*Danilo Kiš – The Gingerbread Heart, or Nationalism*¹

This chapter brings together a number of social theoretical insights which play a prominent role in this study and function as a backdrop for the main endeavour of the text: an analysis of anti-nationalism. In a first movement, the post-Yugoslav nationalisms of the 1990s are approached as a set of discursive practices, as a dominant articulatory process arriving at a partial fixation of meanings. The contested nature of these nationalisms is laid bare in the second movement, by pointing to the *altérité* of anti-nationalist discursive practices, patterns of differentiation which are to a certain extent discursively exterior to the nationalist discourses. Finally, as coda, I address some problematic epistemological and terminological issues, which run through this ethnography.

1. discursive practice and articulation

This study develops an approach to post-Yugoslav nationalist and anti-nationalist discursive practices which considers them in their broadest sense, thereby placing the emphasis on 'practice' (see Jansen 1999a). The terms 'discourse' and 'discursive practice' are used interchangeably, but I make more use of the latter precisely because it draws attention to its constitutive, lived character, rather than putting forward a mainly literary approach. For example, in a discursive-articulate approach to nationalism, haircuts, dole queues and drinking games can be just as legitimate objects of study as the canonised works of the so-called Great National Writers. Thus, in what follows, I view discourses as an interplay of thought and action, reaching well outside the linguistic realm.

Also, using the term 'discursive practices' rather than 'discourses' points to their unstable, contested and contingent character—and to the unstable, contested and contingent character of their objects. It allows us to avoid the frequent misconception of discourses as monolithic, determining and stable, and it embeds the notion into the realm of agency, of acts and intentions. Moreover, it reminds us that every discursive practice again consists of a number of intertwined discursive practices and is part of a wider universe of discursive practices, with some reinforcing it and others undermining it. As Laclau and Mouffe would have it, 'a discursive structure is not a merely "cognitive" or "contemplative" entity; it is an *articulatory practice* which constitutes and organises social relations' (1985:96).

Laclau and Mouffe define 'articulation' as 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice' (1985:105). This implies that every social practice is somehow, in one of its dimensions, a practice of articulation, or even that 'the social *is* articulation insofar as society is possible' (ibid.:113-114). Two more clarifications need to be made here: the authors call *moments* 'differential positions insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse' and *elements*, 'any difference that is not discursively articulated' (ibid.).

How then can we conceptualise discourses within this theoretical framework? They are structured sets of moments, articulated in a specific way. They constitute a partially

¹ See Kiš 1996:17.

completed totality, which produces a systematic formation consisting of a number of elements that have been articulated into a structured set of moments (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:125). Laclau and Mouffe speak here of *nodal points* (a term borrowed from Freud), by which they refer to 'the privileged discursive points of partial fixation' (1985:112). Even though partial, both in the sense of a residue of unarticulated elements and in the sense that the level of closure depends on one's perspective, these discursive structures can have systematic effects (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:112). In the post-Yugoslav context of the 1990s, I argue, nationalist discursive practice was such a privileged form of articulation, and nodal points such as 'national identity' and 'the nation' were central—in a variety of ways—to the partial fixation it achieved.

2. power, agency, and discursive practice

One widely held objection to discursive approaches to social reality, apart from the risks of textualism, is the idea that they obliterate individual agency. It is true that Foucault in particular emphasised the constraining workings of discourse: discourse makes it impossible to ask certain questions and argue certain cases and it authorises only certain people under certain circumstances to participate in its formulation (see 1990:95). In Foucault's work, the 'positivity' of discourses is largely negative. This might have to do of course with the nature of the discourses he was studying (penal system, madness, sexuality, etc.)—in this way, a study of (anti-)nationalism in the former Yugoslav republics runs the same risks. However, I highlight both the enabling and the constraining character of discursive practices (Hajer 1995:48-49; Fairclough 1992:41-45, 64-67). Conceptualised in this way, a discursive practice is always double-edged in nature: on the one hand it provides for the possibility of constructing a topic (for instance the nation), but on the other hand it limits the way in which this topic can be constructed. A dialectic is at work here: a discursive practice can only be constituted through acts by individuals or groups, and at the same time, no actor can establish him/herself as actor of a discourse without reference to certain broader rules of discourse (see Hall 1991:183).

It is possible, then, for a discursive approach to leave space for agency. Actors operating in a world of regulated discursive formations can make use of what Foucault calls the 'tactical polyvalence of discourses', or their multi-interpretability. This study demonstrates that individuals may draw upon many different discourses at one and the same time, strategically deploy them for different objectives in different contexts and invest different meanings in them. Furthermore, through their practice, individuals might undermine or modify existing discourses as well as create new ones. In this way a variety of previously unrelated, or differently related, elements can be strategically articulated into a new discourse (Foucault 1990:100).

This study, then, looks at the ways in which post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practices relate to the dominant discourses on identity and to alternative discourses; that is, how individuals (re)structure their own discursive practices for private and/or public use. In this way, I take fully into account the 'practice' dimension of discursive *practices*, incorporating both agency and structure—that is, the ways in which structures are 'acted', and the ways in which agency is structured. With discursive practices in the centre of the analysis, I aim to capture the advantages of both a sensitivity to performative reconciliations of the individual and the collective (Herzfeld 1985:23), and an openness to the possibility of alternative processes of articulation (as emphasised in Laclau and Mouffe 1985). I demonstrate how, even in oppressive contexts such as the post-Yugoslav one, seemingly discursively sutured by nationalisms, some people were engaged in the articulation of alternatives. A whole variety of elements were taken up and articulated into moments of *new*, anti-nationalist discursive practices. In this way, this anti-nationalist *altérité* relied on elements which

were differently articulated into nationalisms as well as on other elements which had remained discursively exterior to those nationalisms.

As a result, this study puts into a critical perspective the work of power in the context of identification. The concept of power is to be taken on board with caution, for it permeates every social texture. As Foucault would have it, 'power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.' (1990:93). I combine this general attention to power, antagonism and conflict with a more specific emphasis on the 'small' everyday practices of power and the regularity therein (Foucault 1975; 1980; 1990; see also Smart 1986:161-164). Since there are many competing discursive practices at work in every social field, this approach of course highlights the contested nature of discourses. Bourdieu theorised struggles for legitimacy and social definitions, and paraphrasing his work I would consider discursive practices as the object and the product of a struggle about the social definition of the *thinkable*². Discursive practices can be reproduced but also modified, undermined, questioned and contested. This struggle for hegemony involves different parties attempting to establish a discursive practice as an implicit, presupposed body of common and consensual knowledge, or in Bourdieu's terms, as *doxa* (Bourdieu 1984:115, 1982:154-156; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1994: 266-272). When a discourse takes the form of *doxa*, the ways in which it articulates elements into moments of a totality becomes 'common sense'.

3. the impossibility of discursive closure

However, even dominant discourses, seemingly reaching the status of *doxa*, carry a wide variety of possible meanings (Scott 1990:102). Laclau and Mouffe argue that the hegemony of a discourse is not a logical outcome of the superiority of this discourse, but that it must be understood as an attempt to overcome contingency—an attempt that is by definition in vain (1985:7). Thus, no articulation is ever completely successful: 'elements' never turn into perfect 'moments' which fully derive their meaning and significance out of the discourse in which they are articulated (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:106; see Foucault 1990:102). This is necessarily so, because if a discourse succeeded in articulating *all* elements into moments of one totality and no floating signifiers were left, this discourse would constitute the impossible: a final *suture* (1985:88). It would represent a closed symbolic order with fixed meanings, which would imply that any further articulation and contingency would become impossible. In this case, we would live in a world of fixed meanings and an unchangeable status quo, for a discourse would have succeeded in establishing a complete articulation of all elements into a totality. It is precisely around this impossibility of ultimate suture, that Laclau and Mouffe build their argument. To quote the authors at length:

'If we accept that [...] a discursive totality never exists in the form of a simply given and delimited positivity, the relational logic will be incomplete and pierced by contingency. The transition from the 'elements' to the 'moments' is never entirely fulfilled. A no-man's-land thus emerges, making the articulatory practice possible. In this case there is no social identity fully protected from a discursive exterior that deforms it and prevents it becoming fully sutured. [...] the relations are unable to absorb the identities; but as the identities are purely relational, this is but another way of saying that there is no identity which can be fully constituted.'

(Laclau & Mouffe 1985:110-111)

If every sense of identity is always deferred, never finally sutured, and if this initial lack is precisely what competing discursive practices are attempting to overcome, then discourses are involved in a never-ending struggle for hegemony.

² Bourdieu 1982:135ff; 1984:115; 1991:242; 1992a; 1992b.

In this context, Laclau and Mouffe introduce the notion of *antagonism* which 'constitutes the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself' (1985:125). The practice of articulation is therefore precisely about attempting to create such a partial fixation of meaning—it is about attempting to construct a discourse as the final, the ultimate and the true discourse on a topic. Although Laclau and Mouffe point out that this drive for closure is a quality inherent in all articulatory practice, I would argue that this is not to say that it is always the dimension that stands out most. The important point here is the very fact that, even if this were the case, it is *never* successful. Even if a number of diverging and opposing discourses are trying to establish a field of fixed meanings, they never will in the end, for elements can never be completely articulated in a discourse. They can always be articulated otherwise, and they can always be articulated with other elements in another discursive structure (Bhabha 1990b:292; Hall 1991:175, 187). This brings us back to the ultimate instability of every discourse: it is always undermined by contingency, by the existence of potentially disruptive alternatives.

4. post-Yugoslav nationalist discursive practice

Foucault made a case for discourse analysis based on the notion of 'systems of dispersion' (1990:37). If we conceptualise post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses of the 1990s from this perspective of regularity in dispersion, we can follow Laclau and Mouffe in that a discourse is a set of positions which is 'not the expression of underlying principle external to itself [...] but it constitutes a configuration which in certain contexts of exteriority can be *signified* as a totality' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:106). In the terminology of the authors, a number of elements have been reduced to moments of the (incomplete) totality in which they occupy a differential position. A number of previously unarticulated elements were (partly) articulated into a systematic relation to each other, and thereby became moments of a discourse. In the case of nationalism, think for instance of a number of 'elements' such as native language, parental religion, name, skin colour, etc. These were elements which of course featured in a number of other discourses (and still do), but which have been articulated in a systematic way in new discursive practices, nationalisms of the 1990s. In this way they were moulded into moments of these discourses.

There were many elements which featured prominently in the discourses enforced by powerful institutions in the post-Yugoslav context, for instance history, 'Balkan' and 'Europe', justice and injustice, communism, fascism, urbanity and rurality, education, individualism and collectivism. Very often they incorporated issues of nationality and were tied together by a nationalist prism, reflecting, not unfaithfully if somewhat crudely, the widely endorsed worldview of humanity as a mosaic of discrete nations. One of the insights in which the material of this study is embedded is a realisation of the many ways in which the post-Yugoslav conflict was a reflection, and not simply an aberration, of the nationalist cosmology of a 'family of nations' (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991; Malkki 1992; 1994; 1995a; 1995b). There might have been some markedly vicious feuds in the South-East European part of the family, but this does not necessarily refute the implicit consensus on a wider worldview.

As we shall see in more detail in Chapter Four, nationalism was a particularly dominant discourse of identity in the post-Yugoslav context and provided an enormous reservoir of material to be used for constructing narratives of self, functioning as the implicit consensus of discursive praxis on identification. When I say, then, that during my fieldwork in the mid-to-late 1990s, nationalist discourses were dominant in the post-Yugoslav states, this does not imply a stable, fixed situation in which nationalism had established a closed symbolic order with a designated place for everyone and everything. Rather, it means that I believe that in these specific socio-historical contexts, nationalist discourses were more successful in their drive for hegemony than

other discourses. And, importantly, they were keen on representing the situation in their state as one of successful discursive closure whenever it served their hegemonic ambitions.

Let me briefly illustrate some implications by analysing an event that took place in Croatia in the early summer of 1998. I look at a conflict situation, because it sheds a critical light on the above theoretical insights. Unlike so many other disputes, this event did not involve any national differences. Dissatisfied with meagre wages and bad working conditions, the teachers' union called for a strike, and in several instances, large crowds of teachers took to the streets. Despite the fact that, to an outside observer, the protest did not seem to challenge the confines of Croatian nationalism—the teachers were even waving Croatian flags—official reactions depicted the strikers, not as political opponents, but as enemies of the Croatian nation. They were accused of breaking the instinctive solidarity amongst Croats for, by standing up for their rights, they were perceived as agitating against the regime, hence against the ruling HDZ party, hence against the Croatian state, hence, finally, against Croathood itself. In Parliament, a hard-line politician compared this to 'Četniks using children as shields against Croatian defenders' (*Feral Tribune* 29/06/98:7). The police, supposedly representing the state *and* the nation, intervened to prevent them from displaying Croatian flags. The regime interpreted the events through an assertion of (aimed-for) discursive closure. Antagonism within the nation was considered illegitimate, or even unthinkable, and Croathood was constructed as a necessarily *prepolitical* seamless whole³.

Importantly, however, discursive closure was never reached, but a struggle for fixity took place in which, again, power has to be taken into account. If nationalism is defined as a discursive practice, an interplay of thought and action, it is also a *regime* of interpretation (see Foucault & Major-Poetzl 1983:22-25; Foucault 1971:19-20, Foucault & Gordon 1980:109ff). Power, then, 'is always already there' and is to be defined relationally not essentially; it is not the exclusive property of certain groups but it permeates social configurations (Foucault & Gordon 1980:141). In the post-Yugoslav context, it was very tempting to depict the social formation as one in which monolithic, powerful administrative and military systems dominated a shapeless mass of powerless individuals. This portrayal was attractive in its immediacy and its popularity amongst many post-Yugoslavs themselves; it strongly reflected a widespread local discourse of helpless victims and ruthless rulers⁴. However, I think it relied on simplistic assumptions and was very deceiving in its impression of explanatory strength. Even under regimes which were often described as authoritarian, the play of power was much more complicated. As Smith argues, and as suggested by Geertz in the case of Bali, discourses are the space of self-production of society, they are modes of representation, forms of power in themselves, not merely the reflection of a power struggle (Smith 1992:495; Geertz 1980).

5. post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist *altérité*

So, post-Yugoslav nationalisms, powerful and dominant as they were, did not reach the complete discursive closure they were attempting to establish. Always and everywhere,

³ I think it is possible to interpret certain aspects of the Beograd anti-regime demonstrations of 1996-1997 through a similar prism (see Jansen 1999b).

⁴ This was *the* dominant representation in Serbia in the late 1990s, but it was also very common in Croatia—especially towards the end of the Tuđman regime (see for example Povrzanović 2000:153 note8). As in the rather different case of Herzfeld's 'Glendiots' (1986:20-21), this frequently implied moral superiority on the side of those victimised, which in turn justified defiance and insubordination (*ibid.*:7, 37). In fact, there are particularly strong parallels between the situation Herzfeld describes in Crete and certain patterns in Serbian/Montenegrin self-perception (see Jansen 2000a for an analysis of the self-image of rebellion and anti-authoritarianism in Serbian protests).

some bubbles of resistance undermined the suturing capacity of the nationalist discourses, sometimes loud and visible such as on peace demonstrations, more often as a tiny murmur in the margins (Campbell 1998:210). Others have successfully employed discursive-articulative approaches to the analysis of domination and resistance in a host of different contexts around the globe (Norval 1996; for a collection see Laclau 1994). However, they rely strongly on textual sources and 'established' public discourses, whether of the ruling or the oppositional variety, and few, if any, have integrated these theoretical insights into an ethnographically embedded approach which allows for the complexity of everyday life processes. This study attempts just that. I call these discursive practices forms of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist *altérité*, borrowing the term from Michel de Certeau. *Altérité* here means patterns of differentiation, which are to a certain extent discursively exterior to the nationalist discourses (de Certeau 1990; Norval 1994:136).

In *L'invention du quotidien*, de Certeau formulates a constructive critique of Foucault's work on power. He takes up Foucault's fluid concept of 'a plurality of resistances' (Foucault 1990:96) and develops it into an approach which allows us to take into account processes of change from below (de Certeau 1990; Ahearne 1995:146). De Certeau draws attention to the ways in which forms of *altérité* undermine, subvert and modify established patterns (see also Routledge 1996:415). In anthropology, conceptions of power have been influenced by Scott's analysis of everyday forms of peasant resistance in a Malay village (1985; 1990). Looking at 'foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so forth' (1985:29), Scott highlights non-articulated patterns of resistance, which he refers to in terms of 'weapons of the weak' and 'hidden transcripts'. In many cases, these 'Brechtian forms of class struggle' (ibid.) represent spontaneous, individual, self-interested actions, scrupulously avoiding any outright defiance on the collective level, and therefore steering clear of any direct confrontation with dominant discourses. Through their cautious strategies of risk-avoidance and anonymity, they leave the public stage to those dominant discourses, and largely comply routinely with the rules set by those more powerful than they (Scott 1985:280-289). The 'full transcript' of those subordinate practices, Scott argues, usually remains behind closed doors (1985:284; 1990).

Taking up this thread of *altérité*, the focus of this study offers a bottom-up perspective on discourses of identification: that is, on the ways in which people dealt with them, used them, were determined by them and subverted them. A minority of post-Yugoslavs of all nationalities engaged in deviant articulations of identity, resisting and undermining the dominant nationalist discourses. These acts of identification were strongly marginalised, and a wide variety of people engaged in them to a lesser or a greater extent. Some post-Yugoslavs deployed them alongside nationalist discursive practices, whereas others, for different reasons, found the discourses of nationalism inaccessible and/or unacceptable (which, of course, never excluded anyone from being subjected to them by others). The focus of this study, then, is on those subversive acts of identification which I call anti-nationalist discursive practices.

In doing so, I take up Herzfeld's suggestion that we 'probe behind the façades of national unanimity in order to explore the possibilities and the limits of creative dissent' (1996:1). By focusing on dissident discursive practices in the Serbian and Croatian capitals, I aim to uncover aspects of post-Yugoslav everyday life which have escaped the gaze of both foreign scholars and journalists. Throughout, I analyse patterns in the ways in which these forms of *altérité* worked, highlighting the tensions between the dominant nationalist narrations of self and the everyday negotiations of more or less alternative identification. This implies more than average attention to the mechanisms of 'practical essentialism' (Herzfeld 1996:*passim*), little acts of essentialisation which can be unintentionally but also strategically deployed. Much use will be made, then, of generalising terms and often even plain stereotypes—however politically incorrect, ignoring them will not make them go away. While anthropology is far from innocent of

the sin of essentialising, recognising them allows for critical analysis (Herzfeld 1996:26) in that looking at their mechanisms can help us understand their significance on various levels. This seems particularly important in a study dealing with people's everyday narratives of phenomena of a 'national' nature: 'the nation', after all, is either essentialised (or imagined as essential) or it simply does not exist. Through a wide range of small, limited acts of essentialisation on the part of their own and other people, 'the Serbs' and 'the Croats' are continually consolidated as nations.

However, essentialising is not the privilege of the dominant. We have to recognise the at times equally essentialist nature of subversions of post-Yugoslav nationalisms (see Herzfeld 1996:26-32). In this respect, I am aware of the fact that, ethnographically, the terms 'post-Yugoslav' and 'anti-nationalism' are problematic. On the whole, I follow Herzfeld's rejection of the 'artificial distinction between symbolic discourse and objective data', and frequently employ 'indigenous abstractions about meaning', that is, the wide reservoir of post-Yugoslav meta-discourses and local analytical insights (1985:46). However, with regard to the terms 'post-Yugoslav' and 'anti-nationalism', it should be said straight away that these are rarely, if ever, used by the individuals or groups in question. Moreover, as was bitterly and poignantly pointed out to me by an interviewee, this terminology lumps together a wide range of very different individuals and individual narratives in a box, and then sticks a label on it. This is precisely the kind of practice the persons in question sometimes feel oppressed by and often try to escape.

'It will be very hard or even impossible for you to find something in common between those people, apart from resistance to nationalism. [...] Now, we have very little, if anything, like a new collective identity. There are only individuals, like myself, who try and preserve their little microcosm, and who would do anything *not* to end up in a new collective identity.'

While I took these objections to heart, after much pondering I have decided in favour of employing these labels, despite the sensitivities and weaknesses attached to it. The reasons are of a practical and of an epistemological nature. Practically, when writing a text, I am simply obliged to rely on generalising terms which avoid summing up all the individual perspectives that were involved in the research. More importantly, epistemologically, I believe there are good enough reasons to employ both terms: 'post-Yugoslav' and 'anti-nationalism'. I now briefly clarify their use in this text.

6. terminology, epistemology, and ethnography

6.1. nothing is simply post- : 'post-Yugoslav'

I use the label 'post-Yugoslav' because the persons I dealt with were all ex-citizens of former Yugoslavia. This has been a difficult choice, carrying a risk of essentialism with it. Would anybody call the Czech Republic 'post-Czechoslovakian', or Eritrea 'post-Ethiopian'? Am I as a Belgian citizen 'post-Roman', 'post-Frankish', 'post-Spanish', 'post-Habsburg', 'post-French', and post-much more? Of course not. So is my use of the term 'post-Yugoslav', then, an expression of orientalism on my part? Maybe. But, rather than employing terms referring to Serbia and Croatia and ending up with a strictly comparative exercise, I acknowledge a strongly diverging, but nevertheless, common Yugoslav legacy. This does not mean that I believe this overarching Yugoslavness to be a more important means of identification than other sources. In ethno-national terms, some of those engaged in anti-nationalist discursive practices did identify primarily as Serbs, some primarily as Croats, some as Yugoslavs, and some resisted national classification altogether.

For reasons of clarity, I refer to individuals with the national label 'Serbs' or 'Croats' only when they did so themselves, or when describing situations in which their self-proclaimed or presumed (by others) national identification was an important factor in that particular context. The focus of this study is on anti-nationalist discursive practices, which are by definition not structured around national boundaries. In order to reflect the geographical limitations of the field research, however, I employ the term 'post-Yugoslav', while widely using the terms 'Serbian' and 'Croatian' at other places. The use of 'post-Yugoslav' also highlights the relation between anti-nationalist processes of identity construction and the break-up of Yugoslavia, inasmuch as many people constructed their anti-nationalism through a set of narratives of continuity.

The aim of all this terminological juggling is to balance the central role (or: *rule*) of nationalist representations in experience, while at the same time to highlight their problematic nature and accommodating hybridity (see Campbell 1998:258). In this sense, the labels employed, such as 'Serbian', 'Croatian', and 'post-Yugoslav', should always be read in between giant inverted commas⁵.

6.2. resistance and the 'anti' in 'anti-nationalism'

A more contentious issue is the term 'anti-nationalism'. It reflects a reality running through this project, i.e. my efforts to reach an understanding of discursive practices developed in response to Serbian and Croatian nationalisms, working up from individual narratives. In this sense, the term anti-nationalism is meant to emphasise the explicit nature of the processes of identity construction which are central to this text as well as their relation to dominant discourses of nationalism. Very quickly, during fieldwork, I realised that many of the critics of the war or the regimes recommended to me by helpful friends were not what I was looking for. They engaged in anti-war and anti-regime discursive practices, but they did not question the dominant nationalisms themselves. In contrast to the work of Scott (1985, 1990) and de Certeau (1990), this might seem a rather restrictive approach ignoring important wider, unarticulated forms of everyday resistance to nationalism. Scott rightly attacks a false essentialising and privileging of 'real resistance' leading to revolution as opposed to seemingly compliant 'token, incidental resistance' (1985:292ff).

However, through my emphasis on 'explicit' or 'articulated' post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism, I am not suggesting that other forms of dissent were absent or unimportant. In this text, I do write as much as possible about everyday forms of anti-nationalist discursive practice. Given the state of nationalist paranoia during my stay in Serbia and Croatia, though, it would have been extremely difficult ethnographically to disclose those everyday practices amongst people who did not display them on a more or less public level. Maybe anti-nationalism did exist on those more submerged levels, but if this was the case, most people were not empowered to a sufficient degree to make it count in a situation of war and oppression which denied them what was perhaps necessary economic, social and cultural capital. Issues of nationality were almost *always already* implicitly part of every discursive context, and nationalist modes of representation pervaded a large part of post-Yugoslav realities, as *doxa*. I have argued above that this can be understood as nationalism's incomplete but relatively successful attempt to achieve discursive closure.

Moreover, there were some specific conditions in the post-Yugoslav context which set it apart from, for example, that of Scott's Malay villagers, or de Certeau's factory workers. The dominant post-Yugoslav nationalisms presented themselves as discourses of

⁵ There are a host of other, similarly problematic terms, but on the whole I have chosen to privilege clarity above paranoia with regard to political sensitivities. Hence: Kosovo (not -a), because this is the way it is pronounced in the context where it features in this study: Serbian nationalism. With regard to language, I employ the term 'Croatian' when talking about Zagreb fieldwork, and 'Serbian' in Beograd cases. For an ethnographically rooted discussion, see the section on language in Chapter Six.

liberation from previous oppression: they *were* resistance. Nationalist discourses were therefore *not* considered a discourse of oppression by most people. On the contrary, most post-Yugoslavs saw their 'own' nationalism as liberating and emancipatory, whereas the national Others were seen as oppressive. To take this point even further, in most cases, the concept of 'nationalism' simply did not enter the debate. Interpreting the post-Yugoslav conflicts in terms of nationalist discourses was in itself a marginal and critical endeavour. In such a context, most people actively engaged with nationalism (without calling it by this name) by trying to get the most out of it, or, at least, to minimise the damage. The goal was, then, in Hobsbawm's words, 'to work the system to their minimum disadvantage' (quoted in Scott 1985:301).

Scott, himself, warns against over-romanticising the 'weapons of the weak' (1985:29), and argues instead that we should recognise that resistance can take many different forms and that different contexts are likely to give rise to different forms of resistance. He convincingly demonstrates that the style of everyday resistance is strongly determined by the form and the style of the oppression itself (1985:299). In the post-Yugoslav context, notions of 'non'-nationalism, a 'sideline' attitude, 'withdrawal' or 'silence as resistance' were certainly present and relevant. Many citizens of Serbia and Croatia opted precisely for the tactical safety of anonymity (Scott 1985:36; de Certeau 1990:xix) and the secrecy which allows for avoidance of control from the centre (Feldman 1991:38). However, enthusiasm for the nationalist cause was overwhelming on the public scene, where national identity played its main role. Of course, national identity existed in the private sphere as well. But, on the pervasively multi-national public scene, it was invested with degrees of power, often relying in turn on resonances with symbols and patterns from the private sphere⁶.

Against the backdrop of ethnic cleansing and war, this meant that the above everyday forms of 'non-' rather than 'anti-' nationalist resistance were often easily incorporated as compliance, and thus *functioned*, regardless of their intentions, as tacit support for the dominant discourses. As in Hitler's Germany, fear of retribution by one's own co-nationals could be one element in explaining this. This factor is, however, unable to account for the sheer horror of many acts of war and for the hostile exclusivism that pervaded many patterns of everyday life away from the front-line (for the Nazi example, see Browning 1992; Goldhagen 1996). Crucially, and very differently from Scott's Malay villagers, those post-Yugoslavs who were engaged in the development of discursive practices of resistance usually did not do so in the first place because it oppressed *them*. For most of these individuals, this was at most a minor motivation, as they often focused their energy on a critique of the nationalism of 'their own' national group, which primarily victimised others.

My main interest is, therefore, in *explicit* dealings with nationalism and issues of national identity: anti-nationalist counternarratives and dissident everyday practices. In Serbia and Croatia, two discourses made issues of national identity explicit and to a certain extent public (and therefore accessible to outsiders): outspoken nationalist ones and outspoken anti-nationalist ones. Many have written about the former or, rather, about leading representatives of the former; I set out to bring the latter into the story. Within this framework, however, and working back from these explicit instances of anti-nationalism, I focus as much as possible on the significance of minute everyday practices and seemingly banal acts of defiance on a much wider scale.

Ironically, and significantly, the term anti-nationalism also reflects the centrality of nationalist discourses in the identity formation of the persons in question. It indicates that nationalism served as a focal counterpoint for these forms of *altérité*. Post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism, then, is *my*, not *their*, label for a whole range of discursive practices of identity, which a minority of ex-citizens of former Yugoslavia deployed in response to the dominant nationalist discourses. I use it as a shortcut and *sous-rature*, as it will never be more than second best.

⁶ An argument brought up, albeit rather differently, by Erikson 1999.

[chapter two] narratives of self, memory, big/small stories

Impossible stories, stories with No Entry signs on them, change our lives, and our minds, as often as the authorised versions, the stories we are expected to trust, upon which we are asked, or told, to build our judgements, and our lives.

*Salman Rushdie – The Ground Beneath Her Feet*¹

You know what it is like when two people start a conversation. First one of them does all the talking, the other breaks in with *That's just like me, I...* and goes on talking about himself until his partner finds a chance to say *That's just like me, I...*

The *That's just like me, I...*'s may look like a form of agreement, ... but that is an illusion. What they really are is a brute revolt against brute force... All man's life is nothing more than a battle for the ears of others.

*Milan Kundera – The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*²

In this chapter I address the role of narrative in post-Yugoslav acts of identification. Narrative was an important mechanism through which citizens of Serbia and Croatia positioned themselves in relation to larger temporal frameworks and to influential discourses on the public level. The post-Yugoslav context was characterised by an intensification of narrativity, which played a central role in many people's strategies for coping with the massive changes that affected their everyday lives, including discursive shifts on the level of legitimate identification. Therefore, we are dealing with a situation where the poetics of the self (Herzfeld 1985:8-19) took on a heightened acuteness. Even many everyday practices that would in another context be rather unproblematic, now carried contentious meanings. Throughout this chapter, I particularly consider strategies of remembering and forgetting, and positionings in relation to the dominant discourses of nationalism.

1. narratives of self in practice

1.1. narrative identity

Paul Ricoeur sees identity as a product of dialectic between selfhood and sameness, two meanings of the word identity which overlap but are not the same, although they are often confused (1990:140-143; 1991b:189-192). Selfhood refers to the experience of self in time without always being the same, and is related to the concept of subjectivity. The dialectic between selfhood and sameness, Ricoeur argues, takes place through two phenomena: self-constancy (i.e. keeping one's word), and character (i.e. different moments in which selfhood expresses itself) (1990:143-150). According to Ricoeur, a crucial instrument in achieving this sense of self is narrative. People negotiate identities through narration, telling stories, and identity is a story of yourself. 'Narratives make sense out of self-identity in the context of time' (Rasmussen 1996:165; see also Dawson & Rapport 1998). It is Ricoeur's central concept of narrative identity that I attempt to use for an exploration of anti-nationalist identity construction in the post-Yugoslav context. Narrative identity integrates a sense of self within the context of a larger temporal framework, of 'history'. It allows an experience of self as distinctive and unique within the constancy of time³.

¹ Rushdie 1999:199.

² Kundera 1996 (1978).

³ This recalls, to a certain extent, Giddens' work on self-identity (1991:52-56, 100).

The individuals I worked with in the post-Yugoslav context were continually engaged in the telling and re-telling of a narrative identity that was more or less consistent *in their eyes* (or, better, not all too inconsistent). In a context of extreme confusion, they aimed for a story of themselves that, even though it was multi-faceted, ambiguous and potentially contradictory, made at least *some* sense. Narrative mediated their journey through life, a journey of introspection in which they partially dissected their lives in order to construct an intelligible narrative in retrospect (see Curtis and Pajaczkowska 1994:212). My exploration of the ways in which post-Yugoslavs did so through anti-nationalist discursive practices suggests that in order for a story of self to work, it needs to have *some sense of continuity* in it. Again, it might be better to say that it shouldn't be all too *discontinuous*. This by no means implies that these people invariably wished to avoid or eliminate inconsistencies, for selfhood through narrative does not necessarily imply a drive for disambiguation⁴. However, no matter how ambiguous and internally contradictory the individual stories were, there was a strong tendency to narrate one's self as a unity which was not all too inconsistent, and not all too discontinuous. This resonates with Ricoeur's insight that people are able to imagine variations of their own ego and thereby construct a narrative understanding of themselves. 'These narratives then provide a unity which is not substantial but narrative' (Ricoeur 1991a:32-33).

1.2. narration, practices of coping, resistance

This study may strike the reader as *strongly focused on stories, on narration, on told sequences of events, in short, on words*. The use of extensive quotes throughout this text reinforces this, and deviates somewhat from the anthropological convention to privilege direct observation of activities over listening. Importantly, silences played a crucial role through implicit or explicit non-narration. This is hard to quote, but I hope it becomes clear throughout the text that the discursive strategies of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism relied as much on a refusal to narrate as on narration itself. However, I am aware that constructing selfhood through narrative does not always and everywhere play a central role in human experience. I do not claim that people have no other ways of experiencing selfhood than through narrative, but the post-Yugoslav setting provided me with many reasons to follow Herzfeld in his emphasis on performative aspects of identification (1985:16). In particular, the expression of a sense of belonging to a nationally imagined community (Anderson 1983) often relies on a variety of performative strategies. There is a further point here: after emphasising the *practice*-dimension of discourse in the first chapter, I may now seem to embark on exactly the opposite endeavour, by placing narrative at the centre of this study. This choice, however, reflects a reality in the post-Yugoslav context. Both on the individual and the collective level, this field was undergoing dramatic change during the 1990s, which resulted in a condition of intense narrativity⁵. Narrative, I argue, was a common tool by which people attempted to comprehend processes of change, or tried to keep them in check (see Ricoeur 1990:167-193; Jansen 1998a).

This means that the post-Yugoslav narratives that gave shape to this study were inextricably linked to relationships and to the lived reality of social worlds. Through these narratives—and thus through dialogic engagements with each other and with

⁴ In some circumstances, inconsistencies could even come in handy, sometimes in the crudest of ways, for private gain, as in the case of the Beograd academic who presented himself internationally as a committed civic activist, and locally as a loyal Serbian believer. In other cases, inconsistencies simply proved too hard to deal with, such as for the young Zagreb girl whose closest friends didn't even know that she identified herself as Serbian. Still in other circumstances, certain inconsistencies seemed more acceptable because they were not just perceived as individual ripples on the desired snooker table of national homogeneity, but they reflected something that existed on some social level outside of the one person in question (hence, for example, the drive for counter-homogenisation amongst many Serbs who decided to stay in Zagreb (see Chapter Six)).

⁵ Holy observed a similar phenomenon in the Czech Republic (1996:9-10).

me—the individuals in question positioned themselves in a wider context. Importantly, we have to take into account that narration is not purely textual, and that narratives are an important part of discursive practice, especially in a situation like the post-Yugoslav one, where the very act of narrating identities (national ones in particular) took on a marked political significance. I demonstrate in this text that narratives of self and society can be performative utterances depending on the context in which they exist. They are, therefore, not simply expressions of a fixed underlying identity, but 'signifying practices' which are being *lived* as 'strategies of survival under compulsory systems' (Butler 1990:139; Hebdige 1979; Ferguson 1999:94-104). In the post-Yugoslav situation, simply making a statement concerning one's identity or one's state could be tantamount to securing one's life or death. In this sense, narrative formed an important and always contested part of people's everyday strategies for coping and survival.

This study explores anti-nationalism as discursive practice through an analysis of how certain moments were articulated into elements differently from the dominant nationalisms. This also includes a look at anti-nationalist struggles to maintain the unproblematised, non-articulated nature of certain moments, i.e. mainly to *not* essentialise and politicise certain characteristics of somebody's national background. I explore these patterns through a study of people's narrative coping-strategies with the (dis)continuity represented by the nationalist wars and the break-up of Yugoslavia. At this point, I would like to explain briefly that anti-nationalism also constituted an *embodied practice*.

If this seems a cheap self-evidence, let me make clear that it is not an attempt to win over adherents of recent developments in anthropology which argue that we should give more place to the importance of embodiment in general (Csordas 1998). In fact, I would prefer to remain rather unapologetic about the emphasis on stories and words in this study, which is the result of an *analytical* choice. However, that shouldn't prevent us from realising that, in the end, post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism came to life only through its many embodied practices. Think for example of activists working with war victims of all nationalities in the field, people attending meetings and public gatherings, individuals writing articles, or *somebody simply having coffee with a neighbour of a different nationality*, despite the disapproval of others. Anti-nationalism, of course, existed in and through these embodied practices, which are analysed in this study mainly in terms of their narrative aspect, more specifically in relation to stories of self and society.

Here I would like to look at one specific example of embodied resistance to nationalism primarily because it was a self-conscious form of embodiment. In Chapter Nine we shall see how women's bodies played a crucial role in the nationalist violence in a variety of ways. Specifically through war rapes and debates surrounding reproductive rights, much controversy came to be located precisely in and over women's bodies. It is against this background that we must understand the following example: a small-scale but prominent feminist critique of war, nationalism and patriarchy in Beograd, known as *Women in Black*. The individuals involved in this organisation staged weekly street protests during and after the wars, in addition to a wide range of other activities. Dressed in black, they silently stood on the city's central square, *Trg republike*, carrying banners with a variety of slogans. Through the insertion of their bodies into such an important public space, they self-consciously shaped their critique of the regime and of the dominant discourses of nationalism, militarism and patriarchy through their female bodies. In the nationalist climate, this implied a strong sense of vulnerability consciously played out as a strategy. Reactions from passers-by ranged from rare expressions of sympathy, to aggression to physical abuse, with 'betrayal' being a frequent accusation⁶. As we have seen above, in many people's perceptions if these women were critical of the war and of nationalism they therefore *had to be* either national Others or bad Serbs (as internal Others).

⁶ See the yearly collections of *Žene za mir*, published by Women in Black for a selection of slogans and people's reactions (e.g. 1996:10-12, 19).

1.3. identity, narrative and memory

It is time now for memory to enter the argument. If identification is about experiencing a sense of self through time, then memory and identity are inextricably related concepts. As Gillis argues, 'the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely a sense of sameness over time and place, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity' (Gillis 1994:3). Memories play a central role in processes of identity construction, in helping us make sense of the world we live in and of ourselves. However, like identities, memories are contingent and always partly negotiable. To quote Gillis again, 'We are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities. Memories help us make sense of the world we live in; and "memory work" is, like any other kind of physical and mental labour, embedded in complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end' (Gillis 1994:3).

In this sense, Gillis is right to state that 'identities and memories are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*' (Gillis 1994:5). Hence, to put it in Ricoeur's words again, through narrative identity, we become hero *and* narrator of our own story, but *not* author (Ricoeur 1991a:32-33). Numerous ethnographic studies have demonstrated that this doesn't prevent us from engaging reflexively in identity narration. Rapport refers to this as individual narratives and argues that 'such acts of self-narration do not merely and innocently describe the self but are basic to its emergence and reality. Narratives articulate acts, events, and event-sequences within a significant framing context or history so as to provide a "primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves"' (Rapport 1997b:46).

2. narratives of self and discursive shifts

2.1. crisis and acute identity renegotiation

The reflexive construction of identities becomes particularly acute in times of radical change and dramatic discursive shifts. Numerous ethnographic studies have illustrated this heightened urge to renegotiate memories and identities, for example in contexts of migrancy and postcolonial displacement (Ganguly 1992), of the threat of cultural discontinuity in old age (Hazan 1980; Myerhoff 1986), and of postcommunist transition (Berdahl 1999; Wanner 1998). They all demonstrate how, in the interplay between narratives of past and present, the two mutually constitute each other.

Similarly, the massive changes that took place in the post-Yugoslav states required acute renegotiations of identification on the collective as well as the individual level. The discrediting of formerly self-evident sequences of events and old frameworks of reference by nationalist discourses had brought both the grand narrative of Yugoslavia and the narration of many people's individual identities to a breaking-point. New canonised versions of reality were constructed and new criteria of legitimacy imposed, which affected people's everyday lives dramatically. Ignoring these changes was therefore not an option for most individuals in the post-Yugoslav states, as it might have been in other situations. They were rather suddenly expected to position themselves in relation to these new dominant discourses and the new nationalist 'truths'.

This is not to say that previously all individual narratives were smoothly in line with the former 'truths'. Far from it, people permanently renegotiate their identities. This is not an unusual situation in itself, in Minh-ha's words, 'identity lies at the intersection of dwelling and travelling and is a claim of continuity within discontinuity, and vice-versa' (Minh-ha 1994:14). However, the scale, the speed and the intensity of the processes

discourses (and often evoking the different forms of *power* that come with them). Sometimes these storylines are literally taken from those discourses, which still allows wide variation because, in line with the emphasis on the impossibility of discursive closure, storylines are characterised by a high degree of multi-interpretability. When somebody uses a certain storyline, it is automatically expected that the others will respond within a similar framework; but as a result of multi-interpretability, this does not mean that consensus is needed. Evoking powerful discourses can impute authority to the speaker; it can also set the rules for conversation on a supposedly 'generally accepted' level without having to discuss specific details. Story lines offer us the opportunity to talk and think about a topic without having to grasp the whole problematic and often, thereby, to position the speaker in a wider context of relationships. By calling on a storyline, complexity and conditionality is reduced and a certain implicit underlying common ground, a more or less provisional *doxa*, is presupposed.

An illustration of the use of storylines is provided by Portelli's work on memories of Italian communists (1988). He found that the people he worked with relied heavily on proverbs and quotations from folk songs. Also, he shows how storylines can be authorised retrospectively as in the case of an activist who attributed a certain folk saying to Lenin in order to invest it with the legitimacy of communist orthodoxy (1988:49). In the post-Yugoslav states, it was easy to see how nationalist discourses thrived on storylines, and how they were an ubiquitous feature of everyday life. While throughout this study I explore the meanings and uses of a series of storylines, particularly in anti-nationalist discourses, let us first look at some examples from nationalism.

In Croatia, nationalism revolved around the sanctity of the national state, and this authoritative discourse was permanently and abundantly reinforced through policies, imagery, regime statements, and media messages. However, this discourse of nationalism was never (and could never be) spelled out completely. Rather, on billboards all around the country it was summarised in storylines such as 'We have Croatia!'; in speeches and interviews, politicians relentlessly emphasised the need to be 'on one's own [land]'⁷. The horrendous fate of the Croatian nation in the former state was often captured in the assertion that 'we couldn't sing our own songs, or even speak our own language'. Similar examples taken from Serbian nationalism could be the reference to 'five hundred years under the Turks', the moral superiority implied in 'we ate with knife and fork long before anyone else', or the assertion that 'it is actually Croats who are the nationalists, not Serbs'. Many people's accounts included the latter as a warning for me. 'If you think this is bad', they said, 'wait till you get to Zagreb, now *there* you'll see some nationalism!'. This reflects the dominant line of (self-denying) Serbian nationalism, which holds that the Serbs are the eternally victimised, the ones who only defended themselves against the nationalism of others in the post-Yugoslav wars. These examples illustrate how powerful discourses, or 'big stories' strongly influenced local 'small stories', which often even repeated certain storylines word by word.

However, there was another side to it. People used storylines in order to evoke large, complex and powerful discursive practices and thereby asserted control themselves. In Portelli's words, 'By saying that history was "good", we claim that we have made something out of ourselves' (1988:53). This could be in order to justify certain behaviour or situations, or to avoid reflection about certain issues, or to deny responsibility, or simply and perhaps most crucially, to survive and stay somehow sane (sanity in the eye of the beholder, again). People evoked authoritative discourses through the use of storylines, one way in which they positioned themselves in relation to these larger discourses.

⁷ '*Imamo Hrvatsku*' was a cry of triumph. The second storyline, '*Biti svoj na svome*', literally means 'to be one's own on one's own'.

taking shape in the post-Yugoslav republics posed these challenges with greater urgency. One had to come to terms with new states, new borders, new poverty, new status relations, a new political system and new prescriptions for appropriate behaviour. In a situation where many people experienced influential discourses of state, war, nation and territory as largely objectified and out of their individual control, and where feelings of powerlessness and confusion were overwhelming, many post-Yugoslavs struggled to find a more or less consistent way of relating to these discourses. A whole range of reference points had slipped away from under their feet, and previous narratives of self were often at odds with the new 'truths'. Active negotiation was required to reach a workable balance.

2.2. big/small stories: coping and repositioning

I argue that most of the citizens of Serbia and Croatia aimed for a degree of minimisation of incompatibility between their individual narratives ('small stories') and certain authoritative discourses on the public level ('big stories'). When interpreting their own and other people's life-events and emotions, they relied at least partly on pre-existing discursive material, often of the more powerful and authoritative kind. These narrative positionings involved multiple and contradictory public discourses, and, arguably, they often took place on an unconscious level. However, due to the increased narrativity of the moment, for many, ignoring the issue was not on the menu. Whatever people's evaluation of these 'big stories', they were continually expected to position themselves in relation to a number of large discourses (see Connerton 1989:21).

Again, this seems a simple truism. Often, people attempt to position themselves favourably in relation to some authoritative discourse—favourably, of course, in the eye of the beholder. In this sense, the post-Yugoslav crisis did not only bring geopolitical, socio-economical and ideological shifts, but it also led many people to gradually or suddenly re-write the story of themselves. Often, simply rewriting your own ideological affinities and your own past in line with a set of nationalist truths opened the way to considerable gains in status, power or money—or at least it would prevent losses. However, I would argue that, for many, it was also a question of sanity; if people's narratives of self were completely out of tune with every 'big story', they'd be considered mad.

Narratives, according to Barthes, represent 'a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable cultural discourses which "hem in" what may be said' (Barthes, quoted in Rapport 1997b:44). It is true that people's choice in narrating the story of themselves can be strongly limited, but even in extreme situations of war and displacement actors can deploy what Foucault calls the 'tactical polyvalence of discourses' (Foucault 1990:100). Thus, this study explores the dissident ways in which post-Yugoslavs related to the new dominant nationalist discourses on identity and to alternative discourses, and how they (re)structured their own discursive practices of identity. This brings us back to issues of identification. Identity, particularly in contexts of rapid change, is very much about how we relate (or *don't* relate) our narratives of individual experience to larger discourses. It is through this 'poetic of the self' that we reinforce or deny our position in the broad field of belongings (Herzfeld 1985:21).

2.3. story lines: evoking authoritative discourses

Using the framework for discursive analysis developed by Hajer, we can use the concept of 'story lines' to clarify one of the ways in which people connect their narratives of self to authoritative discourses. The term 'story lines' refers to a 'generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific [...] phenomena' (1995:56). In everyday life, we continually reproduce certain phrases referring to, or better, *evoking* authoritative

Having said that, storylines were not the exclusive property of the dominant discourses. A whole variety circulated, often emerging out of everyday interaction rather than purely 'borrowed' from powerful representations. For example, when asked if they ever considered the possibility of emigration from Serbia, many people curtly answered, independently of each other, 'And do what? Wash dishes?'. This reply should be seen in context: hundreds of thousands had emigrated during the last decade, leaving behind a situation in which the question of emigration had become increasingly normal for people to ponder. But rather than going into the ins-and-outs of their decision-making process, rather than providing me with a list of arguments why they hadn't left (yet), people could rely on a storyline which would not require any explanation. Going by the stories of many of those who stayed behind in Beograd, washing dishes was the single most common activity amongst post-Yugoslav émigrés—and giving this answer meant saying 'No', while at the same time evoking a whole set of pressing financial, social and status problems that potential, maybe even desired, emigration would entail.

Reproducing storylines was particularly common with regard to issues of national identity, creating an oppressive sense of discursive homogeneity with regard to stories of the wars and of nationality in general. Often, storylines seemed to be experienced as the only, and certainly the most effective, forms of access to issues of a national-political nature. As we shall see in Chapter Six, which discusses the changing meanings of national identity in everyday life, this might be an indicator of the previous, relatively unproblematic, taken-for-granted nature of national identity for large numbers of post-Yugoslav citizens. Since many people saw themselves forced to develop a discursive fluency in national terms quickly, when the matter was steadily rising to the top of the political agenda, storylines were a welcome mechanism for repositioning.

Thus, despite its seemingly homogenous character, the post-Yugoslav discursive field was not a one-dimensional, monolithic formation. Even the post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses themselves were extremely polysemic: meaning different things to different people, and approached and used in different ways by different people at different times. Moreover, as always and everywhere, ambiguities ran through the whole picture and alternative discursive practices were being developed. Here lies, of course, the focus of this study: dissident narratives of self, and the ways in which they evoked different authoritative discourses, such as urbanity, 'European-ness' or feminism through different storylines.

3. remembering and forgetting

3.1. rewriting narratives

In contexts of drastic change, narratives of the past come to play a crucial role in identity construction. Tonkin argues that 'individuals may be supported or threatened by public representations of pastness that seem either to guarantee their identity or to deny its significance' (Tonkin 1992:10). Thus, the status of memories shifts—some might be discredited, others lifted to a new importance. Sudden displacement often gives rise to an urge to disambiguate the past in order to make sense of a heavily ruptured present (see Ganguly 1992:31). In this process, people sometimes bump up against the limits of malleability of memories. In any case, there is bound to be plenty of tension at work here, a sometimes fruitful, and often painful, interplay between discontinuity and continuity, between remembering and forgetting, between amnesia and nostalgia.

The evocation of authoritative discourses through the use of storylines can serve people in their attempts to exert control over their own life narratives. Life experiences can then be retroactively and strategically brought into tune with dominant narratives, and in this way, paradoxically, can be reformulated as if belonging to the individual's

'small story' rather than having been imposed by a larger outside force. These repositioning strategies allow people to draw on 'big stories', while simultaneously keeping the latter at a safe but compatible distance from their narratives of self.

Again, it is crucial to note that the processes by which people renegotiate narratives of past and present and rewrite their stories of self are not always the same, nor are they unambiguous. Ganguly's study of Indian migrants in the US, for instance, shows how men and women constructed radically different narratives of past and present (Ganguly 1992). The men approached the past as an undesirable, slightly exotic other, in order to consolidate respectability in the present. The women, on the other hand, tended to glorify their Indian past and compared it favourably to the present without actually criticising their current situation. This case illustrates how, even though in most situations certain narratives are obviously dominant and others marginalised, there are many different roads to follow and many different meanings to be explored.

3.2. the uses of misremembering

Memories, as referred to in narratives of the past and in stories of self, have an ambiguous status with regard to truth. For example, in Ganguly's study, the women are aware that their glorifications of the Indian past are imaginary constructions (Ganguly 1992:39-40). However, they *work*, they are 'symbolically effective' (Ganguly 1992:42). Myerhoff's ethnography of Jewish retirees in California points to a similar conclusion. They know that their representations of identity are contradictory and internally inconsistent but that doesn't stop them from believing and enacting them (Myerhoff 1986:264-265, 284). She shows how a parade and a set of murals were deployed as self-conscious expressions of identity in their own terms, rich in references to the Old Testament, the ocean crossing, life in the shetl, etc. Similar to Ganguly's case, these evocations of a Jewish past are consciously taken out of context and used. Many people who never actually lived in a shetl still referred to it in their recollections of life histories. 'Whether or not experienced individually, the experience is "borrowed" as a historical moment and regularly incorporated into accounts of personal histories' (Myerhoff 1986:274; see also Ganguly 1992:29-31; Hazan 1980:89-97).

Another example is mentioned by Berdahl, who found that villagers in the German borderland constructed memories of landmines on the previous intra-German border, whereas, in fact, they were never there (1999:217). The imagined minefield served to add another layer to the discourse of victimisation developed after reunification. During my own NGO work in a heavily war-affected area in Croatia, I was often struck by the way in which discourses of victimisation dominated many of the abundant references to the past. Even when addressing the most recent conflicts, vagueness and selective amnesia allowed for generalised accusations and for protection against potentially threatening questions about individual knowledge and responsibility. In highly homogenised and nationally one-sided stories of the past, Serbian and Croatian returnees in this now Croatian-dominated area represented recent events in diametrically opposed ways. For example, in one and the same village, almost all Serbs recalled and named a number of mixed marriages, thereby constructing the past as one of peaceful co-existence, whereas most Croats initially denied and later downplayed their existence, in this way reinforcing their bleak view of inter-ethnic relations in the common Yugoslav past. Related to this, in a retrospective effort to cleanse their own biographies of ambiguities, many villagers engaged in the reinterpretation of their life stories and chose to forget their previous Party membership (Jansen 2000b).

While this selective amnesia might have been driven to extremes in the above-mentioned villages with their recent campaigns of ethnic cleansing and their WWII histories of mutual massacres, it was certainly not absent from the relatively unscathed capital cities. As we shall see, it was not even restricted to nationalist discourse. Anti-nationalist narratives throughout this study illustrate the malleability of memory and the

strategic uses people can make of this. Surely some misremembering is taking place if virtually all nationalist narratives reconstruct a Yugoslav past consisting almost exclusively of national victimisation, while the bulk of anti-nationalist stories recollect a time of harmony and peace. Hence, memories are just as much about the present as they are about the past, and I see those narratives as political comments on the desirable organisation of society at the time of speaking rather than as a true depiction of life in the former state. In nationalist discourse, the past had to be disambiguated into discrete, opposed groups in order to legitimate the nationally restructured present, while dissident versions struggled to inject the writings of the past with ambiguity, with overlapping national patterns and with co-existence.

With regard to language, for example, the different nationalisms claimed age-old discrete evolutions of their language and blamed similarities on pollution by other elements. Anti-nationalist narratives did not so much deny differences as point out that they had been much more ambiguous than could be represented through a discrete nationalist perspective. In this way, a crucial aspect of anti-nationalism was the very effort of re-ambiguating nationalist histories, the struggle to retain 'elements' as 'elements' and to resist their articulation as 'moments' in nationalist discourses (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Similarly, when discussing the notion of *Jugonostalgija* in Chapter Ten, I indicate how 'Yugoslavia' had functioned for a number of people as a common cultural space – a self-evident discursive background for their everyday lives. However, not all anti-nationalist discourse was articulated with *Jugonostalgija*, and some exponents were actually very critical of it. Now, if nationalist narratives never mention such a notion of 'home' in Yugoslavia, does this necessarily mean that it was never there? I would argue that this is not the point here—without denying the ways in which it certainly *is* a point for many post-Yugoslavs. What I want to do is look at the mechanisms of remembering and forgetting and at their roles in people's positionings with regard to nationalist discourses. But more, much more about this later.

Of course, I am not suggesting that there is only strategy involved here. It is clear that misremembering can be rooted in many different soils⁸. It may be the unconscious product of trauma or a simple mistake. Alternatively, it might be the expression of calculated self-interest in the above-mentioned, fairly innocent ways or, and sadly this was often the case in the post-Yugoslav context, in a more ruthless manner. In extreme instances, as suggested in Friedlander's study of German memories of the Holocaust, the past can be too massive to be forgotten and too repellent to be integrated into the 'normal' narrative of memory (Friedlander 1993:2). Usually the reality lies somewhere in between because history is shaped always in the experience of later events and often as a way of dealing with the present.

The latter aspect of amnesia is also illustrated by Collard's study of a Greek village (quoted in Tonkin 1992:116). Collard found that there was little or no historical talk about the civil war although it was a key event that had happened only thirty-five years before, the effects of which were still remarkable. Ottoman times, though, a period long before the villagers were born, were often discussed in detail, sometimes falsifiable with reference to documentation. Collard argues that this provided 'a means to talk about some aspect of the early 1940s [the civil war]. It may be that one historical 'story' has come to stand in for another one, which, for a variety of reasons, cannot be spoken of in any other way' (quoted in Tonkin 1992:116). Thus, importantly, rewritings of the past can provide comments on the present without explicitly criticising the status-quo to an extent which might pose risks to oneself or to others.

⁸ Some instances show that false memories can also be working against the interests of the people who hold them: Tonkin, for example, describes how certain aborigines in Australia, despite postcolonial legislation, have blanked out memories of the genocide perpetrated against them by whites in the beginning of this century (Tonkin 1992:115).

3.3. someone's truth, the whole of someone's truth, and nothing but someone's truth

In the post-Yugoslav context of crisis and displacement, the contradictory present was experienced by many people as outside of one's control. The past, then, sometimes came in as a (wo)man's best friend. One could refashion it into a disambiguated, fixed, authoritative narrative to be relied upon. It was possible to disambiguate the past because inconsistencies could be blanked out with hindsight to make it more directly accessible. The past was fixable, because it could be seen as 'over' now. And because it was often reified as objective and autonomous, it could be given an authoritative stamp, particularly in a context where dominant political discourses relied heavily on the authority of certain versions of the past. This narrative could then serve as a positive example or as an undesirable counterpoint as long as it was constructed as a solid, credible, and stable starting point from which to make sense of the present. In this sense, people 'remake the past in terms that are accessible to the present' (Ganguly 1992:45; see also Holy 1996:10).

Rév has written about the politics of collective and individual amnesia in the states of the former Eastern Bloc, which erased all traces of everyday collaboration and accommodation (quoted in Einhorn 1993:8; see also Holy 1996:16). He explains how communism was often considered as an essentially foreign system, imposed from outside (usually by the Soviet Union). Other East Europeans, Rév argues, were portrayed as innocent 'by right of birth', since their very national identity testified to the fact that they had always suffered under and resisted communism. In this way, nationalist discourses represented a widespread attempt to deal with the legacy of the former system.

So are these memories false? Yes, in the sense that they do not correlate to a factual past. Some people who assured me they had never been in the Communist Party were lying to my face. They knew it, I knew it, and maybe they knew that I knew. However, as Tonkin reminds us, in some instances the incorrectness of histories can be veracious in that they provide a true, timeless comment on past and present (1992:114). Portelli elaborates on this theme by analysing what he calls 'uchronic dreams', revealing how for many people it is too difficult or too painful to admit, or even imagine, the 'real' course of history (1988:54). Uchronic tales, he argues, set the existing world up against a desirable one that could have been in a parallel universe (Portelli 1988:46). In these fables of the past, his informants, Italian communist activists, tended to associate themselves closely with certain leaders and events, while disassociating themselves from others (1988:48). The uchronic turn in their stories, Portelli found, almost always emerged when relating an event in which the narrator played a particularly significant role, so that, paradoxically, misremembering was most prevalent in relation to the best-remembered times.

In the post-Yugoslav context, many narratives of the past, and especially those associated with violence, became particularly one-sided and inconsistent when dealing with recent events that could not have been other than highly significant on a personal level. Their main characteristic, however, seemed to be their vagueness. There rarely was any mention of individual agency, as actors were usually collective and national (Jansen 2000b). It was precisely one of the defining points of anti-nationalist narratives that they attempted to relate events in terms of individual responsibility and 'who did what'.

Historical truth in narrative is relative, as Ganguly warns, 'the reasons for the inventions lie in a discursive field other than that dealing with history and truth' (Ganguly 1992:40). Although valid in general terms, I think this view may appear cruel to many people in a context such as the former Yugoslavia. When discursive battles are raging between heavily disputed versions of past and present, and when these versions deal with issues of life and death, justice and injustice, war and peace, the idea of truth in relation to memory takes on increased tension. This became particularly clear to me on

an evening in Zagreb, when a Chilean human rights activist came to speak about the traumas and problems surrounding the identification and exhumation of mass graves. The speaker argued that lessons from the Chilean case could inform a sensitive approach to recently located mass burial sites in Croatia. But when he attempted to deconstruct 'hard' concepts of truth concerning war crimes and traumas, a woman from the besieged and later destroyed town of Vukovar loudly and emotionally protested by screaming 'The truth is what we want, the truth!'. Several of the men of her family, including her husband, had been missing since the beginning of the war, and only *the* truth about their fates, not *someone's* truth, could quench her thirst for peace of mind.

3.4. alternative narratives, alternative memories

Post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discourses displayed a similarly strong call for recuperating notions of truth, particularly with regard to memories of the recent past. Often, these narratives were constructed in opposition to the surrounding climate of lies – with indignation, anger and disbelief as central elements. As we shall see, many people reconstructed their anti-nationalist stories of self by relying on the continuity of truth and the refusal of accepting non-truth, at least on an individual level. In doing so, they articulated their memories and their versions of the past, which were often in direct contradiction to the dominant nationalist ones.

In an article about people made redundant by IBM, Sennett argues that large modern capitalist institutions encourage the idea of memory as private property. In their drive for flexibility and mobility, they attempt to undo institutional memories of the days when the company took care from the cradle to the grave. 'Given these realities,' Sennett argues, 'it becomes indeed reasonable to see the domain of memory instead as a private matter, an archive one wants to protect from the violations of the competitive world' (1998:24). The post-Yugoslav situation is different: the dominant nationalisms were engaged in a collective attempt to eradicate a whole range of personal memories of the past fifty years, while promoting those that underwrote the general discourse of national victimisation—often in terms of 'collective memory'.

In this sense, this study of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism deals with a peculiar set of subaltern memories, which find themselves in uneasy company with many other counter-discourses centred upon 'alternative memories'. I would like to take this opportunity to point to some differences between the approach proposed here, and other analyses of such memories (see also Jansen 1999c). I will refer to two studies in particular: Wanner's study of memory, history and Ukrainian postcommunist transition (1998) and Connerton's work on 'how societies remember' (1989).

Wanner's book focuses on the formulation of historical counter-discourses and the role of 'social memory' in the ways that people make sense of reality in opposition to official, dominant accounts such as Soviet ideology. For Ukrainian nationalists, paralleled for example by their Croatian counterparts, a crucial instrument for fostering popular support was the reinterpretation of the experience of the Soviet regime through the perspective of national victimisation. I believe Wanner's analysis makes an important leap when she argues that these nationalist rewritings of history were successful because they, 'far more so than official Soviet historiography, reflected individual experience and memories' (1998:44). Nationalism, Wanner says, (re)constructed Ukrainian historiography in categories and meanings compatible with individual memories, and it was this 'overlap of historical narrative and individual experience embedded in memories which led to mass support' (ibid.:197-198).

What Wanner leaves unclear, I believe, is the relation between those two posited fields of memory: collective and individual. Furthermore, she applies a rigid distinction between official Soviet historiography on the one hand and memories based on individual experience on the other hand (ibid.:37-38). Given the extent of Soviet manipulation of historiography, for example with regard to the Famine of 1932-1933,

this is not so surprising. However, she refers to the blatant instrumentalisation of representations of the past by nationalism (ibid.:38) as compatible with individual memories. Still, Wanner herself warns that 'memories are not fixed entities but constructions evolving over time within a field of power relations' (ibid.:166-167).

There is a problem with this approach, I believe. Wanner's argument unwittingly runs the risk of retrospectively confirming, ratifying or even canonising the significance and legitimacy of certain issues by embedding them in 'memory'. There is a danger of reifying 'social memory', a risk which is also prevalent in some otherwise fascinating studies of WWII memories in Croatia's Serbian communities (e.g. Hayden 1994; Denich 1994). Of course I wouldn't deny the importance of the Ustaša genocide on Serbs, amongst others, but I would argue that *proclaiming* certain issues significant with hindsight, giving them the stamp of subaltern memory, also actively contributes to the political significance of potential memories of these issues. The first incidents of hate speech and bloodshed in the post-Yugoslav wars were loaded with references to what were represented as subaltern, suppressed memories (the Ustaša genocide on Serbs, the Bleiburg massacre on Croats, etc.). Scott writes about the crucial moment when 'hidden transcripts' break through to the public level, and he illustrates this with the powerful words of a Chilean opposition politician who first spoke openly against Pinochet and who ended his daring speech with the words 'I speak for fifteen years of silence' (1990:207). The post-Yugoslav nationalisms often presented themselves in similar terms, arguing that it was they who finally freed subaltern memory. With nationalism taking over, new versions of the past became dominant and they violently pushed other memories into marginality.

Let us move on to another, similar approach to memory. Connerton describes how, through oral histories, subordinate groups can gain a voice, as they are not represented in elite historical reconstruction (1989). He explains that the idea of a chronological narrative often does not relate to subordinate ways of remembering because this reflects elite views of narration, whereby inserting your own story into 'objective institutional history' is the rule (Connerton 1989:18-19). Connerton argues that people in subaltern positions lack the terms of reference for a linear trajectory and instead follow a cyclical pattern, since the rhythm of their narratives is not structured around 'the individual's intervention in the working of the dominant institutions' (1989:19). Although an important insight for certain contexts, this seems a slightly essentialist view of 'subordinates', which does not allow for the variations and ambiguities which might exist. In the post-Yugoslav situation, I found, many people in very weak positions *did* try to insert their life narratives into larger dominant versions of history. Moreover, and crucial to my argument, the case of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practice demonstrates that narrative linearity can also serve as a form of resistance. This converges with a general aversion to collectivist discourses in post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism: one of the major critiques of nationalism was carried out through a critique of collectivism in general (Dević 1997). Linear patterns of narration might be more consistent with beliefs in individual responsibility, and in the post-Yugoslav states such beliefs were counterposed against what was perceived as a society where blind collectivism reigned⁹.

3.5. modes of narration

A useful tool for understanding narratives of the past and misremembering can be Portelli's concept of 'modes of narration' (quoted in Tonkin 1992:68). In a study of narratives of social unrest amongst Italian workers in the post-war years, he found that his informants tended to select one or more out of a range of *modes* to recount certain events. Portelli distinguishes between the institutional, the collective and the personal mode of narration and emphasises that they might coexist and overlap between and

⁹ Thanks to Caroline Oliver for bringing this to my attention.

within narratives. He draws the attention to examples where general periodisation and even detailed dates change according to this mode. For instance, even amongst eye witnesses different dates were attributed to the killing of a worker, a key event in local history. The differences were systematically related to the mode in which the speaker inscribed him or herself when recounting this particular event.

Similarly, in the post-Yugoslav context, I found people speaking in different modes, depending on their own position, the topic, the context, the addressee, and so on. It seems important to me that we resist the temptation to study predominantly *one* mode of narration—a tendency not entirely absent from many studies of memory, which focus strongly on a collective mode. This brings us back to the point made earlier on individuality, linearity and anti-nationalism. In Serbia and Croatia, I found that people, when involved in anti-nationalist practice, often spoke in the personal mode, providing detailed accounts of their experiences including dates and chronologised events. This provided a striking contrast to the dominant tendency of vague and selective, but always collective, historicism.

Portelli's observations are crucial to ethnographic work in a context like the post-Yugoslav one, where reference to long-gone history was abundant and ubiquitous in many people's narratives and in everyday conversation. Western European and North American media depictions eagerly took on this practice as a symptom of the Balkans' cyclical history of blood and revenge and as an expression of the timelessness of its people's social character (very prominently so during the Kosovo crisis in 1999). And it has to be said that it was tempting to do so, with local people overwhelmingly bringing up and relying on 'history'. In my own NGO work in Croatian war-affected villages, I was continually confronted with local accounts of past events containing references to authoritative discourses of history (Jansen 2000b). In this way, in a context of extreme powerlessness and destruction, people exerted control over their own version of history and, thereby, over their own 'small stories'. For instance, rather than simply arguing that he didn't want Serbs to return, this man referred to an age-old historical contract which stated that Serbs were out of place in this area:

'We [the Croats, *s/j*] accepted them [the Serbs, *s/j*] long ago. We accepted them on the basis of a contract that they would stay until the Turks would leave. But they stayed on after that. And not only that, they wanted to be the chiefs.'

Another villager, whose father was killed by Serbs in WWII in front of his own eyes, also switched to a national-historical mode of narration, referring to the historical cause of national freedom. Standing in front of a ruined house that he had partly done up with his wife who was ill, he refused to deplore their predicament—so obvious to the eye of any visitor. Asked about life in the former Yugoslavia and about the perspectives of Serbs returning, the answer was a reformulation of history as one long Croatian struggle for national freedom against Serbs. The man argued that Croats had always been second class citizens who were not allowed to study, to wave their flag, or to sing their own songs. He complained that they had not been allowed to speak Croatian and that the language had been called Serbo-Croatian. For a thousand years, he claimed, they had lived under the Serbs, until they had finally decided it was time to stand up for their freedom. The first time they had done so in 1941, he argued, on the German side. Everybody had thought Germany invincible, but with the defeat of Germany, the Croats had lost as well. They were forced to live under the Serbs for another fifty years—this time the Serbs were 'communists'. And again the Croats had prepared a revolt. Now, he concluded, for once and forever they had settled the score and liberated themselves. Forever. The reference to a thousand years under the Serbs is a storyline taken from president Tuđman's oft-cited idea of the thousand-year dream of the Croatian people to have their own state. Note that the area that is now Croatia was controlled by Hungarians and Austrians for centuries and only the last seventy-five years of these ten centuries were 'Yugoslav' years.

Reference to national history, then, was abundant, and it would be easy to interpret this as a symptom of deeply embedded, collectively entrenched ethnic conflicts. However, I believe this might be a case of people framing their narratives into a certain received and authoritative form, i.e. of talking in a certain *mode*. And, parallel to the possibility of switching between several powerful discourses, it seems that, for a variety of reasons, different modes can be compelling at different times.

[chapter three] Yugoslavia—dealing with the national question

It's hardly likely that twentieth century man [sic] is called upon
to discover the truth that had never been discovered before.
E.F. Schumacher

Rabinovitch, a Jew in the Soviet Union, wants to emigrate. The emigration official asks him why, and Rabinovitch answers: 'There are two reasons why. The first is that I know that communism in Russia will last forever, nothing will really change here, and this prospect is unbearable for me.' 'But', interrupts the bureaucrat, 'this is pure nonsense. Communism is disintegrating all around! All those responsible for the communist crimes will be severely punished!' 'That's my second reason!' responds Rabinovitch.
(Soviet joke, reformulated by Slavoj Žižek (1991:1))

Numerous works have been written on the political history of Yugoslavia, and therefore, in this chapter I attempt only to sketch concisely some aspects of the Yugoslav background. In this brief outline of certain ideological and socio-political processes which made the creation and consolidation of a united Yugoslavia politically thinkable and historically possible, I focus on the politics of nationality and nationalism. In light of the subject of this study, particular reference will be made to the relation between Serbian and Croatian nationalism and to the ways in which the reconstruction of histories is part of the endeavour to legitimate and support contemporary discourses. In this way, the chapter does risk defeating its own object, as it necessarily favours certain representations over others. However, although the post-Yugoslav wars and the anti-nationalist discursive practices that are at the core of this study cannot be explained exclusively with regard to previous events, a brief look at some background factors is necessary for any understanding of the situation in the 1990s. At various points later in this study I shall come back to the contemporary role of contested narrations of the past in more detail.

1. the glorious pasts of 'natural' homelands

The idea of a unified South-Slav state is relatively recent but it seeks its legitimation in times long ago, when Slav tribes moved towards the Adriatic in the seventh century and underwent both common and separate historical influences. Up to the nineteenth century, social formations in the Balkans were by no means comparable to the modern phenomenon of a centralised nation-state; therefore, historical arguments about territory and political control are always ambiguous and based on uncertain assumptions. An integral part of the nationalist endeavour, however, is the reviving of the glorious past of the nation. In the post-Yugoslav context nationalist intellectuals of all colours referred to a time in which its presumed ancestors ruled a territory much larger than the present republic (Singleton 1976:29).

If we limit our analysis to Serbs and Croats, we can see how Croatian nationalism found inspiration in the tenth century, when the Dalmatian chieftain Tomislav and his successors bore the title of King of Croatia and ruled a considerable part of what later became Yugoslavia. Serbian nationalist discourses refer to the fourteenth-century empire of Stefan Dušan, Czar of Serbs and Greeks. The fact that both monarchs ruled large parts of present Bosnia-Herzegovina sheds a critical light on the claim by nationalist politicians in the 1990s that these regions were part of the 'natural' homeland of their respective peoples (Križan 1992:137-139). Arguably, those respective nationalisms have good reasons to refer precisely to these periods in history, because

nearly the entire area was later ruled by imperial powers. Recalling Banac (quoted in Bennett 1995:16) it could be argued that 'the history of the Balkans is the history of migrations, not just of peoples, but of lands'¹. However, roughly two main patterns took shape. In 1102 the predominantly Catholic Croatian lands became part of the Kingdom of Hungary and, from 1526 onwards, it was controlled by the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The region now known as Serbia, mainly Orthodox, was incorporated in the Ottoman empire after the defeat in the legendary battle of Kosovo (1389), which came to occupy a central place in Serbian nationalism.

2. the emergence of the Yugoslav idea

According to most historians, and to the horror of contemporary Croatian nationalists, the 'Illyrian idea', the notion of a united Yugoslavia [literally 'South-Slavia'], originated in the 1830s-1840s amongst a relatively small circle of the Croatian upper class (Cohen 1995:4). Yugoslavism became a powerful political ideology only in the second half of the 19th century, when, influenced by the eighteenth century Herderian concepts of nationhood, and eager to embark on the train of modernity, intellectuals in various South-East European regions developed the idea of a united Yugoslavia (Lampe 1994:73-76). Herder defined the nation by cultural-linguistic criteria, and this made it possible to conceive of a nation-state comprising speakers of all South Slav dialects, regardless of political and religious background. Interestingly, there was no single Slavonic language which could boast a tradition of being the medium of a high culture—linguistically, no fundamental distinctions could be made between the various dialects that became Serbian, Croatian, and so on (Schöpflin 1993:173). In their effort to create the foundations for a Yugoslav state, these intellectuals and politicians followed the classic adagio of nation-building and campaigned for a common South Slav high culture. As argued in the works of Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm (1990) and Anderson (1983), this was not a matter of reviving authentic languages of folk culture, which would reflect the complex patchwork of local cultures. What these intellectuals really did was to forge a new language for a new literate culture: the construction of a national language was a conscious political effort, far from a neutral cultural process (Banac 1992a:3-4; Detrez 1993:15). Ironically, in this respect, the first expressions of Yugoslavism reflected more aspects of the classic scholarly accounts of nationalism than the recent Croatian and Serbian discourses of identification.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm of linguists and writers (Hobsbawm 1990:54; Schöpflin 1993:174; Garde 1992:131), the evolution of the Illyrian movement was not unproblematic since centripetal and centrifugal forces were operating from the outset. The aforementioned linguistic factor and the similarities in customs and lifestyles constituted arguments in favour of a united Yugoslavia. However, there was less unity on the religious level, as three major religious traditions (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim) had a long history in the region. Still, a number of observers argue that these religious differences gained much of their importance only with the rise of nationalism in the 19th century (Ramet 1984; Lampe 1994:72-73). A more crucially divisive factor, according to some historians, consisted of the diverging histories of political domination, which created deep divisions particularly between the political establishments (Cohen 1995:5-7). Central to the debate between Serbian and Croatian nationalisms was the definition of a South Slav identity. Moreover, within Croatian political circles a division arose between those who favoured the Illyrian idea on the one hand, and the supporters of outright Croatian independence on the other hand.

Denich argues that, historically, Serbian nationalism was conceptualised around the

¹ For a wonderful literary account of the shifting boundaries of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires and the effect those shifts had on the Bosnian towns of Višegrad and Travnik, see Ivo Andrić's classics *The Bridge over the Drina* and *Bosnian Chronicle*, both written in the 1940s.

notion of hegemony, whereas the Croatian nationalist cause centred upon the concept of negation (1994:372-373). Among Serbian nationalists, the idea of a united Yugoslavia merged with the concept of a greater Serbia (Grmek et al 1993). During the 19th century a Serbian national state had been established as a political unit with a relatively high degree of independence (Garde 1992:39-41), and with the rise of Yugoslavism, the predominant notion of national hegemony was quite straightforwardly expanded to all the territories where Serbs lived. In this way, the Yugoslav idea was not always quite as Yugoslav as it looked since a range of Serbian nationalists came to embrace it as necessary for the fulfilment of Serbian nationalist aspirations. This, of course, did not please Croatian nationalists who were engaging in the construction of Croatian discourses of identification, which were explicitly posited against the above. Extreme Croatian nationalism even defined statehood as requiring the exclusion of Serbs from the territory which it claimed, as exemplified by the fascist regime of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during World War II². This distinction between incorporative Serbian nationalism and negationist Croatian nationalism constitutes an important framework of understanding throughout this study.

Notwithstanding these patterns of conflict, the notion of a united Yugoslavia was more influential in Croatia than in Serbia. Over time, a growing consensus including moderate nationalist circles in Zagreb grew on the desire to establish a common South Slav state—even if only as a necessary condition for a more autonomous Croatia, which was at the time still ruled by the Habsburg empire. However, on the basis of the previously mentioned diverging definitions of the Yugoslav idea, and particularly taking into account conflicting Serbian and Croatian nationalist views, it was predictable that any unitary South Slav state could only come into being with a heavy mortgage³.

3. the inter-war kingdom: Yugoslavia take one⁴

In 1914 during a visit to Sarajevo, Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, heir to the Habsburg crown, was killed by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb. Princip declared at his trials that he was 'a Yugoslav nationalist, aiming for the unification of all Yugoslavs'. He added that he did 'not care about what form of a state [Yugoslavia would take], but it must be free from Austria' (Malcolm 1994:155). Despite these Yugoslavist credentials, Princip was also a Serbian nationalist. Whatever his real intentions, the thin line between Serbian nationalism and Yugoslavism would prove a thorny issue in the following years.

Despite the conflicting visions in Serbian and Croatian political circles, a first successful attempt to create a united Yugoslavia took shape towards the end of the First World War. Larger geopolitics were a crucial factor (Glenny 1999:361-366), but as a result of specific political circumstances Serbian, Croatian and Slovene elites also came to accept South Slav unity as a desirable and profitable objective—albeit for different and often contradictory reasons. I have pointed out how, for Serbian nationalists, the kingdom was a step in the process of hegemonic nation-building. Croatian nationalists accepted the propagation of a South Slav state primarily as a political move in Croatia's struggle for autonomy within the Habsburg empire (Lendvai 1991:254). The hard-line nationalist anti-Yugoslav movement in Croatia was outnumbered by its pro-Yugoslav opponents, and on 1 December 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was

² Please note that I am speaking of ideologies here. Recent events in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo have made abundantly clear that, in practice, extreme Serbian nationalism is certainly not unwilling to engage in campaigns of ethnic cleansing—to the say the least.

³ This is not to deny other tensions, for example with non-Slav populations such as the Albanians. However, in this study the focus is on the Serbo-Croatian divide. See amongst numerous others: Schöpflin 1993:174-175; Banac 1992a:3-4; 1992b:169-170; Garde 1992:53-55.

⁴ For a detailed overview, see Glenny 1999:402-412; Neeven 1993:21-28; see also Pešić 1993:40-44; Burg 1983:8-18; Banac 1992a:11-15; Pavlowitch 1988:1-9; Singleton 1976:66-85; Garde 1992:52-61.

proclaimed and the Serbian monarchy of the Karađorđević dynasty was elevated to an all-Yugoslav kingdom. Serbia's pre-war political power and its demographic dominance made the first Yugoslavia a strongly Serbian-controlled unitary state. In 1921 on Vidovdan, the anniversary of the 1389 Kosovo Battle, the new Constitution consolidated this situation: it was virtually a copy of the 1903 Serbian Constitution (Voet 1993:8-9).

While the creation of the Kingdom was made possible by political pragmatism on all sides, a lack of consensus about the nature of the Yugoslav state characterised the 1920s (Banac 1992b:170). Some scholars have highlighted indications of relative successes of Yugoslavism (Cohen 1995:19; Bennett 1995:33), but the ongoing conflict between (Croatian) federalism and (Serbian) unitarism escalated into instability and a vicious circle of political violence. Serbian domination provided a basis for anti-Serbian feelings among Croats, and the *Ustaša* ['Uprising'] terrorist organisation campaigned for Croatian independence. At the same time, Stjepan Radić's Croatian Peasant Party sought political autonomy through more peaceful means. However, in 1928 Radić was killed by a Montenegrin of the ruling Radical Party and political turmoil followed. In January 1929, King Aleksandar dissolved parliament and instituted a strongly unitarist royal dictatorship, which consolidated Serbian hegemony. The monarch was killed in 1934 and, although his successor, Prince-Regent Pavle, moved towards greater accommodation with Croatian demands, this evolution was quickly overtaken by the outbreak of World War II (Detrez 1992; Pavlowitch 1988:6ff).

4. the second world war: contested narrations of horror

If no history is ever uncontested, post-Yugoslav narrations of the 1941-1945 period have proven to be particularly sensitive to political manipulation⁵. Moreover, during my fieldwork, the (re)construction of such clashing memories played an important role on the everyday level as well (see Jansen 2000b). Having said this, it still seems mandatory to provide at least some general information about WWII in Yugoslavia – however high some proponents of Croatian and Serbian nationalist representations would jump at the use of the neutral word 'information' for this concise sketch.

4.1. Ustaša fascist rule in Greater Croatia

In 1941 the South Slav kingdom capitulated to the Nazis. During the following four years Yugoslavia was the setting for a series of events which cannot even begin to be described by terms such as bestiality or atrocity. More than half of the one million plus people that died in the war were murdered by fellow Yugoslavs. The Nazis allowed the Croatian separatists of the Ustaša movement to realise their dream of an Independent State of Croatia [*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH*], including large parts of the present republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and a bit of Serbia, but excluding some coastal regions controlled by Italy. As Singleton argues, the NDH 'was not independent, it was hardly a state, and it was only fifty per cent Croat' (Singleton 1976:88). The leader of the new state was Ante Pavelić, who had spent the pre-war years in exile in Mussolini's Italy, and who unsuccessfully offered the Croatian crown to an Italian prince (Garde 1992:65).

Although now widely held to have been a fascist puppet state, in 1941 the NDH gained considerable recognition by several powers, most controversially by members of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church⁶. Following the lead of the Nazis, the NDH regime

⁵ For some overviews of the war years, see for instance Glenny 1999:485-506, 529-536; Singleton 1976:86-97; Pavlowitch 1988:10-15; Neeven 1993:32-35; Cohen 1995:21-25.

⁶ Dedijer (1994) provides a very critical view of the role of the Catholic Church. A sympathetic account can be found in Garde (1992:64ff).

embarked on a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, and others. The metaphors of a pure Croatian nation-state were actualised through measures such as forced conversion to Catholicism, expulsion to Serbia and mass murder (Denich 1994:374-375; Rusinow 1977:1; Neeven 1993:32-35). Croats with anti-fascist sympathies were also victimised, as state ideology permitted only Catholic Croats and Muslims (regarded by the regime as Islamicised Croats and awarded the dubious title of honour 'flower of the nation') to live in the new fascist state (Garde 1992:66). The NDH was not only the Axis state which marked the largest proportion of its population for extermination, but it also became known as the perpetrator of the most brutal terror in WWII (Glenny 1999:501).

Some writers, Croatian and foreign, suggest that the NDH should be considered a regime imposed on the Croats against their will by the Nazi occupiers (Grmek et al 1993:11; Garde 1992:64ff). Garde argues that 'the confusion of allegiance to the state and approval of the regime and its policies has been maintained consciously under Tito' (1992:65), and he emphasises that we should distinguish between popular support for an independent Croatia and enthusiasm for a fascist government. However, as Garde himself admits further on, there is a problem with his emphasis on the state/regime distinction, for 'the independent state appeared with the regime, and disappeared with it' (1992:277).

An unknown, but widely disputed, number of Serbs, Jews, anti-fascist Croats, Gypsies and others were transported to extermination sites such as Jasenovac. After the war, during Tito's rule, any public discussion of the wartime massacres was strictly controlled. However, in the 1980s independent research was carried out by an émigré Serb (Kočović) and a Croat (Žerjavić) based on a computer analysis of census and demographic indices. They reached similar results (Bennett 1995:45-46; Voet 1993:10): according to Kočović, 1,014,000 Yugoslavs were killed in WWII; whereas Žerjavić's estimate was 1,027,000, almost half of which were Serbs. I limit myself only to these figures in order to indicate the scale of the horror. As we shall see in the sketch of post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses, a sort of obscene statistical juggling has characterised the period since the late 1980s, with opposing nationalists using the bone count to their political advantage (Hayden 1994). For an outside observer, these discussions can seem quite outrageous. For example, with regard to the extermination camp of Jasenovac, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Pavle, in a statement in 1991, talked of 700,000 victims (Grmek et al 1993:277), whereas Franjo Tuđman, the first postcommunist Croatian president, estimated that less than 60,000 people had been killed (Silber & Little 1995:90).

4.2. Četniks and Partisans – from grave to grave...

Although political relations between Serbs and Croats had been troubled for a while, most people living in the mixed territories of the NDH were taken by surprise by the Ustaša genocide (Denich 1994:374-375). Soon, however, guerrilla resistance against the Ustaša state and against its German and Italian allies was channelled along two lines: Četniks and Partisans (Pavlowitch 1989:11; Singleton 1976:90-97).

Let us first briefly look at the Četniks. In German-occupied Serbia, administrated by a Serbian Nazi puppet government, there was a direct, counter-movement of nationalist paramilitary forces. These so-called Četnik militias, created around remnants of the pre-war Yugoslav army, favoured the restoration of the monarchy. Their leader Draža Mihajlović was officially recognised as the Army Minister of the London-based government-in-exile, but on the ground the Četniks were incapable of putting forward an image which transcended their Serbian base of support (Banac 1992b:170-171). Moreover, whereas many pre-war Serbian nationalists had believed in a hegemonic strategy incorporating other nationalities, some Četnik leaders increasingly strove for an ethnically homogeneous Serbia (see Grmek et al 1993). These Četnik leaders effectively replicated the Ustaša ideology of a pure nation-state, but while they did

engage in massacres themselves, their proposed solution was based mainly on population exchanges and expulsion (Grmek 1993:200ff; Denich 1994:375).

The second, and eventually victorious, path of resistance was chosen by those who joined the communist-led Partisan forces. They embarked on a struggle against all three fascist armies, and against the Četniks, aiming for a united Yugoslavia under control of the Communist Party (Rusinow 1977:2-13). The Partisans were particularly successful among Serbs in the territories controlled by the Ustaša government, but they recruited people of all national backgrounds. As the war came to an end, the Partisans succeeded in attracting considerable support based on a discourse which portrayed them as the legitimate leaders of the Yugoslav people. According to Schöpflin, in this legitimating process the Partisans projected themselves in a threefold manner: (1) as the real representatives of the indigenous resistance against the occupying powers; (2) as the champions of inter-ethnic peace and co-operation; (3) as the only force truly committed to the fate of the impoverished peasant masses (Schöpflin 1993:179).

The military-strategic story of the Second World War in Yugoslavia is almost as confusing as the country's national composition, so this text cannot go into the shifting alliances and contradictory operations of all groups involved. In any case, the result was that in 1945 the Partisans led by the communist leader Josip Broz Tito drove out the occupying forces and defeated the Ustaše *and* the Četniks, thereby eliminating huge numbers of their opponents. Hence, the attempts of the NDH to realise an ethnically pure Croatia had failed and the Serbs returned to their villages. The political climate had profoundly changed, however, as those who had fought in the Partisan forces returned victoriously and took on important posts in the communist order (Schöpflin 1993:179; Lendvai 1991:255). Tito's popularity immediately after the war was greatest amongst the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia, but he also drew considerable support from Croats, Montenegrins, and others (Banac 1992b:171).

During World War II people of all nationalities in Yugoslavia were victims of mass murder, including both Serbs (particularly in 1941, by the Ustaše) and Croats (particularly in 1945, by the Partisans) (Voet 1993:11). These events moulded their attitudes towards the events of the past as well as towards the new post-war order. The situation was largely based on fear and distrust, and national lines were accentuated through processes of victimisation and labelling. It is against this background that I now undertake to sketch some patterns of the Titoist project of a modern, socialist and united Yugoslav state.

5. post-war Titoism: Yugoslavia take two

Immediately after its victory in 1945, the new communist government embarked on a campaign to build what was meant to be a radically new Yugoslavia under the banner of *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* ['Brotherhood and Unity']. The 1946 constitution established a federation of republics (with new frontiers), modelled on the Soviet scheme and strongly centralised around the Beograd-based power monopoly of the Party. The Titoist regime(s) that ruled Yugoslavia for more than 40 years caught the attention of many observers around the globe for a number of reasons: its in-between position in the capitalist/communist divide; its experimental economic system of self-management; and its role in the Non-Aligned Movement. The scope of this study is directed at the dimension of national identities—this is a limited perspective, which leaves un-discussed several important related issues.

5.1. one formula for the national question: 'Brotherhood and Unity'

After the ravages of World War II, the new regime judged it necessary to establish a federal system as an important instrument of symbolic inter-national reconciliation. This

also acted as a powerful argument against charges that the Partisans wanted to reconstruct the Serbian-dominated inter-war kingdom. The new communist authorities were clearly in favour of a common South Slav state, but although the political community was to be imagined on the supra-national Yugoslav level, it was argued that this could only be realised gradually. Therefore, a federal system seemed the most feasible construction (Garde 1992:88-91).

Yugoslavia institutionalised a twofold system of national rights organised around the categories of 'nations of Yugoslavia' [*narodī*] and 'national minorities' [*nacionalne manjine*]⁷. In the 1963 constitution, the latter term was abandoned for the more neutral 'nationalities' [*narodnosti*]. While a precise criterion to distinguish nations from nationalities was never officially formulated, implicitly it was clear that nationalities were those groups who were assumed to have a homeland outside Yugoslavia⁸. Each of the five Yugoslav *narodī*, who were recognised as having their habitat in Yugoslavia, was attributed a republic: Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and the two newly recognised nations, the Macedonians and the Montenegrins. The sixth republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, contained the majority of Slavonic-speaking Muslims, who were recognised as a nation in 1968. Two of the republics were officially plurinational: Bosnia (with three *narodī* as constituent nations: Serbs, Muslims and Croats), and Croatia (with two constituent *narodī*: Serbs and Croats).

The second category, *narodnosti*, included a host of nationalities living in Yugoslavia, but considered a diaspora of another nation: Albanians, Magyars, Bulgarians, Czechs, Gypsies, Italians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks and Turks. For the reasons stated above, Kosovo, with an Albanian majority, was not granted the status of republic, but of 'autonomous province'; a similar policy was enacted in Vojvodina, with its large Hungarian presence. The category of *narodnosti* also held other nationalities, such as Vlachs, Gypsies, Jews, etc. The category of 'Yugoslavs' will be discussed later, but it is important here to note that the choice of nationality was voluntary. Moreover, it transpired from recollections during my fieldwork that it was popular amongst urban Yugoslav citizens, particularly in later years, to write down fictitious nationalities. 'Eskimo' seems to have been a particularly attractive one. Nationality was registered in voters' lists, birth and marriage certificates, employment cards, official educational and military documents, etc., but passports were simply Yugoslav (Woodward 1995:36).

The 1946 constitution proclaimed the legal equality of all nations and nationalities and affirmed the brotherhood and unity of all Yugoslavs. Furthermore, it spelled out the equality of all citizens regardless of national or religious identity, the equal rights and duties of the republics, and the 'presumption of equal contribution to the Partisan resistance by all nations' (Lampe 1994:84). The text emphasised the voluntary character of federal co-operation and even granted the republics the right of secession in a preamble (this arrangement gave rise to quite some debate in the early 1990s) (Singleton 1976:220; Hayden 1992). All nationalities, even small minorities, had the right to speak their own language in educational, judicial and cultural affairs. In this sense, culturally, the rights of all national groups were probably protected better than in most other plurinational states. Nevertheless, strict concentration of security and military matters in Beograd, strong pro-Yugoslav propaganda and a more general emphasis on co-operative post-war recovery, indicated that the national question would not be allowed to come to the forefront (Rusinow 1977:18-19).

Initially, the government of the new Yugoslavia adhered fully to the communist ideology of proletarian internationalism. Of course, after the ravages of World War II, the national question could not be denied, but class was declared a much more important factor

⁷ The discussion of the nationality system of communist Yugoslavia is based on Garde 1992:113-115.

⁸ But then again, this leaves out national groups such as the Vlachs or the Gypsies (or, in 1945, the Jews) who did not have a 'homeland' in another state but still were not granted a republic. No official criteria were formulated, as the communist government was always very cautious about not letting the national question come to the forefront. For a good discussion of the policies of nationality, see Stallaerts 1992; 1994.

than the *bourgeois* notion of national identity. Although the new regime formally acknowledged the multi-national character of Yugoslavia, theoretically, the issue of national identity was declared of minor political importance in the progressive evolution towards communism. It was believed that other-than-cultural aspects of national identity would slowly fade away because of the discrediting experience of nationalism in the fascist Croatian state of WWII, and because of the solidarity-generating all-Yugoslav Partisan victory against the Nazis (Lampe 1994:84-85; Cohen 1995:22; Banac 1992b:172-173). In this way, Titoist ideology represented a variant of the classical modernisation thesis: the assimilating forces of industrialisation (be it capitalist or Marxist) were believed to diminish and finally erase national(ist) affiliation.

5.2. the politics of nationality: the balance of Croats and Serbs

In 1948 the Yugoslav regime broke with Stalin and the Cominform. There followed an increased display of official Yugoslav patriotism exemplified by the Partisan tradition and personified in the charismatic figure of Tito. In order to secure Yugoslav unity, a sophisticated network of power balances was deployed between the constituting republics throughout the next thirty years (Topham 1993:38-39). Again, I limit the description to the evolution of the paramount rivalry between Serbs and Croats.

It was assumed that a strong Yugoslavia could only come into being if the power of the largest nation, Serbia, was restricted; so the communist regime put an end to Montenegro's and Macedonia's status as *de facto* colonies of Serbia and created two autonomous provinces within Serbia. On the other hand, Croatia, tainted by its history of fascism, suffered a stronger repression of national culture than other republics, in all but religious issues (Schöpflin 1993:180ff). Moreover, as a result of the defeat of the Ustaše, the Serbian minority in Croatia was proportionally over-represented in the League of Communists and in the security forces. Thus, neither Serbian nor Croatian nationalists could claim victory in the new Yugoslavia. Viewed against the background of the Greater-Serbian dream, Četnik aspirations were seriously restrained as 30% of all Serbs lived outside the republic of Serbia (Topham 1993:37). Demands for Croatian independence, on the other hand, seemed more unrealistic than ever before. On both sides, mechanisms of victimisation re-entered the stage undermining the regime's efforts to contain nationalist sentiments and, hence, to secure the peaceful coexistence of its inhabitants.

In this context, we have to introduce the notion of a Yugoslav identity. From the 1950s onwards people were allowed to opt for the category 'Yugoslav, nationally undetermined', when answering census questions. This category was sometimes subject to manipulation, but for a significant number of people it solved questionnaire problems: children of mixed marriages, party officials, professional soldiers, amongst many others (Schöpflin 1993:186-187). Nevertheless, it remained a rather marginal phenomenon. In 1971, 'Yugoslavs' accounted for 1.3% of the population and in 1981, 5.4% (Sekulić et al 1994:95; Lendvai 1991:253). Moreover, strong regional differences existed. For instance, in the 1981 census 7.9% of the Bosnian population declared itself Yugoslav, whereas only 1.3% did so in Slovenia (Garde 1992:116). It should be noted that the Titoist authorities did not want to superimpose a Yugoslav national identity in the sense that some in the first Yugoslavia had wanted. In the census, the category of 'Yugoslavs' was thought of as 'no nationality' (Hodson et al 1994:1542). This Yugoslav socialist patriotism, it was argued, was *not* a form of nationalism. The new regime argued that, instead of an exclusivist discourse, negating the differences between the constituting national groups, it was an all-embracing patriotism, which presumed the component national identities (Ramet 1992:184).

In the chapter on *Jugonostalgija* I analyse memories of Yugoslav identification and go deeper into its ambiguities. Here I would just like to mention that the regime made a strong effort to promote the idea of Yugoslavism in the hearts and minds of all citizens, for example through schoolbooks, educational excursions, the media, and a system of

conscripted in a republic other than one's own (Bennett 1995:61-66). This was also one of the ideas behind organising the European Championship Football 1976 and the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo in 1984. The process of building Yugoslavism emphasised that people could identify both with a specific nation and with Yugoslavia as a whole. Tito, himself, was of mixed Croatian-Slovenian descent but invariably identified himself with Yugoslavia (Schöpflin 1993:180). However, as he expressed it during the war, 'The term National Liberation Struggle would be a mere phrase and even a deception if it were not invested with both an all-Yugoslav and national meaning for each people individually' (quoted in Cohen, 1995:23).

5.3. the ambiguity of Titoism: unity and decentralisation

The whole history of the 'Yugoslav experiment', as Rusinow (1977) called it, has been a chain of trial and error in order to find a successful recipe for the country's problems, and, of course, for the self-preservation of the Titoist regime. It was the result of an attempt to navigate between the numerous sensitivities, prejudices and utterances of collective paranoia that characterised the post-war Balkans (Detrez 1992). Numerous reforms led to considerable decentralisation from the 1950s onwards, partly as a response to the growth of national tensions⁹. Paradoxically, this decentralisation process exacerbated inter-republic inequalities, and this in turn gave rise to renewed centrifugal aspirations. As national dissent became intertwined with the debate between liberals and conservatives, the federal structure, established as an administrative formality for securing Yugoslav unity, came to serve as the central vehicle for nationalist programmes (Ramet 1992; Topham 1993:44; Lendvai 1991:256; Banac 1992b:172-173; Jansen 1999a). Especially from 1962 onwards, increasing political struggle and decentralisation gave rise to a competitive environment between republican elites.

After a period of centralised federalism based on socialist patriotism à la Soviet Union, the break with Stalin opened the way for a new, more independent course with the 1953 constitutional revision. Economic planning, cultural policy, education and media, were handed over to the republican governments. The 1964 constitution went further than this. The system of workers' self-management created a situation in which it became increasingly viable to organise along republican, rather than federal, lines as more power was attributed to the republican Leagues of Communists.

A number of concrete struggles took place. In 1968, serious riots broke out in the Serbian autonomous province of Kosovo, where the local Albanian majority demanded its own republic. Meanwhile, growing dissatisfaction with the perceived Serbian dominance within Yugoslavia caused political turmoil in Croatia. One of the issues put forward by students and intellectuals was the constitutional recognition of Croatian as a separate language, instead of as a variant of Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian¹⁰. Moreover, there was protest against the flows of foreign currency from export, migrant workers and Croatian tourist resorts to the federal treasury.

The 'Croatian Spring' in 1971 was a reaction against perceived cultural and economic deprivation¹¹. It started off as a cultural movement, but it gradually moved towards demands of economic reform in favour of Croatia. Also, it became increasingly anti-Serbian towards the end, as evidenced in riots at football matches, media articles, and so on. Croatian nationalists bemoaned what they believed was their republic's

⁹ For a brief schematic overview of Titoist policies on the national question, see Cohen's table (1995:27).

¹⁰ The 1954 Novi Sad agreement, signed by Croatian and Serbian intellectuals, stated that there was one Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian language, existing in two equally valid variants. However, discussions about the status of certain words ('dialect' or 'standard') gave rise to new debates, and a number of Croats embarked on a campaign to develop a separate Croatian literary language (Schöpflin 1993:188-189). This seems a good example of what Tishkov calls the politicisation of academic writings on ethnicity—or the ethnicisation of academic publications (Tishkov 1992:41-44). We come back to the language question in Chapter Six.

¹¹ Topham 1993:44-45. Voet 1993:12; Singleton 1976:224-227; Garde 1992:99-103.

secondary position within Yugoslavia and the cash flows towards the poorer regions. It was argued that the federation put serious limits upon Croatian opportunities for development. Opponents argued that Croatia's high economic development was also made possible by investments by that same federation. High living standards and relatively successful industrialisation created a fertile soil for demands for more decentralisation, ranging from more cultural autonomy to outright independence.

The Croatian communist elite, who at first had reacted negatively, later attempted to incorporate the movement in its power struggle against the central regime. Then, Tito took control and ordered a purge of the Croatian Party, whom he accused of nationalism. Many veterans from this era became leading figures in the post-Yugoslav Croatia regime, but for more than a decade after the Croatian Spring the republic was led by a conservative government and became known as the 'silent republic'.

But Tito understood that something had to be done, so in order to let off nationalist steam, the Marshall increased the power of the republics and autonomous provinces. The 1974 constitution was an attempt to settle the national question by establishing a quasi-confederate system, aptly termed a 'conservative equilibrium' by Shoup (1992:50). Economic self-management became a magic formula for solving the national problem, and the commanding heights of the Parties of different republics were expected to achieve a *marriage-du-raison* through economic interests. Moreover, the autonomous provinces were given virtually equal status with the republics. Decisions on the federal level could be vetoed by any of the units of the federation and there was an emphasis on unanimity and consensus-seeking procedures. The 1974 constitution 'effectively created a semi confederative political structure in which powerful sectional leaderships from the single Party competed for influence and support at the top level of the system' (Cohen 1995:33).

For a while it seemed that the central regime had managed to contain the centrifugal tendencies by increased decentralisation of economic and political matters and a re-affirmation of the supremacy of the federal government in terms of ideology and security. Yugoslavia remained under strongly authoritarian rule, a one-party state with a tight security system and limited freedom. Moreover, the Yugoslav army¹² (JNA) became increasingly powerful as the armed wing of the League of Communists and as a sort of praetorian guard of its Pharaoh, Tito (Pavlowitch 1988:26). The JNA was a bastion of Yugoslavism and Titoist loyalty, the latter being very important since Tito's example was a central element in the legitimising myths of the federal state. An ever-growing cult of personality surrounded the Marshall, who, not unlike his colleagues on the international scene, suffered from serious megalomania (Topham 1993:46; Pavlowitch 1988:34-47).

5.4. the end of an era: Yugoslavia's swan song

In the 1980s, a number of events set in motion a process which would eventually lead to the violent break-up of the federation. Grievances with the 1974 Constitution were numerous. Nationalist Serbs, for instance, complained that the country (and particularly Serbia itself) had been parcelled, whereas nationalist non-Serbs, especially in the North-West, argued that Yugoslavia was still a centralised partocracy with a disproportionate share of power in Serbia (Banac 1992b:173ff; Bennett 1995:78-79). After Tito's death in 1980 these conflicts were fuelled by renewed debates about WWII and the status and the future of the Titoist regime.

Two other very important factors, which will only be touched upon briefly here, were the structural economic crisis (inflation, foreign debt, unemployment), and decreasing levels of legitimacy (socio-economic, ideological and nationalist protest). The economic

¹² The JNA very much reflected the original composition of the Partisan forces: Serbs (60%) and Montenegrins (6.2%) were seriously over-represented in the officer corps (they made up 36% and 2.6% resp. of the Yugoslav population). This of course gave rise to protest by other national groups (Gow 1991:302).

crisis was accompanied by economic disintegration as richer republics became increasingly outward-looking as a result of dissatisfaction with the unequal economic development (Waeber 1993:95ff). The annual growth rate of the GDP fell from 8.8% in the period 1956-1964, to 6.1% in 1973-1979, then to 0.4% in 1980-1984. More informatively, the growth in real personal income fell from 6.3% in 1956-1964, to 2.7% in 1973-1979, to -2.0% in 1980-1984 (Cohen 1995:31). Simultaneously, there was a sharply increasing inequality among republics.

Ironically, as we shall see in the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*, many anti-nationalist narratives after the wars recalled the 1980s as the 'golden years', particularly evoked through popular culture from this era. This again sheds a critical light on the work of memory and the ways in which narrations of the past provide comments on the present situation. There is less retrospective debate about whether the system of self-management lived up to its promises on a political level or not, as citizens serving short terms as part-time delegates were confronted with professionals, politicians of the regional ruling parties (Cohen 1995:33). Therefore, the Yugoslav socialist system underwent a twofold crisis: horizontally, through inter-republican competition and conflict; and vertically, with citizens turning away from the Party (Cohen 1995:47; see also Allcock, 1994). A sharp illustration can be found in the membership figures of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia: in 1976, 30.8% of young people in Yugoslavia were members, and in 1984 the percentage fell to 25.3%. Again, there were variations along republican lines: in Slovenia, membership among youth fell from 27.7% (1976) to 16.6% (1984), whereas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, the damage was limited—36% in 1976, 33.6% in 1984 (Cohen 1995:48). Moreover, opinion polls pointed out how more and more young people said they definitely did *not* want to join the Party (9% in 1974, 50% in 1986, again with strong republican differences) (Cohen 1995:48).

These problems of vertical legitimacy were exacerbated by the ever-growing conflicts between the republican elites. The post-Tito debate on strategies of socialist political and economic reform was channelled along republican lines, with Serbia and its allies calling for majority control in a renewed federation and the rich Northern republics, Slovenia and Croatia, arguing for a looser federalism and competitive pluralism. The evolution of these conflicts will be analysed in another section.

Last but not least, major constitutional conflicts between the republics were put in a new perspective by the worldwide demise of communism as a viable ideology in the late 1980s. Despite official slogans such as 'After Tito—Tito!', the Marshall's death in 1980 was another important factor undermining Yugoslav unity. Continuing decentralisation (with the presidency rotating among the republics and autonomous provinces) could not prevent the escalation of nationalist conflicts such as in Kosovo (1981). Eventually, the end of the 1980s saw the collapse of the Yugoslav project. As in so many other parts of the world, it was nationalism that took over.

5.5. the ambivalent role of nationality in Titoist Yugoslavia

In a political climate encumbered by the mortgage of the Second World War, the communist regime attempted to diffuse competing nationalisms by building a system in which the national identity of all its inhabitants was recognised, but not politically articulated. Particularly from the 1960s onwards, a wide range of opportunities for the development of the different cultural communities was at hand¹³, and therefore the bestial character of the war in former Yugoslavia took many observers by surprise. A host of factors must be invoked: economics, international geopolitics, greed, prestige, arms trade, hunger for power and so on. However, again, the scope of this study is limited. I focus on the ways in which discourses on nationality and their entrenchment in Yugoslavia's institutions have contributed to the escalation of antagonism. Against the

¹³ Voet points out how even a tiny ethnic group such as the 20,000 Ruthenians had access to education, radio, television and printed press in their own language (1993:14).

nationalist explanations put forward by local regimes, I will argue that central to the wars were not competing nations, but competing nationalisms in a postcommunist political framework (Glenny 1993; Kaldor 1993:96-97; Silber & Little 1995).

Apart from the problems that vexed most socialist regimes, there seemed to be some elements in the *national* policies of the Yugoslav project which prevented, rather than increased, the possibility of a peaceful society. Tito's complex handling of the national question had created a framework in which it was attractive to imagine a community along national lines. In later days, Tito moved away from the orthodox proletarian internationalism preached by the prophets of Marxism. But what was the nature of the Yugoslav recipe? I will point to three problematic dimensions mentioned by Detrez (1992).

In the first place, the increasing levels of decentralisation were justified ideologically with reference *ad nauseam* to the vague concept of 'national identity'. The Yugoslav state was based on the shaky foundations of a precarious balance between a number of decentralised units whose very existence was legitimated by their 'national' identity. In order to shed charges of centralism, the regime encouraged the respective national groups to develop and display their national differences. In this manner the notion of 'national identity' was attributed an enormous significance (for a specific example, see Duijzings 2000:132-156), while every form of political nationalism remained illegal and could lead to severe suppression. While the republics and autonomous provinces, were proclaimed administrative units, ultimately they derived their legitimacy from the national level. Therefore, when they achieved growing political content, this could not but raise the nationalist stakes.

Secondly, the ever-growing labyrinth of political and economic legal structures caused major problems for governing the country. In its self-preservationist urge, the central regime instituted increasing decentralisation, so that, for example, in addition to the federal constitution each republic had its own constitution, not always consistent with its federal counterpart. Moreover, in their eagerness to protect their privileges, the local bureaucracies invoked the notion of 'national identity' as soon as plans for stricter co-ordination were issued.

Thirdly, the Yugoslav federal order was still based on the territoriality of cultural rights. Its handling of the national question consolidated, rather than undermined, the underlying assumption of nationalist programs: the idea that a cultural community (a nation) is anchored in a certain territory (homeland), where it can determine the rights and duties of *all* inhabitants, whether they are members of that nation or not. The Yugoslav state secured its own existence by reference to the right of self-determination, which was ultimately defined on a territorial base, albeit with a large margin for manoeuvre (Tishkov 1992:45). This line of thought was reflected in the hierarchical categorisation of citizens as members of 'nations' or 'nationalities' with different rights on different territories. As such, the Yugoslav republics ambiguously reflected a national basis: the dominant nation had some sort of ambiguous hegemony in its 'own' republic (Denich 1994:375).

Paradoxically, in a number of ways, the modern project of Yugoslav national policies had the unintended consequence of encouraging nationalism, despite its proclaiming to act against it. Now, this perspective seriously departs from the nationalist narratives in 1990s Serbia and Croatia, which reconstructed the Yugoslav past as an era of darkness and oppression in an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory mixture of reasonings. On the one hand, they portrayed the policies of the past as Marxist internationalist suppression of the development all national identities, in the same vein as many other postcommunist nationalisms. However, on the other hand, they argued that Titoist multiculturalism was simply a question of rhetoric, which in fact thinly veiled the underlying reality of domination by the national Other(s). One of the lines in Serbian nationalism was the claim that Yugoslavia was an anti-Serb coalition led by a Croat, whereas its Croatian counterpart portrayed the former regime as merely Greater-Serbianist wolves in Yugoslav sheep's clothing. What was losing out in this

retrospective quest for definition was the relevance of other critiques of the former regime. These questioned its political authoritarianism, its militarism, its patriarchal value system, its lack of democracy and so on, without legitimising these objections on a national basis.

5.6. Yugoslav modernity: the horror of indetermination

For 45 years the Yugoslav regime pursued hegemony along the three lines of Titoism: economic modernisation, communist hegemony, and policies of national equality. This was meant to legitimise the regime and eventually lead to a fading away of the virulent nationalisms that dominated the public discourse during World War II—rational solutions for temporary problems. In this chapter I have analysed how the Titoist policies of organising multinational complexity took shape against a background of a rational bureaucracy. Elsewhere I have argued that the Yugoslav state could be seen as a truly *modern* project, exemplary for the age of modernity (Jansen 1999a). Following Bauman, the communist regimes in Eastern Europe could be said to represent a most modern form of universalist, rational and progress-oriented thinking, a 'quest for order' (Bauman 1991:1-17; 1992b:179)¹⁴. In this campaign to organise the chaos, and thereby to make sense of a complex social world, national states, like other social groupings, create friends and enemies; however, they also attempt to eliminate strangers. '*The national state is designed primarily to deal with the problem of strangers, not enemies*' (Bauman 1991:153, italics in original; see also Bauman 1992a:687). Hence, everybody, as in every single body in Yugoslavia, needed to be classified in the organisational scheme of society.

Since the federation, as I have shown, was paradoxically constructed around the notion of national identities, everybody needed to know his or her place in this discourse. In such a system (which has taken on global proportions), one cannot possibly have *no* nationality¹⁵. In this way, the 'Yugoslav' option in the censuses was also a nationality, an instrument in the regime's attempts to reduce ambivalence. On a political level, the element of national identity, even though rhetorically declared unimportant, was strongly articulated into a moment of power struggles throughout the Yugoslav period¹⁶. Now, interestingly, anti-nationalist narratives in the 1990s struggled to retain, or re-establish its quality of a largely unarticulated moment in everyday life, and they did so partly through the (re)construction of a multicultural past. The chapter on *Jugonostalgiija* explores the resulting contradictions further.

Whatever the nature of the Titoist regime, the end of Yugoslavia gave an enormous impetus to the endeavour to create national order out of what was perceived as multinational disorder. Whereas the communist policies were fraught with contradictions in their handling of the national question, the nationalist discourses that defined Yugoslav reality since the collapse of the federation openly declared a real war against the 'horror of indetermination' (Bauman 1991:146ff). If we accept that nationalism is a specific form of political and cultural representation within modernity, it is laden with destructive potential since the ideal type of a nation-state has no equivalent in reality. This is not an exclusively Yugoslav problem: a nation's right to self-determination is enshrined in the UN charter and in foreign policy programs throughout the world, all based on a mosaic-like cosmology of discrete nations.

¹⁴ Bauman argued that: '[the emergence of modernity was] a process in the course of which the construction of garden cultures re-evaluated the past, and those areas that stretched behind the newly erected fences, and the obstacles encountered by the gardener inside his own cultivated plot, became the wilderness' (1987:51).

¹⁵ Gleason (1983) describes the links between the development of the notion of (official) identity and the rise of bureaucratic states. For a discussion of passport controls as *rites de passage*, see Hoffmann-Axthelm 1992.

¹⁶ Chapter Six provides a detailed discussion of anti-nationalist narratives of the significance of national identity in everyday life under the former regime.

Hence, if we look at the various post-Yugoslav nationalisms and the wars that were being waged in their names, it is possible to analyse them as crusades for purity. In the next chapter I analyse two of those nationalist discourses (Croatian and Serbian) in a little more depth, and the rest of this study is devoted to the counter-currents of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist *altérité*.

[chapter four] Croatian and Serbian nationalism: articulating past and present

Franjo Tuđman decides to go for a walk to see how his people live. He has a look at a shop window and bursts into tears. A policeman comes running towards him and, shocked by the sight of his president crying, asks him: 'But Mr President... Why are you crying? What's happened?' In between his hysterical sobs, Tuđman answers: 'I am looking in the shop window... I mean, you should see those prices. How can our poor pensioners possibly survive with their little income! It's terrible!' While the policeman tries to console the President, a pensioner approaches the two and asks: 'Is that the President!? Why is he crying?' That does it for the policeman; he gets out his truncheon and mercilessly beats the pensioner to pulp, shouting: 'Because of you, you piece of shit! Because of you!'

(*Feral Tribune* competition 'The best 40 jokes about Franjo Tuđman', 1999. Joke sent in by Tomos from Opatija, finished on number 16. See www.feral.hr)

Let's block off the Danube. No to foreign mingling in our affairs!

Dear Citizens. Stop.
Hold out a bit longer. Stop.
I am arriving a bit late. Stop.
Problem with entry visa. Stop.
signed: Democracy

(slogans on the 1996-1997 anti-Milošević demonstrations)

The Yugoslav federation went through several periods of turbulent political trouble leading to adaptations in the federal framework. As we have seen, this was not merely a result of pre-existing nationalist programs, but it can*also be partly attributed to the unintended consequences of the communist policy on the nationalities question. However, it was not until the 1980s that Yugoslavia began to fall apart rapidly. In this process of disintegration, the formation of independent states out of federal units coincided with the discursive project of the nationalisation of identities. Under Titoism, national identities had served as vehicles for expressing regional conflicts and were therefore subject to huge ambiguity: they were both encouraged (insofar as they were thought to be necessary for the survival of Yugoslav unity) and discouraged (insofar as they were incorporated into separatist discourses). In practice, on the whole, people with different national affiliations lived peacefully as neighbours. However, with the collapse of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state in the late 1980s, national identities occupied a central position in the process of a new definition of society—they were re-articulated as crucial moments into a new discourse.

The events that took place in the late 1980s and in the 1990s brought about massive changes for the people of former Yugoslavia. During those years, they tumbled from peace into war and into peace again, some on several occasions. Through the bloody politics of ethnic cleansing, new borders were drawn and they all became citizens of new state formations. In every one of the newly created states, the so-called self-management economy of Tito's Yugoslavia was at least nominally abandoned for some kind of free market capitalism. The previous official ideology of internationalism, epitomised by the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity', was marginalised by different credos of nationalism.

1. 'transitions' to poverty

There seemed to be little disagreement on the changes that the end of Yugoslavia brought in socio-economic terms. Certainly in poverty-stricken Serbia, but also in relatively better-off Croatia, most people experienced a dramatic fall in living standards. Lower spending power, towering unemployment and drastic cuts in welfare amongst other things created a strong sense of having been better-off before. This is not to say that everybody suffered the consequences of so-called transition and the wars to an equal degree. Nepotistic privatisation and shameless war profiteering even propelled a limited number of new and 'old-new' businessmen¹ to unseen heights in terms of fortune. Also, the sense of a relative drop in living standards was not always understood through the same prism. Reflecting the tendency to present virtually all issues in terms of national differences, many people interpreted their dire socio-economic situation as something inflicted upon them by the violence of one or more national Others (other post-Yugoslavs, or the 'West'). Relative poverty was, then, considered a transitional consequence of the wars, and many people expressed the belief that 'things would be better', and that 'one should be patient and have confidence in one's leaders'. Others, who were more critical of their respective regimes, blamed the new leaders and their corrupt economic policies. Particularly in embargoed Serbia, such views were often expressed in conjunction with a sneer to the 'West'.

A crucial trope for expressing dissatisfaction with the current socio-economic situation was the dichotomy of *before* and *after*, which I explore in more depth in the next chapter and which serves as a thread through this study. In narratives of past and present, post-Yugoslav citizens told me that compared to people in other communist states they had lived well, especially during the last decades. This was the case in Croatia, but particularly in Serbia, where living standards had fallen most dramatically. In fact, for many people in Beograd, the economic sanctions against the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the deep crisis under Milošević were amongst the more direct effects of the wars that, after all, had taken place in neighbouring republics. During my fieldwork period in Serbia (*after* the signing of the Dayton agreements which brought an end to the war operations in Bosnia and solidified its division, and *before* the internationalisation of the Kosovo crisis and NATO-attacks on targets throughout the new Yugoslavia), the catastrophic socio-economic situation was one of the major themes dominating the public scene, as well as private conversation.

Sometimes, memories of relative affluence were accompanied by a sort of bitter-sweet suspicion-with-hindsight that life before had actually been *too* good. Now, in retrospect, many people added that they had been spoiled by a never-ending flood of foreign credit as a result of Yugoslavia's in-between position in the Cold War. This, many people argued, couldn't go on because it didn't have any basis in hard work.

Recalling the subject of this study, and rather than embarking on the gigantic task of explaining the disintegration of Yugoslavia—which, doubtlessly, would be in vain—I now focus on the articulation of nationalist discourses in Serbia and Croatia. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which they (re)constructed versions of Yugoslav history and incorporated them into their search for legitimacy, since the promotion of 'nationalist truths' often departed drastically from some 'givens' in the near past. In order to render the present acceptable or even self-evident, in order to prove that the post-Yugoslav situation was a result of necessary changes which were in fact improvements, the different nationalist discourses engaged in a re-writing of the Yugoslav past.

¹ The expression 'old-new', widely used in the post-Yugoslav states, referred to those individuals and groups who used to occupy influential positions in the former system and continued to do so in the new order of things, albeit on the basis of a different legitimising discourse. Often, this implied a quite sudden conversion.

This study focuses on Serbia and Croatia, and it should be pointed out immediately that strong differences existed between them with regard to the break between *before* and *after*. Notwithstanding the fact that nationalist discourses of identification enjoyed overwhelming dominance in both states, they were articulated in different ways. Reflecting previously mentioned patterns, Croatian nationalism centred strongly upon the idea of a radical break with a Serbian-dominated Yugoslav past, whereas its Serbian counterpart was often characterised by an extreme sense of ambiguity in this respect. This was the case in domains of political rhetoric, state-building reality and everyday life experiences: a permanent oscillation existed between discontinuity and continuity with particular versions of the Yugoslav past.

2. clearing Serbian grounds: How The East Was Won

2.1. the beginning and the end: Serbian nationalism and Kosovo

The story starts in, and more recently returned to, Kosovo. In Titoist times, a large Albanian majority in this region justified its status as an Autonomous Province within Serbia. As we have seen, the self-rule of these Autonomous Provinces was greatly enhanced by subsequent constitutional changes, and in 1974 they acquired quasi-equal status with the republics. However, Albanian nationalist calls for recognition as a republic came to a head in the beginning of the 1980s, when serious riots broke out. Although these protests had a great deal to do with the grinding poverty of the region, they also expressed dissatisfaction with the constitutional arrangements in Yugoslavia². The riots were suppressed by force, and at certain points, a third of the Yugoslav army was stationed in Kosovo (Ramet 1991:179).

Meanwhile, the demographic profile of the Kosovo population became increasingly dominated by Albanians due to a high birth rate and emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins. Despite an official Serbian campaign to encourage the latter to live in Kosovo, their relative numbers kept falling to some 13% in 1987. Nationalists on both sides were quick to seize on this situation to further their causes. If we focus on the Serbian side, we see that despite the enormous army presence in Kosovo, Serbian complaints were accompanied by charges against the federal government for not intervening. As the economic crisis grew deeper, poverty and unemployment rose, and with the decay of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav framework, events in Kosovo served as pretexts for accusations against Albanians of nationalism, irredentism, genocidal plans, expulsion of Serbs and Montenegrins, systematic rape, conscious overproduction of children and of intellectuals, and so forth (Banac 1992b:175; Blagojević 1996; Magaš 1993:3-76).

Ramet has coined the term 'traumatic nationalism' for the kind of nationalist discourse that rose to dominance in Serbia: the battle of Kosovo and the persecution of Serbs during WWII served as major points of reference in this discourse of suffering and sacrifice (Ramet 1995b:103-105; see also Duijzings 2000:176-202; Zirojević 1996). In this way, the Serbian nationalist argument on Kosovo was always a defensive one: it was about defending homes and families and the cradle of Serbian civilisation, epitomised by its numerous Serbian Orthodox monasteries. On several occasions petitions were presented to the Serbian and the federal government by Kosovo Serbs, supported by church leaders and, at first secretly, by some prominent intellectuals. They demanded tough measures against perceived discrimination by the Albanian-dominated authorities in Kosovo (Ramet 1991:182ff). However, despite a purge in the Kosovo League of Communists, the judicial system and the university, the government

² Moreover, Kosovan Albanians referred to a long history of resistance against Serbian domination. In the inter-war Kingdom, uprisings were crushed by the Serbian army, and a campaign of forced assimilation through Serbian colonisation was fiercely resisted (Ramet 1991:175; see also Vickers 1998).

was reluctant to see the troubles through any other than a Titoist prism. Up to 1987, the Party line condemned every open form of nationalism, and Albanian demands for republican status were rejected as indicative of irredentist aspirations supported by Tirana. Tensions in the Province rose, and violent repression and an anti-Albanian campaign by the Serbian authorities brought about a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It was in this heated climate that two key-events in Serbia took place which had a tremendous influence on the political landscape in the Yugoslav federation as a whole. First, there was the controversy stirred up by the *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1986, and second, there was the rise of Slobodan Milošević to power and his dramatic discursive shift to incorporate nationalism. We shall now turn to each of these elements.

2.2. Serbian intellectuals and the discursive shift: the *Memorandum*

If the Kosovo question had been a thorn in Yugoslavia's side for a number of years, in the late 1980s it became one of the most important factors in its disintegration. As mentioned above, numerous petitions and calls for action were put forward by Serbs living in Kosovo and those who supported their cause. In January 1986, for instance, 212 prominent intellectuals set up a petition 'Against the persecutions of Serbs in Kosovo' in which they accused Albanians in harsh terms of discrimination and even genocide (Križan 1994:57; Ramet 1991:183; Pipa 1990:168-170). In this light, the now infamous *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) was not entirely new, but it would serve as a blueprint for Serbian politics in years to come.

Unofficially published in September 1986, the *Memorandum Concerning Present Social Issues in our Country*³ consisted of two parts (Grmek et al 1993:229-269; Križan 1994:58-60). In the first part, 'The Crisis of the Yugoslav Economy and Society', the authors deplored the disintegration of the Yugoslav economy as a result of far-reaching decentralisation. They argued that this worked in favour of the North-Western republics (Slovenia and Croatia) and pointed to the growing socio-economic imbalances between the republics. Ironically, in this context they warned against nationalism and called for a return to the original communist principles of Yugoslavia (Pavković 1994:445-447).

However, it is the second part that made history, cruel history: 'The position of Serbia and the Serbian People'. In this part, the SANU argued that in the federal Yugoslav framework, Serbia and the Serbs were discriminated against economically through the pernicious influence of the Comintern and of the elites in the other republics (Grmek et al 1993:238-239). Apart from being treated unfairly economically, it was claimed that Serbia faced an inferior political position in Yugoslavia, particularly with the Constitution of 1974 (ibid.:241-250). The authors of the *Memorandum* argued that their republic did not even have equal status with other republics because it had no decisive say over its autonomous provinces. Allegedly, this was due to the influence of an 'anti-Serb coalition' which had put its stamp on Yugoslavia. The *Memorandum* went on to deplore the allegedly discriminatory treatment of Serbian minorities living outside Serbia proper, such as the Serbs in Croatia (ibid.:254ff). However, the major ammunition was brought in for the Kosovo question, where 'the physical, political, judiciary and cultural genocide of the Serbian population' was referred to as another great 'defeat of Serbia in the liberation struggles it has waged' (ibid.:251).

More explicitly and systematically than ever before, the issue of Kosovo was taken up in order to re-evaluate (i.e. condemn) the Titoist discourse of the national question in Yugoslavia (ibid.:p250ff). A previously unthinkable discursive shift was realised in the field of nationality politics: the *Memorandum* de-legitimised the Titoist line of 'Brotherhood and Unity', albeit without explicitly denouncing communism. It argued that

³ The only translation I know of in a West-European language is published in the French collection of Serbian extreme nationalist texts compiled and edited by Grmek et al 1993. This volume only holds the second (and by far the most influential) part of the *Memorandum*. All translations from the French are mine.

Serbia should determine its own national interest, as 'the establishment of the full national and cultural integrity of the Serbian people—in whichever republic or province they live—[was] its historical and democratic right' (ibid.:265).

Although the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts protested officially against the publication of the *Memorandum*, it never repudiated its contents or published a rectified version (Križan 1994:59; Grmek et al 1993:234). Quickly, it became a not entirely official, but politically decisive, document for a new era in Serbian and therefore also in Yugoslav politics⁴. Of course, this development could only take place after overthrowing the status-quo in the legitimacy question of political discourses, and within a very short time a man at the top of the Serbian League of Communists decided he was going to be the personification of this shift in legitimacy in Serbia. We are talking, of course, about Slobodan Milošević⁵.

2.3. the devil you know: comrade Sloba takes control

Slobodan Milošević, the person who by many is held primarily responsible for the bloody wars in the post-Yugoslav states, was born in the Serbian town of Požarevac, but he is of Montenegrin descent (apparently, his brother declares his nationality as Montenegrin (Đilas 1993:83ff)). Milošević had been a loyal Titoist apparatchik and a successful businessman in the financial sector when, in 1984 his political mentor and friend, Ivan Stambolić, became president of the League of Communists of Serbia (SKS). Stambolić appointed him head of the Beograd party committee, which was a very important post because Beograd had long carried a reputation of being a centre of democratic dissent in Yugoslavia (Đilas 1993:86). Also, together with Slovenia and Vojvodina, it was the source of the most critical and professional media, widely read in other republics (Bennett 1995:78-79). Milošević strongly held the Titoist line, condemning any form of economic liberalisation and nationalism, and, in 1986 when Stambolić became president of the Republic of Serbia, Milošević was appointed president of the SKS⁶.

It has been argued that the political career of Slobodan Milošević can be divided in two parts: before and after the night of 24-25 April 1987 (Silber & Little 1995:36-37). On that night Stambolić was expected to visit Kosovo Polje for talks with local Serbian leaders, but he sent Milošević instead. While the talks were taking place, outside the building, riots broke out between Serbs protesting against what they perceived as discrimination and the police. The Albanian Party leadership, assuming that Milošević had come in an attempt to encourage reconciliation, offered him the microphone and the man held a speech which represented a symbolic break in his career and in the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia. It is worth quoting him at some length:

'You should stay here. This is your land. These are your houses. Your meadows and your gardens. Your memories. You shouldn't abandon your land just because it is difficult to live, because you are pressured by injustice and degradation. [...] You should stay here for the sake of your ancestors and your descendants. Otherwise your ancestors would be defiled and descendants disappointed. But I don't suggest that you stay, endure and tolerate a situation you're not satisfied with. On the contrary, you should change it with the rest of the progressive people here, in Serbia and in Yugoslavia.'

(Silber & Little 1995:37)

Note the mentioning of 'progressive people', which points to Milošević's attempt to

⁴ For detailed discussions of the role of intellectuals in the further legitimisation of Serbian nationalism see for example Popov 1994; Čolović and Mimica 1993; Pavković 1995; Markotich 1994; Milosavljević 1996.

⁵ I have not come across any mentioning of Milošević actually referring to the *Memorandum* explicitly, but there is little debate as to whether his policies were influenced by this document (see Garde 1993:254).

⁶ A very readable and comprehensive account of Milošević's rise to power, as well as the story of his Kosovo speech can be found in Silber & Little 1995.

combine the legitimising power of Titoism and nationalism. Later, this speech was epitomised by what became a catch-phrase of new Serbian nationalism: 'No one should dare to beat you'. Such terms of victimisation and defence soon developed into powerful storylines uniting a large group of people with diverging interests and opinions around Serbian nationalist discourse. This discourse included explicit historicisation of the current struggle: finally, it was argued, the Serbian nation was standing up against the injustice and the oppression that had been perpetrated against it for centuries. With one of the most powerful people of Serbia inscribing himself into this discourse, the road to a re-articulated politics of nationality was open.

2.4. the craft of re-articulation: Serbian nationalism, Yugoslavia, and the Party

After his widely televised speech in Kosovo, Milošević embarked on an extremely ambitious and apparently unstoppable campaign to overturn the whole Serbian Party policy from one that was based on Titoist federalism and Yugoslavism, to one that included ardent Serbian nationalism. He declared his solidarity with the claims and demands of Kosovo Serbs, supported permanent repression of Albanians in a region where they constituted a very large majority and put into effect a metamorphosis of the Serbian League of Communists and public life in Serbia in general.

The definitive breakdown of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav federal system in the late 1980s did not destroy the existing power structures on the republican level. On the contrary, as might be expected from the sketch in Chapter Three, the Serbian republican administrative apparatus became the primary vehicle for the shift to nationalism (Močnik 1993). This had important implications, for in a one-party state it meant that official and state-controlled institutions, such as media and cultural institutions, became carriers of nationalist discourses⁷. In Đilas' words: 'The opponent, Serbian nationalism, was devoured and its spirit permeated the eater. Milošević reinvigorated the party by forcing it to embrace nationalism.' (Đilas 1993:87). Further on, I shall refer to this as the 'Yugo-vampire phenomenon'. The discourse shifted dramatically, but the instruments, the logistics and even most of the people ensured a strong continuity with previous times. Whereas in Croatia a number of dissidents and non-(or former) Party members took control of the institutions (albeit with significant support from a great number of former officials), in Serbia it was Milošević himself, at the top of the Party, who took power through the existing institutions. His success was based on a re-articulation of certain moments of Titoism into a nationalist discourse, but it never let go of the discourse of Yugoslavism in its struggle for power.

By September 1987, Milošević and his supporters had purged the ranks of the Serbian League of Communists of Titoist federalists such as his mentor Stambolić—all this with invaluable support from powerful Beograd media (Silber & Little 1995:38-47). But he did not stop at the borders of Serbia proper. A 'Committee for the Organisation of Protest Meetings of Kosovan Serbs and Montenegrins' was set up to organise mass rallies in Serbia and Kosovo, but also in Vojvodina and Montenegro where they brought down the Titoist leaderships (Banac 1992b:178; Ramet 1991:188). In May 1989, Milošević was elected president of Serbia by his parliament and had his men in leading positions in four out of eight federal Yugoslav units. A dubious crowning moment for his work came in the form of an address he made on 28 June 1989 to a meeting of one million Serbs in Kosovo Polje, gathered for the 600th anniversary of the mythical Battle—a battle which presumably symbolised the beginning of it all.

The way in which Milošević and his supporters took power in Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro was closely linked with his call for a so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution. An articulation was established between two discourses: the reassertion of the Serbian national interest; and a populist anti-elite discourse with leftist resonances. The anti-bureaucratic revolution brought forward a call for the

⁷ See Banac 1992b:177; Križan 1992:130-133; 1994:57-58; Ramet 1996a.

abolishment of privileges for the Party elite, political corruption and expensive but unpopular projects. These demands were raised in an increasingly populist framework of organised mass-rallies and heated speeches, all under the name 'meetings' rather than traditional communist terms⁸. Paul Garde has compared Milošević's anti-bureaucratic revolution with a cultural revolution such as that in Maoist China. The latter is defined as a 'phenomenon whereby a communist leader succeeds in bringing about the political changes he desires, the elimination of his opponents, and the consolidation of his own power, by stirring up the enthusiasm of a substantial group of people who then, apparently, impose these measures from below' (1992:252).

This should be seen in the light of Milošević's attitude towards Yugoslavism, consisting of a curious mixture of rejection and embracing. Arguing that the Communist Party line until then had been empty rhetoric, Milošević set out to restructure the status of the relationship between Serbia and its autonomous provinces and thereby claimed to actually create a better and more just Yugoslavia (Ramet 1991:188). With his supporters occupying most influential positions in society, and with strong support from his anti-bureaucratic foot soldiers, it did not take him long: the new Serbian constitution of 1990 abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina (Voet 1993:15).

Ironically, given the wider context of 1990 Eastern Europe, all these *coups* were accompanied by a rhetoric that increasingly borrowed from the 'Western' liberal-democratic discourse. It is worth noting here that, unlike the Croatian or the Slovene constitutions, the new Serbian constitution explicitly defined the Republic of Serbia in non-national terms, referring to 'citizens of the state' and only mentioning 'the Serbian people' in the preamble. However, Kosovo was put permanently under siege and suffered an enormous military presence, a thorough purge of the Party cadres, unashamedly pro-Serbian and anti-Albanian population, education and employment policies and the instalment of Serbo-Croatian as the only official language⁹.

Meanwhile, resistance against Milošević's policies in Serbia proper (which by then had become a defunct term) was swamped by massive media manipulation and by frequent appeals to the nationalist fervour of 'the people'. Mass demonstrations and desertion proved impotent in the face of the New Order, particularly as the majority of the traditionally fairly critical Serbian press, along with radio and TV, quickly became mouthpieces of the new nationalist leadership (Bennett 1995:90-101). It is interesting to note that during my fieldwork in the late 1990s, very few references were made to the years of Milošević's rise to power. Whereas the anti-nationalist narratives that lie at the basis of this study paid ample attention to remembered Yugoslav times and to the war years, very few of them actually mentioned the ways in which the Serbian leader had ridden to power on waves of popularity. As we shall see later, this is related to the widespread view that Milošević's success was mainly the success of media manipulation amongst poorly educated, rural populations.

3. meanwhile - disintegration, elections and war

While Milošević was turning Serbia into a bastion of fervent nationalism and at the same time declaring his loyalty to the Yugoslav federation, other republics underwent dramatic changes as well. Apart from the rapid escalation of national conflicts and the dramatic economic situation, the demise of the communist systems all over Eastern Europe created a climate of intense crisis. In this section I briefly sketch some patterns that took shape in the period leading to the war.

⁸ For an intriguing account of the 'antibureaucratic revolution' with astonishing examples and anecdotes illustrating the importance of the media in particular, see Silber & Little 1995:60-73.

⁹ Vickers 1998; Ramet 1991:190; Garde 1992:251-261; Banac 1992b:177ff; Detrez 1992.

3.1. Slovenia, Serbia and the last Yugoslav supper

The leadership of the tiny republic of Slovenia, by far the richest in the Yugoslav federation, had chosen the road to pluralism in the mid-1980s. Particularly since 1986, with Milan Kučan as President of the Slovene Communists and under the growing influence of a broad non-governmental 'alternative movement', Slovene society underwent increasing liberalisation. This period became known as the 'Slovene Spring' and Ljubljana became a centre of cultural and political creativity¹⁰. If at the outset responses to Milošević's rise to power had been weak in other republics, with time, opposition grew—first in the alternative movement, but later, increasingly, in the Slovene League of Communists. Strong criticism of the situation in Kosovo and even of the hitherto sacrosanct Yugoslav Army (JNA)—by then an extremely conservative and corporatist bastion—became acceptable in the Slovene political climate.

This infuriated the Serbian leadership and the JNA, and meetings at the federal level became increasingly polarised, with the Serbian Communists bitterly attacking their Slovene colleagues for anti-Yugoslavism. In fact, the Serbian leadership broke off relations with Slovenia and banned Slovene goods from their market, while still forming part of the same state (Banac 1992b:179). The conflict covered about every domain from the Yugoslav economy, to the restructuring of the federation, to the discrediting of communism and the idea of a multiparty system (Silber & Little 1995:49-59). It was in the same period that the hierarchy of the JNA increasingly showed its support for the status quo, i.e. for Milošević who never ceased to emphasise his Yugoslav federalist credentials (Cohen 1995:85-88). In this tense climate, very shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Yugoslav League of Communists decided to hold its Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress in January 1990. With Milošević in control of four out of eight federal votes, and the Slovene-Serbian conflict reaching the boiling point, it promised to become a historical Congress. And it was—if only because it was the last one with the Slovene leadership walking out and their Croatian colleagues following them. It was only a matter of months before the first post-war multiparty elections would herald a new era in the region's politics, and indeed in European history.

3.2. following the postcommunist tide—a wave of elections

In an ultimate attempt to reinvigorate the enthusiasm for Yugoslav federalism, the last federal prime minister Ante Marković founded an all-Yugoslav party, the Alliance of Reform Forces. He did so on 29 July 1990, which meant it was too late to take part in the Slovene and Croatian elections (Woodward 1995:121). The question is whether it would have made much difference, because although at first Marković attracted some support in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, all the republican elections of 1990 were won by parties who committed themselves to the 'national interest'¹¹. Note that these elections were organised on a republican level, not on the Yugoslav level.

So, what was the nature of the new governments? In most cases, the people in power could be called 'renewed' rather than 'new'. Of course, many ex-communist officials stayed on, but also many of the previously oppositional intellectuals and professionals were actually former Party members who had become critics of that regime at some point. Demographically, the elections saw a sharp drop in the participation of young

¹⁰ There is plenty of literature on the Slovene Spring and its political and cultural dimensions, sometimes by Slovene scholars who themselves attempted to bridge the gap between theory and practice by engaging in the 'alternative movement'. This cross-fertilisation of cultural theory and the building of political/artistic alternatives was a typical feature of the Slovene Spring. A tiny selection: Kovač 1988; Mastnak 1992, 1994; Bibić 1993; Močnik 1984, 1992; Žižek 1990; 1992; Žižek & Salecl 1991.

¹¹ With Montenegro being an ambiguous exception, but only because the victorious reformed Communists were controlled by Milošević, who of course adhered to another nationalism.

people in politics, with the average age of representatives much higher than during the last years of communism (Cohen 1995:164-172). Even more outspoken was the dramatic drop in the female share of political representation. As we shall see in the chapter on feminism and anti-nationalism, this evolution was accompanied by a reassertion of patriarchal discourses throughout all republics.

After the elections held throughout 1990, nationalist parties participated in the all republican governments of Yugoslavia. As in so many East/Central European countries, the leading figures in most republics were almost religiously devoted to the European Union but held diverging opinions on the status of the Yugoslav federation. The meaning of their nationalisms varied widely, and, at that stage, no party which demanded immediate independence could rely on a majority in the (coalition) governments. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to assess the degree to which the people in the various Yugoslav republics were voting for an independent state (Woodward 1995:123). Opinion surveys suggest that even in Slovenia only a minority demanded outright secession, which might indicate lower levels of support for independence in other republics (Cohen 1995:88-94). But, then again, it doesn't mean that a majority was *against* it either...

Moreover, for decades, the Yugoslav regime had emphasised the possibility of simultaneous identification with the national *and* the supranational level, so that for many there was no clear division line between the two. It was simply unnecessary to opt for one exclusive sense of belonging on the societal scale. However, an opinion survey carried out as late as mid-1990 suggests that identification varied quite strongly according to nationality¹². Although one could have strong reservations about the value of standardised questionnaires for researching matters of identification and belonging in general, and even more so in a crisis situation such as that of Yugoslavia in 1990, the figures can be indicative of broad tendencies. It seems that, apart from widely and strongly held senses of local identification (i.e. with village, town, city, region), adherence to Yugoslavia was very strong amongst Bosniacs and Montenegrins, for instance, whereas it was very weak amongst Slovenes. Moreover, the category of 'Yugoslavs' in the census became less attractive: the 5.4% who called themselves Yugoslavs in 1981, decreased to 3% in 1991, with the numbers going down most dramatically in Slovenia and Croatia, but also in the other republics.

(a) the first elections in Croatia

The Croatian League of Communists had been known as conservative bastion for more than 15 years, after a Titoist purge had made an end to the nationalist Croatian Spring in the beginning of the 1970s. According to most commentators, it was only in 1989 that the 'silent republic' caught up with the events that shook Yugoslavia to its foundations (Banac 1995:47; Pusić 1994:391; Silber & Little 1995:87). Opposition to the communist government grew, and within a short period it became clear that name-changing would not save the League of Communists. The best chances were for an organisation that could present itself as a radical departure from the communist past and as the carrier of a self-conscious assertion of Croatian national interests (Cohen 1995:95). From the outset, the *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ—Croatian Democratic Community) was particularly effective in putting forward this image and, therefore, took the lead in the emerging multiparty climate.

Chief founder and virtually undisputed frontman of the HDZ was Franjo Tuđman. During World War II Tuđman joined the Partisans, and later, he rose to the rank of general in the JNA. In Tito's Yugoslavia he became a historian¹³; but in the 1970s, he fell into

¹² Pantić quoted in Cohen 1995:172-176. 4230 respondents in all republics were asked to what extent they adhered to the local, the republican/provincial, and the Yugoslav level (non-exclusive categories).

¹³ As Melčić put it, Tuđman was 'by profession a military historian and by passion a historical metaphysician' (1994:337).

disfavour with the Communist Party because of his increasingly nationalist profile. Tuđman was convicted of offences 'against the people and state', and was subsequently imprisoned. After being released, he criticised the official representation of the Ustaša genocide in interviews with foreign journalists, and, in 1981, he was jailed again, albeit with privileged treatment as a consequence of his Partisan record (Little & Silber 1995:89).

The HDZ was organised through 116 branches in Croatia and amongst Croats in Vojvodina and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1987, during a visit of North America, Tuđman had been able to raise vast financial means among the Croatian diaspora¹⁴. The Croatian émigré communities invested in what they perceived as the liberation of the Croatian nation, which allowed Tuđman to organise his nationalist movement along very professional lines from its first public meeting in February 1989 onwards¹⁵. Supported by such a public relations campaign, the HDZ, the 'Party of all Croats in the World', developed a very strong grass-root base, a characteristic reflected in its successful mass rallies for the 1990 elections. Moreover, despite its strongly anti-Communist ticket, the HDZ attracted a veritable flood of ex-communists, such as Stipe Mesić, the last federal president of Yugoslavia and the first post-Tuđman president in 2000¹⁶.

With all the parties in the elections supporting a free market economy and a 'Western'-style liberal democracy, the major differences in opinion concerned the status of the Croatian republic and the intensity of questions regarding national and moral issues. As in other republics, the party platform of the anti-Communist coalition was not a consistent, clear-cut policy plan, but rather, '[it was organised] around talismanic pronouncements that if the party running was elected it would transform the state into something that expressed the real will of the real people and would expunge from the nation all those agents and agencies which had in the past perverted that will' (Bowman 1994:137). Slogans, such as 'We will decide our fate by ourselves', carried a strong message with regard to who was *not* to make the decisions (Silber & Little 1995:96; Denich 1994:379).

Although it only received 42% of the vote (1.2 million, against 994,000 for the reformed Communists), the first-past-the-post system gave the HDZ the absolute majority in both Chambers of the *Sabor* (Croatian parliament) in 1990. Ironically, this electoral system had been installed by the League of Communists probably hoping it would turn out to their advantage (Melčić 1994:359; Pleština 1995:138-139; Cohen 1995:99-101).

(b) the first elections in Serbia

Name-changing did work in Serbia, where, in December 1990, the example of the other republics was followed and the first post-war multiparty elections were held. Based on a strongly nationalist rhetoric and arguing for democracy, a free market, a restructured federation and social and economic conservatism, Milošević and his reformed Communists (Socialist Party of Serbia, SPS) rallied under a slogan of continuity: 'With Us There Is No Uncertainty'. Unless one prefers the dubious certainty of generalised suffering, it seems hard to think of a situation of more uncertainty than the one that was to come: that of war.

The electoral results were predictable, even more so after the Albanian leadership in Kosovo called a boycott of the polls. The SPS secured 77.6% of the seats (with 65% of

¹⁴ At the end of the Second World War thousands of Croats had escaped their country fearing Partisan reprisals, and large parts of the emigrant community had always held strong anti-Yugoslav views. Another wave of emigration followed around the Croatian Spring of 1971. Moreover, throughout the post-war years, a large number of Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter*, particularly in Germany, came from Croatia. Bennett points to the fact that also in the war, the most extremist elements in the Croatian militias were often emigrants (1995:164-165).

¹⁵ Silber & Little 1995:90; Koch 1992:193.

¹⁶ Mesić had left the HDZ during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and founded a new party.

the vote) with two anti-communist and nationalist (!) opposition parties following: Drašković's Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) with 7.6% and the Democratic Party (DS) with 2.8%. Opinion polls on the background patterns of the Serbian electorate suggest that in comparison with the other important parties, Milošević's SPS actually attracted voters with more moderate nationalist attitudes. In 1990, it was the writer Vuk Drašković in particular who carried the hard-line nationalist torch, and later, the self-proclaimed Četnik, Vojislav Šešelj, overtook everyone else with his extreme right-wing radicalism. Whereas Milošević's Socialists demanded self-determination for Serbs outside Serbia (but within a Yugoslav framework), Šešelj would settle for no less than one united Serbia incorporating Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Croatia. Initially, Drašković also argued for bringing large parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia under Serbian control; but when the war broke out, he opted for a pacifist stand (Pavković 1995:127). Throughout the 1990s he switched allegiances so many times that, during my fieldwork, even his own followers did not seem to remember what he claimed to represent apart from, of course, 'Serbia'.

3.3. and the winner is ... war

It is clear that the Yugoslav federation went through a crisis and a period of utter confusion when the elections took place. With nationalism taking an ever more prominent position in politics, nationality issues and the future of the Yugoslav federation became extremely pressing questions. Special rounds of the expanded collective state presidency in the first months of 1991 failed and can now be considered as a prelude to the war (Cohen 1995:197-225). Issues such as the nature of the inter-republican relations, the right to secession, the role of the JNA, economic transfers and inequality, the Kosovo question and the problem of the Krajina Serbs in Croatia¹⁷ were approached from fixed positions which did not allow for compromise. The incapability or unwillingness of the leading politicians to reach peaceful solutions paved the way to war.

This text does not present an analysis of the wars in Yugoslavia. Factual overviews of the violent events are numerous, exist in many formats and sizes, and reflect the different perspectives of the authors¹⁸. However, the picture of Croatian and Serbian nationalist discourses is simultaneously a picture of war. Therefore, in a desperate attempt to restore a sense of continuity in my story, I now sketch a rough chronological story of the wars that made an end to Yugoslavia and to the lives and livelihoods of many of its inhabitants.

Against the backdrop of the failed special rounds of the federal presidency in 1991, Croatian and Slovene officials held a meeting in Ljubljana to co-ordinate plans to proclaim independence, which they did on 25 June 1991. After a ten-day war in Slovenia, the Yugoslav army retreated in order to focus its attention on Croatia. In Croatian areas with large Serbian populations (but not in Zagreb), conflicts broke out between Croatian (para)military forces and local Serbian militias supported by the JNA. In December 1991, the hard-line leaders of Bosnian and Krajina Serbs proclaimed the independence of their regions from their respective republics. Krajina was ethnically cleansed of its Croatian population. In March of the next year, however, Bosnian Croats and Bosniacs voted for an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina (boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs). This vote was very quickly endorsed by the EU which had already recognised the independence of Croatia and Slovenia on 15 January 1992. In the meantime,

¹⁷ Krajina (a term which was, on principle, not used by the HDZ regime) designated a region comprising two sides of a long stretch of the Bosnian-Croatian inter-republican boundary. In this study, I use it mainly to refer to the Serbian Republic of Krajina, which seceded from the Croatian republic and was ethnically cleansed from almost all its Croatian inhabitants in 1991.

¹⁸ Three foreign journalistic accounts that stand out in my view are Glenny 1993; Thompson 1992; and particularly Silber & Little 1995.

thousands of UN soldiers and negotiators arrived in former Yugoslavia.

Shortly after the declaration of independence, the Bosnian Serbs, supported by Serbian politicians and the JNA, took up arms against the Bosnian government. The situation became ever more complex with members of the three main national groups in Bosnia and their allies from outside alternately fighting each other, and with precarious alliances perpetually breaking down. In May 1992, the UN issued sanctions against the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for its support of the Bosnian Serbs. In the next three years, Serbian forces conquered one UN-protected 'safe zone' after another. Journalistic reports of mass-executions, detention camps and large-scale ethnic cleansing campaigns by different sides established this war's sad reputation as the ultimate cataclysm of post-holocaust twentieth-century optimism in Europe.

In August 1995, Croatian forces launched an offensive with the help of the US against Serbian Krajina, and within a few days they incorporated the whole area into Croatia. With a combination of NATO air strikes, international sanctions and embargoes as stick, and God only knows what else as carrot, the presidents of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia met for peace talks in Dayton. By then, it had become clear that any peace treaty would reward military 'successes' and consolidate the results of ethnic cleansing, at least on the short term. On 21 November 1995, a peace agreement was signed and a process started to convince all post-Yugoslav citizens of two things: that the hundreds of thousands of murders and the millions of refugees were all to blame on national Others; and that these sacrifices had, after all, been worth it (Koch 1996:30-35). In Serbia, moreover, the public was slowly being prepared for the escalation of yet another conflict—that over sovereignty in Kosovo, which had smouldered for years and would explode in 1999.

4. Serbian nationalism as discursive practice

4.1. Serbian nationalism and the articulation of old and new suffering

With war raging in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, large parts of the Serbian population became increasingly radicalised. A discourse had grown dominant in which the mythologised victimisation of the Serbian people served to justify militarism, war and the atrocities committed by many Serbian soldiers. One of the most prominent insignia of Serbian soldiers in the war became a cross with four letters 'S' (which in Cyrillic looks like four Latin C's). This symbol of Serbian unity goes back to a medieval kingdom but was elaborated upon particularly in the 19th century by Serbian intellectuals and politicians (Gow 1994:457-458; Pavković 1994:443). The four S's stand for *Samo Sloga Srbina Spašava* ('Only Unity Saves the Serbs'), and this theme was to dominate the Serbian intellectual and political scene from the late 1980s onwards (Pavković 1995:128). In this context, the concept of a storyline seems relevant, because, as we have seen, within the Serbian discursive landscape, there were many diverging opinions on the exact meaning of the four S's. Again, it is precisely this multi-interpretability which was the main source of strength of 'SSSS'. The four letters carried a highly condensed message and thereby reduced the complexity of social reality—in its simplicity and polysemy, it was an ideal storyline for a broad discourse coalition.

This discursive hegemony, however, was never complete. Even though sometimes swamped by nationalist euphoria, resistance existed throughout, and the rest of this study focuses precisely on that anti-nationalist *altérité*. The 1993 elections saw a decline in support for Milošević's party, as did every election since, so that coalition governments became the rule. Here I would just like to mention that, more than any other republic, Serbia experienced mass anti-regime demonstrations during the wars (Thomas 1999). Initially silenced by the state media, they were later violently crushed

by the regime, a pattern that Milošević followed on several occasions during his reign. For the sake of argument, I have so far presented an overly coherent and unified picture of Serbian nationalism. Perhaps it is necessary to emphasise here that this tendency to homogenise an object of study is a consequence of the nature of the analysis, rather than a reflection of the character of that object. In a way, of course, Serbian nationalism did not exist—that is, only Serbian nationalisms existed. Although, much more so even than the social sciences, nationalisms have a tendency to posit the homogeneity of their object (the nation), they do not in themselves constitute monolithic discourses. Not only was it possible to distinguish diverging factions in the broader spectrum of Serbian nationalist politics, it is also clear that the discourse of Slobodan Milošević, himself, was permeated with contradictions, imbalances and incongruencies. Salecl describes Milošević's political discourse as a mixture of traditional Stalinism, proto-fascist right-wing populism, étatism, mythologising nationalism and bourgeois liberalism (Salecl 1994b:214-217). Again, far from being a weakness, this heterogeneity was part of its strength: through his autocratic approach, Milošević succeeded in discursively uniting different elements that were hitherto regarded as incompatible. In this process of articulation, they changed meaning and content. Let us take the example of the Second World War. The official version of this war, with the Partisan victory over all 'foreign occupiers and domestic traitors', served as the foundational myth of Titoism. It is on this discursive basis that the idea of 'Brotherhood and Unity' and its federal implementation in post-war Yugoslavia were built. With the collapse of Yugoslavia, however, the war events took on an entirely different meaning in the different republics. In Serbia, rather than reinforcing the need for a peaceful and fraternal Yugoslav federation, WWII came to symbolise yet another stage in the eternal suffering of the Serbian people. In this way, it also provided justification for the war against Croatia, a war that was presumably needed to save the Serbs in that republic from a new genocide by an allegedly fascist HDZ regime. Hence, whereas the Second World War was an important moment in the discourse of Serbian nationalism as well as in Titoism, its meaning changed completely because of the different ways in which it was articulated into the discourses.

But, to come back to my point, if Serbian nationalism did not exist—that is, if there was not one monolithic discourse—it is important to highlight how it articulated a number of possibly contradictory elements into moments. I referred already to the powerful myth of the Kosovo battle and its significance as the symbol of national Serbian martyrdom. Related to the Kosovo cataclysm, a nationalist understanding could be constructed of centuries of Ottoman domination, and more recently, of the expulsion and execution of Serbs in the World War II Croatian Ustaša state. Serbian nationalists, then, added the alleged discrimination against the Serbs in Titoist Yugoslavia to this long list of national suffering (Pavković 1994:440). Later, their views of the proclamation of independence in Croatia, Bosnia (and Kosovo) were structured through this prism.

Despite their internal contradictions, however, Serbian nationalist discourses established far-going fixations and, thereby, represented the Serbian nation as highly coherent and unitary. The new Serbian nationalist discourses also rested upon a range of articulations with other, related discourses, such as moral traditionalism, orthodox Christianity and rural romanticism. Lack of space prevents me from going into these themes here, although I come back to them later in this study. Let me just emphasise that every one of these articulations was highly contradictory. Not only did the nationalist discourse coalition comprise self-proclaimed progressive Yugoslavists, conservative Christian royalists and extreme right Greater-Serbianists—but even within every strand, tensions were high. The discourse articulated by the Milošević regime and the way it was lived in everyday life patterns throughout Serbia were particularly ambiguous with regard to Yugoslav past. We'll have a closer look at this now.

4.2. (dis)continuity and the vampire: versions of the Yugoslav past

Even before the disintegration of the former state, there was an ambiguous relation between Serbian nationalist discourses and Titoism (Žižek & Salecl 1991:29). As we have seen, although opinions on this issue varied widely, most Serbian nationalists favoured some kind of federation, albeit one that would not be dominated by the anti-Serbian coalition that allegedly led to their inferior position. Serbian politicians and the Serbian-dominated JNA have always claimed to be defending the Yugoslav federation. Moreover, one should not forget that after the break-up of Yugoslavia, the federation of Serbia and Montenegro was called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in many ways portrayed itself as the defender and successor state of (Titoist) Yugoslavia. While the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, fought in great part by the JNA, delegitimised Yugoslavism to a large extent, towards the late 1990s Milošević increasingly dug up his so-called progressive Yugoslav credentials. This was particularly the case during the 1996-1997 anti-regime demonstrations and during the NATO air strikes in 1999 (see Jansen 2000a:305-306).

On the one hand, the regime narrated its legitimacy along lines of continuity with regard to Yugoslav 'progressive politics'. Some kind of leftist discourse articulated the legacy of anti-fascism, multiculturalism, equal rights and non-alignment in international affairs. A strong emphasis was then put on patriotism and the uniqueness of the old and the new Yugoslavia as a country, as a political system and as a social formation of solidarity and affluence. Regardless of the grinding poverty and repression that constituted everyday reality in Serbia, the regime prided itself on its dedication to improving the lives of ordinary people. Its failures were put down increasingly to the embargo, and thus to the 'West'. This was not just regime rhetoric: being perceived as the unofficial High Representative of All Western Governments, I was reminded numerous times of how we were responsible for the misery of the Serbs.

On the other hand, Serbian nationalist discourses articulated a sense of discontinuity with the Yugoslav past—a trend that was present in most versions and dominant in non-regime nationalism. Before and during the wars, there was an urge towards an active break with Titoist times; the Serbian nation, it was argued, was finally vindicating its inferior place in Yugoslavia. The lies and passivity were over and done with, and militant Serbs were *finally* asserting the real story of, say, the Ustaša genocide of WWII. In later years, this sense of discontinuity became more reactive and often contradicted the above. The new experience of war, socio-economic deterioration, the influx of refugees and so on were represented as a break with the good life of this past. Of course, all varieties of Serbian nationalism blamed the current situation on others: post-Yugoslav national Others, the 'West', and, increasingly by the end of the 1990s, the *communist* kleptomaniac, Milošević (Jansen 2000a:292). This, of course, implied continuity on the level of the grand historical narrative of Serbian national suffering.

Different discourses of Serbian nationalism articulated these contradictory elements into ambiguous blends, and merged them into contested but extremely effective discursive complexes in several ways: through an extreme level of media manipulation and lies; through direct and indirect oppression and limitations on dissenting information; and through an arbitrary approach making floating references to *certain* elements of Serbian nationalism and certain elements of Yugoslav Titoism. We could call this a form of Yugo-vampirisation. Milošević arguably was one of the main killers of Yugoslavia, but he sucked its blood—its discursive practices of legitimacy—and used it to sustain his own life. As we shall see in the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*, this created great unease and difficulty for those who wished to articulate what they saw as positive aspects of the Yugoslav past into a dissident discourse.

However, on an everyday level, these Yugo-vampire articulations were symbolically effective for many people because of their polysemy and the space they left for bricolage. People could tap into them and argue entirely different things without contradicting each other. For example, in one and the same conversation, people could

evoke the Yugoslav discourse of solidarity and equality as something that proved their superiority over non-Yugoslavs, *and* tell tales of discrimination and oppression which supported the claim that Yugoslavia was an anti-Serbian conspiracy. Because the notion 'Yugoslav' meant so many different things, such paradoxical statements did not necessarily cause any debate or consternation—often, it functioned as a blanket term, covering potential conflicts with its veil of polysemy. As there was simply no level where the different statements would meet, endless variations seemed possible, and unneeded or potentially annoyingly inconsistent elements were blanked out or ignored. As we shall see throughout this study, many people engaged in the rewriting of the past on all levels, repositioning themselves in relation to the crisis surrounding them (see also Jansen 2000b). During my fieldwork in the late 1990s, the general atmosphere was characterised much more by indifference and passive conformity than by active identification and fanatic support. On the whole, people simply worried about other things—mainly about their attempts to keep their heads above water in the daily struggle for survival. Through vagueness, silence and the reproduction of storylines, their attitudes towards 'politics' were usually summarised in brief evocations of a generalised state of Serbian suffering.

In everyday life in Serbia, a strong sense of continuity was embodied in people's surroundings. Despite changes in outlook (mainly the tangible deterioration), many consumer products remained the same: *Yugo* cars still filled the streets, and old state shops looked similar to before. The TV showed the same old faces of the regime and the country was still officially called Yugoslavia. In retrospect, even hard-line Serbian nationalist narratives increasingly relied on patterns of continuity. Many people argued that they had actually always wanted to continue living in a Yugoslav state together with others on an equal basis, but that *they* (that is, the national Others) didn't want this anymore. During my fieldwork, one NGO activist called this 'the story of abandoned lovers'. This again reflects the theme of the hegemonic, incorporative nature of Serbian nationalist discourses, which allow to a certain extent for ambiguity and hybridity with other post-Yugoslav nations—always, however, with the Serbs as the dominant group, *incorporating* differences. The Dalmatian Coast, many Serbs would argue, was *also* ours; Sarajevo was *also* ours, only *they* wanted everything for themselves. We would live together, as we have always done, if they'd let us and if they wouldn't kill us—but, since they attacked us, we had to protect ourselves.

5. Croatian nationalism as discursive practice

Space is being created for a new (and this time, really new), bright (and this time truly bright) future (and this time really a future). The terror of memory has its counterpart in the terror of forgetting. Both processes are indispensable for the creation of a new state of events and a new truth. The terror of memory is a strategy which restores the (apparently uninterrupted) continuity of national identity, whereas the terror of forgetting is a strategy to wipe out Yugoslav identity and the possibility to restore it—afterwards.
(Ugrešić 1995:113).

5.1. a thousand-year dream - nationalist discourse and polarisation in Croatia

When, in 1990, Franjo Tuđman was installed as the president of Croatia, a Serbian politician became vice-president. However, shortly after the elections, the nationalist Serbian Democratic Party retreated from the parliament, which they viewed as a strictly Croatian institution. On the ground, the strongly mixed areas around Knin were increasingly dominated by nationalist militias (Glenny 1993:24-30; Van Dartel 1991:209; Voet 1993:18-19). The Milošević-controlled media operating from Beograd took every opportunity to depict the new Croatian government as a fascist dictatorship,

a re-run of the Ustaša regime, aiming for the extermination or at least the expulsion of all Serbs (Glenny 1993:14ff; Banac 1992b:180).

It must be said that the HDZ government, and Tuđman in particular, did everything within their power to make matters worse¹⁹. The new regime referred *ad nauseam* to the thousand-year dream of the Croatian nation for their own state. An important role was played by Catholic Church leaders. Moreover, even in a country accustomed to Tito's megalomania, the symbolism of the new state protocol seemed excessive to most and recalled the emblems of the Ustaša regime. Against a heavily loaded historical background, hard-liners of both Serbian and Croatian sides imposed a definition of the situation through the prism of exclusivist nationalism. A polarisation of discourses took place in which extremists claimed that the collective existence of their nation was threatened by the very presence of national Others. When local police units run by Serbian hard-liners refused to implement certain changes, an attempt by Croatian government officials to undo their stand met with fierce resistance from the local policemen and from newly created paramilitary groups—the war in Croatia had started²⁰ (Denich 1994:380). In no time, more than a third of the republic was Serbian-controlled and ethnically cleansed of its Croatian inhabitants.

Tuđman's personal role was crucial in post-Yugoslav Croatia. His HDZ emerged as the dominant party in every election for a decade, and even when electoral engineering and strategic timing (just after the Krajina victory) became increasingly important to secure this dominance, his personal popularity was very high. According to a poll during the 1992 elections the HDZ enjoyed most support amongst pensioners, people working in the administration, the unemployed, housewives, and church-goers. The oppositional Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLs), a more moderately nationalist party with a liberal economic programme, attracted a younger, better educated, more employed, urban and less religious share of the electorate (survey by Grdesić, quoted in Pleština 1995:140). In 1995, HDZ lost its majority in some cities, and both domestic and international opposition grew to Tuđman's authoritarian leadership. Critics attacked HDZ policies towards the electoral system, the media, privatisation programs and nepotism.

5.2. who are the people? narrating difference

As in other republics, the political discourse of the new Croatian rulers was democratic: they were to represent *the people*²¹. But this had equally been the case under the communist regime. Hence, the central question became 'who are the people'? The HDZ's answer was not different from that of most winning parties in other republics: the real people, they argued, were the members of the dominant nation (Bowman 1994:138). The Tuđman government developed a discourse in which the essence of the Croatian nation was constituted in opposition to Others who were held responsible for the suppression of the real development of that nation. The power of the HDZ was underpinned by and implemented through a discourse which re-articulated the Titoist discourse on national identity, legitimacy and territoriality. Hence, the transition from a communist order to a liberal democracy was understood through the prism of nationalism, and other options were excluded²².

By referring to imagined communities such as 'the Serbian nation' and 'the Croatian nation', the new leaders defined the situation along national lines. As every regime

¹⁹ Pusić 1994:395; Hayden 1992:657; Bowman 1994; Denich 1994:380; Kaldor 1993:101-102; Schöpflin 1993:201; Garde 1993:275-281.

²⁰ For an overview of pre-war events in Krajina, see Glenny 1993; Denich 1994:380ff; Detrez 1992; Voet 1993:17-21; Garde 1993:177, 275-281; Silber & Little 1995:98-112.

²¹ Serbian/Croatian uses one word for both 'people' and 'nation': *narod*.

²² As discussed above, despite his Partisan past, Franjo Tuđman established nationalist credibility from the 1970s onwards. He also wrote a number of books on the subject of nationalism.

defining its authority on a more or less national basis, the Croatian government was confronted with the anomalies of reality. In Serbia only some 66% of the population had a Serbian background, and, when the HDZ came to power, only 75% of the inhabitants of Croatia identified as Croats and 12% as Serbs (Garde 1992:117, 172). A small but substantial amount of the population declared themselves as Yugoslavs. Also, large Croatian minorities lived outside the republic, in Vojvodina, Canada and Australia (Škrbiš 2000). Particularly, the HDZ enjoyed vast support in neighbouring Western Herzegovina. Croatian Herzegovinians were granted dual citizenship in 1990 and received the right to vote in Croatian elections, which had a strongly radicalising impact on Zagreb politics (see Chapter Seven). Moreover, the local authorities made use of a whole range of Croatian materials and symbols: currency, flag, coat of arms, police uniforms and so on (Woodward 1995:230-231).

Hence, in order to construct the basis for its power, nothing less than the Croatian nation, the Tuđman government had to rework the official Yugoslav discourse on identity. It was here that the nationalist leaders of the different republics found a common ground²³: the public had to be persuaded that there was no alternative to increased national self-determination. This, of course, had serious territorial implications. Apart from more political and economic autonomy, the HDZ electoral platform mentioned 'Croatia's ethnic and historical borders', which could be interpreted as meaning anything, including the annexation of regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina with a Croatian majority, or even the re-installment of the NDH-borders (Denich 1994:377; Garde 1992:363). Moreover, Tuđman often failed to make clear his position on the Bosniacs, who were seen by many hard-line Croatian nationalists as Islamicised Croats (and by extreme Serb nationalists as Islamicised Serbs). Several times, the Croatian president expressed his preference for a division of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia (Silber & Little 1995:92).

Like their Serbian counterparts, Croatian nationalist themes were often articulated with Catholicism, since most Croats had a predominantly Roman Catholic cultural background. Similarly, romantic ruralist themes were taken up, albeit always in a contradictory way because Croatian nationalism presented itself simultaneously as a modern, 'Western' discourse. Throughout history, the regions that are now post-Yugoslav republics have often occupied a very specific position in the symbolic geography of 'East' and 'West'. Many Croats and Slovenes retrospectively viewed the Yugoslav project and the war through an orientalist discourse, which I come back to in Chapter Eight. Often, this discourse provided an implicit, underlying consensus on the prism through which Yugoslavia should be seen and talked about. The South-Eastern Balkans were then depicted as the home of lazy peasants—primitive, intolerant and aggressive free riders in the Yugoslav federation (Škrbiš 1995:165-166). This discourse had severe implications, for it re-evaluated once more Titoist discourses on the assumed 'Brotherhood and Unity' of the Yugoslav peoples. Yugoslavia was represented as an uneasy, imposed and impossible combination of clashing cultures. Croatian nationalism asserted that Croats had never felt at home in this 'Balkan' federation, because they had always essentially been part of (Central) Europe²⁴ (Bakić-Hayden & Hayden 1992:9-12; see also Silber & Little 1995:88).

In order to understand such a discourse, which attempted to reconcile a 'modern', 'European', liberal-democratic system based on citizenship on the one hand, and a

²³ Of course this common ground was bound to be explosive. It also explains how both the seceding regimes and the Milošević/JNA coalition could refer to the Yugoslav constitution: one side justified secession with reference to the right of self-determination of *the republic*, whereas the others justified their violence on the basis of the constitutional right of self-determination of the *nation* (Gow 1994:465). In Bosnia, the situation became even more complex...

²⁴ As we shall see in Chapter Eight, Balkan orientalism took on a number of different forms in the post-Yugoslav context, and, although it was stronger in Zagreb than in Beograd, it was by no means the sole property of the North-Western republics. Serbian nationalists, for example, would refer to the Bosnian war as yet another occasion of Serbs defending Europe and its Judeo-Christian heritage against Muslim fundamentalist domination.

nationalist appeal to the dominant ethnic group on the other hand, Hayden coined the term 'constitutional nationalism' (Hayden 1992). The situation in post-communist Croatia was symptomatic of this tension inherent in discourses which articulate democratic constitutionalism and national self-determination. Hayden defines constitutional nationalism as 'a constitutional and legal structure that privileges the members of one ethnically defined nation over other residents in a particular state' (1992:655). In what seems to be a similar discussion of Croatian and Serbian contemporary politics, Cohen proposed the term 'ethnic democracy', whereby 'a de facto privileged status [is] accorded by the state to one or more ethnic groups' (1995:359-365). Policies emerging from such a framework are likely to evoke majority support, but at the same time they are bound to alienate minorities.

Although this study points out that Croatian nationalist discourses were not homogenous and monolithic, I do believe that there was less evidence of the rather extreme polysemy that characterised its Serbian counterpart. This was a historical trait of Croatian nationalism, as explained in Chapter Three, but it also has to be seen in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. By the late 1980s, Milošević had consolidated his position and his assertions of Yugoslav/Serbian power politics made clear that the threat of war was a real one. And, although all sides in the post-Yugoslav wars claimed to be engaged in defensive operations, in 1991 Serbian paramilitaries and the JNA were overwhelmingly dominant in the violence, which, let us not forget, took place on disputed territory in the Croatian Republic. Therefore, the lower level of polysemy is not so surprising, as Croatian nationalist discourses relied much more straightforwardly on representations of Serbian/Yugoslav aggression and a Croatian closing of ranks in the face of the enemy (Povrzanović 1997).

5.3. constructing unity: the homogenisation of the nation

5.3.1. correcting history gone wrong: (re)naming and the power of definition

Immediately after taking over power, the HDZ started to correct what it viewed as a situation which was historically out of line. This had been one of the major strands in the electoral campaign, which had taken shape during a Party Conference in 1990, where an influential leader of the HDZ argued:

'There won't be any improvement for Croatia until a Croatian rifle is on a Croatian shoulder, and a Croatian wallet in a Croatian pocket.'
(quoted in Silber & Little 1995:92)

In the purge of the *nomenklatura*, hundreds of Serbs were removed from influential positions and a range of overtly and covertly discriminating measures were installed, particularly targeting Serbs²⁵. In Yugoslav times, reflecting the composition of Partisan support, the Serbian minority had traditionally been over-represented in the Croatian administration and police. HDZ politicians had repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation. Serbian personnel was now sacked on the spot, and despite constitutional guarantees for the Serbian minority, a climate of retaliation took shape.

Of course, we have to see this against the background of the previously described events in Serbia, where Milošević was riding the waves of an increasingly aggressive nationalist euphoria. The year 1991 saw atrocious violence as radical Krajina Serbs seceded from the newly independent Croatian state and ethnically cleansed the region of most Croatian inhabitants. Obviously, throughout the war years, the nationalist discourse did not always remain the same. Through the lived experience of war, storylines were reformulated and new events and themes were articulated into the

²⁵ For examples, see Woodward 1995:229; Voet 1993:17; Tromp-Vrkić 1993:8; Kaldor 1993:101; Hayden 1992:667.

developing discourse. Močnik puts it as follows: 'First, the story was about centennial dreams, obstructed by various "others"; then came the "we are in danger" motive; now, it is the "we must avenge the defeat" rallying cry' (Močnik 1992:1). In this way, the idea that the wars were defensive operations was widespread both in Serbia and Croatia (Garde 1992:169). Nationalist discourses defined the situation as if the fate of each and every individual member of the nation depended on the fate of his/her nation.

The redressing of the national balance in favour of 'the Croatian national interest' was accompanied by a flood of symbolic re-assertions of Croatian nationhood²⁶. Towns, villages, streets and institutes were renamed, erasing the undesired tainting with Yugoslav times and (re)constructing a link with older, and supposedly more Croatian ones. A campaign of purification took place, cleaning the Croatian language of alleged Serbianisms through the coining of new words with 'indigenous' derivation and through the revival of archaic words (see Chapter Six). Moreover, the HDZ installed Croatian national celebrations that had not been officially recognised under Titoism and, of course, abolished the official Yugoslav alternatives (Roskandić 1995). The arduous efforts of the HDZ government to present the new Croatian state as a homogeneous formation was further accentuated by discouraging the historically strong regional identification among Croats in favour of a firmly unitarist national consciousness²⁷. The policies of the new Croatian leaders were designed to compensate for what they had long perceived as the suppression of Croatian national identity in Titoist Yugoslavia. In Tuđman's words:

'Croatian sovereignty means above all that we restore Croatian legitimacy. In the last 45 years Croatism has not only been exposed to pressure but also to persecution [...]. Streets and squares named after Croatian kings were changed. Croatian children were not allowed to sing innocent Croatian songs.'
(quoted in Cohen 1995:97)

This is not to say that the desire to start with a clean sheet was a unique characteristic of the Croatian nationalist regime. As Laclau (1990) has pointed out, this is a common phenomenon when power changes hands, and, in fact, the Titoist take-over in 1945 had engaged in similar strategies of renaming landmarks and redressing balances. What made the Croatian balance tip, and what made the regime an easy target for Beograd propaganda, was its ambiguity over the WWII past. Pusić later called this revolution of symbols a 'double error', because for many Croats it put into perspective the lack of real change beyond the symbolic level, whereas amongst the Serbian minority it created unrest and support for radical nationalists (1994:394). In this sense, Tuđman's policies caused a serious move away from previous practices of similarity and sameness on the local level (Glenny 1993:22). Let us now have a closer look at the new regime's narrations of (dis)continuity with the events of WWII.

5.3.2. raising the bone count: the ambiguity of (dis)continuity

In its attempts to realise the political implications of the discursive shift in terms of identity and community, the new Croatian government articulated a whole set of emblems of earlier collective struggles into its new discourse (Bowman 1994:147; Denich 1994:379ff). In May 1990, the new government decided to reinstall the historical Croatian coat of arms: a red and white checkerboard [*šahovnica*] (Silber & Little 1995:87). Immediately, a fierce controversy broke out, for the *šahovnica* had also served as the major icon of the fascist Ustaša state in WWII. A compromise was reached in the December 1990 Constitution: the checkerboard was preserved as the

²⁶ See for instance Glenny 1993; Silber and Little 1995; Thompson 1992; Ramet 1995a; Žanić 1995; Pleština 1995; Denich 1994; Bowman 1994; Ugrešić 1995.

²⁷ Tromp-Vrkić 1993:11-12; see also Thompson 1992:89, 252; Garde 1992:166-167.

national coat of arms, but the top-left corner was to be a red square instead of a white one. However, in conjunction with a deliberately provocative propaganda campaign by the Beograd media, the radicalisation of the Serbian minority in Croatia had already reached its boiling-point. This symbolic break with the Croatian fascist experience again came too late.

As we have seen, another dimension of ambiguous (dis)continuity was the question of Croatia's historical borders, as radical Croatian nationalist milieus circulated maps on which the country enveloped large parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia²⁸. Still another sensitive issue was the new Croatian currency called 'Kuna' after a medieval coin. Again, it was also the name used for the currency of the fascist NDH. When asked for a reaction on the worries and the sensitivities of the Krajina Serbs, Tuđman argued:

'They must understand that they are a minority here, and they must recognise Croatia as their homeland. They can take an equal part in it ... but they cannot, as they did in the past, impose solutions on state policies, and least of all, on the name of the Croatian national currency.'

(quoted in Cohen 1995:344-345)

These are only some examples of a whole range of decisions with wide symbolic resonance reaching well into WWII times (see Denich 1994; Bowman 1994; Pleština 1995:132; Hayden 1992:657; Pusić 1994:395). When viewing these measures against the background of Tuđman's continuous efforts to relativise the Croatian culpability in the NDH, it is clear that they were bound to provoke a vehement response. In the views of many Serbs—blurred by Beograd propaganda, their own radical nationalism and local polarisation—the new leaders affirmed continuity with this black episode of Yugoslavia's history (Glenny 1993:87). With the fascist NDH providing the only reference of statehood in modern Croatian history, Tuđman was always extremely reluctant to denounce it as merely a fascist puppet-state. Several of his closest advisers were well-known apologetics of the WWII regime (Križan 1993:68; Denich 1994:377). While admitting Ustaša crimes, the president insisted that the NDH was also an expression of the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state (Silber & Little 1995:91). Tuđman also wanted to rebury Ante Pavelić, leader of the Ustaša regime, in Croatia and repeatedly called to change the monument for the victims of fascism in the Jasenovac camp into a monument for *all* people who died in the war.

With the discursive shift that took place in postcommunist Yugoslavia, we enter the twilight zone of Titoism: the taboo of World War II. Building on the ashes of genocide, the Partisans had created a Yugoslav state, which united the very people who had been slaughtering each other some time before. In order to preserve its power, the Titoist system exercised ideological control over the representation of the past and strictly suppressed contested memories of the war years. The communist discourse structured the ways in which to think of the events of the war. The collective, non-ethnic categories 'victims of fascism' on the one side, and 'foreign occupiers and domestic traitors' on the other side were the only legitimate discursive means for representing the war (Denich 1994:370). Hayden describes how in the 1980s a cross-republican flood of scholarly, journalistic and literary texts opened up the taboo subject of WWII (1994). The authors of these writings challenged the official regime of history by the Yugoslav government and ultimately brought about a redefinition of this history. At least two foundational myths of the Yugoslav state were undermined in this way: the moral

²⁸ As Vulliamy points out, usually these maps were produced abroad, for instance by emigrants in South America (Vulliamy 1994:6-10). Škrbiš found out that many Croatian clubs in Australia have maps entitled 'Croatia in its historical borders', which for moderate emigrants were just descriptions of how things used to be, but for extreme nationalists they were the expression of expansionist dreams (1995:162). This was mirrored by Greater-Serbianist ambitions on the other side.

superiority of the Partisans in WWII; and the moral inferiority of the Ustaša regime and the NDH.

Although these interventions were initially directed against the Communist regime without necessarily being part of a political program of nationalism, it was clear that they provided *gefundenes Fressen* for those aiming for the construction of a new nationalist political consciousness. When Croatian and Serbian nationalists engaged in the discursive construction of distinct imagined communities, they had at their disposal the powerful mechanism of the symbolic revival of genocide²⁹.

5.4. Croatian nationalism and narrations of the Yugoslav past

It must be clear by now that, on the whole, Croatian nationalist discourses represented a more radical and more homogenous break with regard to Yugoslav times than their Serbian counterparts. An important factor in this phenomenon is the fact that much of the violence took place within the Croatian republic. Also, it developed partly in response to the rise of Milošević and reflected the previously mentioned historical negationist nature of Croatian nationalism. The nationalist representation of the newly independent Croatia, then, was articulated around a radical, absolute departure from the Yugoslav past. This discontinuity was embedded in the wider continuity of the historical 'will' of the Croats, who had been, so it was argued, forced into Yugoslavia and hated every moment of it. Therefore, the war, officially called the 'Motherland War' [*Domovinski Rat*], was a necessary evil imposed by Serbs (and later, ambiguously, by Bosniacs) to realise the thousand-year dream of the Croatian nation to have its own state.

These explicit references to the historical dimension of the new Croatian state were reinforced by daily media-reports and political decision-making in postcommunist Croatia. In a speech before the UN, Tuđman put it this way:

'From the 10th to the 12th century, the Croats had their own independent kingdom governed by national rulers. [...] However, [...] the Croatian people preserved its autonomy [...] The highest aim, the realisation of which is wished for by every national being from the moment it reaches the level of separate national, political and cultural self-awareness, and when the international circumstances allow it, has now been achieved by the Croatian people [...] Humanity strives towards a unique world community as an organised international system of independent sovereign states, based on the generally accepted principles of the right of the peoples to self-determination and freedom.'

If we place this narrative in the context of 1990s Croatia, it is clear that there were a number of contradictions since many Croats had actually contributed to the Yugoslav system in some way or other, and most others had at the very least accommodated to it. Croatian nationalist discourses dealt with this in two ways. On the one hand, there was the virulent denunciation of some Croats who were known to have supported the idea and practice of a common Yugoslav state (this was staple ammunition in the campaigns against the then-second party, the reformed communists (SDP)). Those Croats were simply proclaimed un-Croatian. On the other hand, however, nationalist discourses had to face up to the fact that many of the men now hailed as saviours had themselves been active in official Yugoslav institutions. Franjo Tuđman himself was the prime example. Here it was argued that those people had truly believed that Yugoslavia could be a step in the right direction (independence); but they had soon realised that that was unrealistic and that Yugoslavia was a Serbo-communist creation imposed on the Croatian people. This theme of conversion allowed many people to reformulate their own life stories in tune with the new versions of past and present (Buden 1996:77; *Feral Tribune* 05/10/98:38-39).

²⁹ I would see this process in strongly politically-instrumentalist terms, rather than representing it as a freeing of suppressed collective memory. For a post-war case study, see Jansen 2000b.

In this way, Croatian nationalist narratives of the past did contain strong ambiguities, and they seemed to be growing as the war moved further away in time. During my fieldwork, there were even attempts to actually incorporate a sense of continuity between the Croatian nationalist discourses of the 1990s and the anti-fascist struggle of the Titoist army in WWII. This led to a bizarre situation on Anti-Fascist Day in 1998 (22 June), the first time that some leading hard-liners of the regime had attended the commemoration, as well as the first time that it was reported extensively in the pro-government media (Gruden 1998:16). Until then, most nationalist circles had considered anti-fascism a dirty word referring to a compromising and anti-Croatian phenomenon. However, in 1998, state officials used the ceremony to argue that the Croats *were* the anti-fascists in the WWII Yugoslav context—and the most numerous ones at that (*Jutarnji List* 23/06/98a). They reformulated the war against fascism in Croatia into a struggle that was primarily a Croatian struggle, and, *therefore*, a fight against the enemies of the Croats. Now, in Croatian nationalist discourses it was obvious who the most important enemies of the Croatian people were; the Serbs, of course. This discursive operation transferred the legitimacy of the anti-fascist struggle of WWII to the 1991-1995 war.

Meanwhile, at other moments and in other places but sometimes involving the very same people, Croatian nationalist discourses continued to narrate WWII primarily in terms of a Yugo-communist attack on the Croatian nation (*Jutarnji List* 23/06/98b). However, in a surprising move by the HDZ-run state TV, even this was reformulated when deemed necessary (see *Jutarnji List* 23/06/98c). The main news report on the eve of the Day of the Anti-Fascist Uprising did of course pay its daily honours to Franjo Tuđman, but also elaborated a bit on the positive role in Croatian state-building played by—Tito! While embedded in a staunchly anti-Serbian discourse, the news editor thus located Tuđman, a close friend of his, in a series of 'great men'. The Croatian president often showed concern about his personal place in history (most infamously by comparing himself with Franco), and he had never really attacked Tito very strongly as a person. Quite the contrary, he obviously admired Tito's status as an internationally acclaimed statesman and a mythically popular president. Numerous commentators have pointed out how Tuđman's personal style showed many signs of imitating Tito: he lived in Tito's villa; spent his holidays on the former leader's private island; and displayed a similar type of dated megalomania and fascination with symbolism in his suits, speeches, and *entourage* (Pleština 1995:143-147; Silber & Little 1995:90).

Tuđman's experience fighting alongside the Yugoslav leader in WWII was now being incorporated into the narrative of his leadership and vision. He had, after all, been on the 'right' side in WWII, the victorious side, the side that protected Croatia and the world against fascism. The Croatian president thus shared in Tito's fame, which he regularly attempted to use in order to create credibility in international relations. In this context, flirting with a fascist past was not very popular anymore and Tuđman's vision of an all-Croat reconciliation between fascists and communists was considered a dirty game. This was also an important element of the domestic opposition against him, as related to me by Ankica, an eighty-year old lady who was involved in the organisation of remembrance ceremonies of the Partisan cause. After having joined the Dalmatian Partisans as a young girl, Ankica had remained employed on a high level in the Anti-Fascist Women's Front (AFŽ). This had earned her the right of residence in the comfortable central Zagreb flat where I occasionally went to sample the combined delights of her home-made biscuits and her marathon WWII stories. The flat issue is an interesting one: the HDZ regime also ran a policy of residence distribution amongst its cadres, some of whom had family backgrounds on the opponents' side in WWII. While Ankica hated to watch returnees from the Ustaša emigration occupy positions of power, she was even more upset by Tuđman's explicit support for them. This, she argued, was humiliation and betrayal by a former war comrade, by a man who had once, like her, been prepared to make sacrifices in order to fight fascism.

And there, of course, was the problem: Tito had been a communist and a Yugoslav,

whereas Tuđman and all 'true Croats' in the Partisan struggle, so the narrative *now* went, had fought for Croatia. However, Tito still scored high in popularity polls, and he could be incorporated into the narrative by arguing that while, yes, he was a communist, yes, he was a Yugoslav... he *did* create the necessary foundations for a Croatian state! In this way, Tuđman represented himself as the personified apotheosis of a long series of Croatian leaders who had all done their best, but had never quite gotten their act together like him (see for example *Novi List* 27/10/97:4). So the circle was round. Not only was Tuđman the one who had finished the job until the end, he was also the true heir of Tito because he had made the final step in Croatian anti-fascism: he beat the Serbs!

Through repression and manipulation of information, the above narratives of the past were imposed on the general population, leaving many citizens of Croatia baffled at their ambiguities. However, as in the Serbian case, these ambiguities made it possible for many people to rewrite their individual narratives of past and present in specific ways. Through amnesia and selective remembering on an everyday personal level, their stories included a mixture of discontinuity with the Yugoslav past as well as a sense of continuity of one's dedication to the Croatian cause.

7. constructing discrete national cultures: versions of past and present

The above rewritings of the past served a purpose in the 1990s post-Yugoslav context. They allowed for a redesigning of the situation, which, in the field of national identity, primarily meant the creation of discrete national cultures. Both Croatian and Serbian nationalist discourses engaged in such an endeavour, albeit in different ways and to different extents. They converged on the idea that, ultimately, 'Serbian' culture and 'Croatian' culture were and always had been essentially different from each other. As we shall see in Chapter Six, many anti-nationalist narratives countered this by reconstructing an age when the boundaries were not that important or were even entirely non-existent. They then argued that the wars were so bloody, precisely because people were so similar and had so much in common (see Harrison 1999).

The regime campaigns of constructing national cultures as discrete and maximally different from each other involved a host of policies. The act of removing Others from the territory considered the national homeland was only the most extreme one. Ethnic cleansing means exactly that; and most of these operations were carried out with such brutal violence that it not only facilitated similar campaigns in other areas, but also guaranteed a reluctance to return. However, (para)military war crimes on national Others were necessarily accompanied by the infliction of symbolic violence within the sphere of one's own nation through a campaign of homogenisation. The process of national homogenisation was tangibly present in education, language reforms, renaming policies, popular music and other domains of society.

This was, of course, represented as part of a legitimate defensive operation to redress a situation that had historically grown out of balance and to close ranks in the face of an enemy attack. I would like to stress here that I am not just talking about hard-line nationalists and regime figures, nor was the discourse of discrete national cultures necessarily always embedded in an aggressive xenophobic stance towards national Others. Rather, through an emphasis on similarities within and differences outside of the nation, the previously mentioned cosmology of a 'family of nations' pervaded everyday life and constituted a part of Croatian and Serbian *doxa*, thereby reflecting the wider discourse of humanity as a mosaic of discrete nations (Malkki 1994). Or in the words of the leader of the HDZ Youth³⁰: 'Only someone who is first a true Croat, can be a true internationalist and cosmopolitan'.

³⁰ In Croatian: '*Pravi internacionalist i kozmopolit može biti samo onaj koji je najprije pravi Hrvat*' (Mario Kapulica, president of HDZ Youth, in his speech on the 7th birthday of the organisation, *Novi List* 27/10/97).

[chapter five]
before and after:
clashing narratives of self, society and war

C'est l'histoire d'une société qui tombe et qui au fur et à mesure de sa chute se répète sans cesse pour se rassurer 'Jusqu'ici, tout va bien, jusqu'ici, tout va bien, jusqu'ici, tout va bien'. L'important, c'est pas la chute. C'est l'atterrissage.

[It's the story of a society that falls, and that, in order to reassure itself, during its fall, keeps repeating to itself, 'So far so good, so far so good, so far so good.' The important thing is not the fall. It's the landing.]

(taken from *La Haine*, a film by Matthieu Kassowitz¹)

a soldier's things
his rifle, his boots full of rocks
oh and this one's for bravery
and this one's for me
and everything's a dollar
in this box

*Tom Waits – Soldier's Things*²

In this chapter, I sketch some backgrounds with regard to contested representations of the recent post-Yugoslav wars. This is, of course, a risky endeavour and I am not aiming to provide an authoritative account of the events. That would not only be impossible in the context of this study, but it would also fail to reflect the meta-struggle that surrounded the status of the violence. For example, disagreements over whether the fighting should be seen as a civil war or as a war of aggression depended upon whether the problem was defined as secession or expansionism. In what follows, I limit myself to a brief outline of some aspects of that conflict over definition. I then address one of the central elements of this study: the experience of a defining, collective narrative break in post-Yugoslav lives and the subsequent ontological distinction between *before* and *after*. This allows me to take on issues of loss and liminality as well as to introduce the themes of memory and continuity which will structure the rest of this study.

1. ethnic cleansing as a war objective and a war strategy

If the late 1980s and the early 1990s brought nationalism to the forefront as *the* legitimate public discourse on identity in all Yugoslav republics, this was quickly translated onto a party-political level. Elections brought victory for parties with nationalist programs in all republics, with the results in heavily mixed Bosnia resembling those of a population count on the basis of national affinity. As we have seen, in a euphoric climate legitimised by referenda, Croatia, Slovenia and, later, Bosnia declared independence and the Yugoslav federation fell apart at the seams. War, once more, seemed to be the continuation of politics by other means. The 'war in former Yugoslavia', as it is often referred to, actually consisted of a series of different armed

¹ *La Haine* © 1995 Productions Lazennec.

² Tom Waits, from the album *Swordfishtrombones* © 1983 Island Records.

conflicts: a 10 day war in Slovenia; a long war for territory in Croatia; a gruesome and exhausting war in Bosnia (itself consisting of several conflicts); and, finally (?), a war over Kosovan sovereignty.

Since others have written extensively on these wars, I will only mention one aspect of the post-Yugoslav violence, referred to in the phrase it added to many people's vocabulary: 'ethnic cleansing' (Ahmed 1995). This term is, of course, a euphemism for campaigns of expulsion, deportation, rape, killing, burning and looting. It is often represented as a result of the war operations in former Yugoslavia and, therefore, as a consequence of a struggle over other issues. I would argue that ethnic cleansing was at the root of the post-Yugoslav wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Evidence suggests that these wars were, amongst other things, organised attempts to create more or less ethnically homogenous territories (as argued convincingly by Glenny 1993; Silber and Little 1995; Duijzings 2000:59-60). This view could be supported by the fact that the fighting stopped only when massive displacement [had] resulted in more or less discrete territories with largely homogenous populations in national terms.

On the ground, ethnic cleansing took many different forms—from relatively 'silent', individual movements to outright terror—but it always aimed at creating such homogenous ethnic islands³. This might also help us to explain in part why many of the war operations were so deliberately gruesome⁴: the more horrific the violence, the less likely that the displaced would return afterwards (Sofos 1996:86). In this way, we can detect two important characteristics of the post-Yugoslav wars: first, that these were mainly wars involving (para)military forces against civilians; and, second, that they were led by men with maps and statistics in their heads. Ethnic cleansing, then, was simultaneously a war objective and a war strategy.

2. struggles for definition: what was it all about?

Even if few post-Yugoslavs would deny that ethnic cleansing was part of the wars that brought an end to the federation, there was very little agreement on the actual nature of those wars. There was little consensus concerning what was at stake in the conflicts, what kind of wars they were, what were the actual events, who was the aggressor and who the victim. An interesting way of looking at this meta-conflict is offered in Bourdieu's theorisation of legitimacy (1984:255-258). He argues that every struggle contains a debate about the terms on which the conflict is waged, which terminology is used, what is considered a legitimate cause and so on. This is a struggle to define what the conflict is about. In everyday life, people often reach some sort of agreement on this, what Bourdieu calls an *implicit consensus* on the rules of the game, a common ground on how to wage the conflict.

In the case of the post-Yugoslav wars, there were elements of such an implicit consensus, superbly parodied in Figure One by the ferociously critical Croatian weekly, *Feral Tribune*. When it became clear that the Serbian and Croatian regimes were conducting secret meetings in order to strike a deal over the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the paper published a frontpage photo montage of Milošević and Tuđman naked in bed. The caption read: 'Is this what we've been fighting for'? Note that this was published at a time when a large part of what is now Croatia was controlled and ethnically cleansed by Serbian (para)military forces, and when a multi-faceted war was raging in neighbouring Bosnia.

³ For an ethnographic example of the former see Duijzings (2000:45-52), and for a retrospective ethnography of the latter see Jansen (2000b).

⁴ A related reason often put forward in local anti-nationalist narratives explains the extent of the horror with reference to the lack of strong differences and the prevalence of *similarities* amongst the fighting 'nations' (contrary to common Western European and North American beliefs). This seems to converge, at least on the level of resulting explanations, with Harisson's interesting insights on identity as a scarce resource (1999).



Figure One (*Feral Tribune* 432, 28/12/93:1)

If all the regimes involved in the post-Yugoslav conflict relied primarily on a nationalist programme normatively linking territory and nation (Gellner 1983:53-58), there was little agreement on the nature of the wars. This is important, because the representation of the conflicts was part of an effort to galvanise mass support at home and moral, diplomatic and material recognition and legitimacy in international relations. Therefore, although the post-Yugoslav wars were obviously about power, influence, money and so on, they were also about the power to name things, about definition, itself. With substantial differences between the warring 'nations' being few and far between, the struggle for definition of the conflict became a central feature of the post-Yugoslav wars (Campbell 1998; Kaldor 1993; Koch 1992). The importance of this struggle, I believe, is underestimated in many analyses of the break-up of Yugoslavia. In what follows, I shall mention some patterns of definition in order to pave the way for the ensuing analysis of anti-nationalist discursive practices.

First of all, there were deep divisions *between* dominant definitions of the wars of the different national groups. Representations were strongly embedded in the different discourses of nationalism, and the regimes went to lengths to ensure that this remained the case with regard to facts as well as to naming. In terms of actual events, in Serbia it was not uncommon to hear people argue that Sarajevo was never under any Serbian siege, and in Croatia many people denied the existence of Croatian prisoner camps for Bosniacs in Bosnia. As for naming, dominant Croatian representations would include at least some of the following terms: Greater Serbia, expansionism, self-determination, defence, cultural differences, a clash of civilisations, Islamic Fundamentalism, 'Europe' and 'Balkan'. Serbian nationalist representations would centre upon at least some of the following key words: secession, fascism, Islamic Fundamentalism, defence, federation, cultural similarities, clash of civilisations, 'Europe', Croatian expansionism and civil war. Clearly, there were overlaps between the opposing dominant nationalist representations of the wars as well as diametrically opposed definitions. Hence, the two sides could, at times, employ an identical terminology by attaching different meanings to the same words.

Importantly, the terms in which the wars were defined had thorough implications for attributing blame. The importance of the actual words was illustrated, for example, by the fact that the very use of the term 'civil war' was considered betrayal in the Croatian context because it implied a potential delegitimation of Croatian nationalism. Framing the conflict in terms of civil war, it was argued, meant failing to make the crucial distinction between the aggressor-Serbs and the victims-Croats. This was extremely common, also amongst those critical of nationalism. Not a day went by during my time in Croatia without some public denunciation of somebody who had 'equated the

aggressor and the victim' (e.g. Lovrić 1997b; Eseš 1997)⁵. Even the Supreme Judge of Croatia flatly denied the possibility of Croats committing war crimes because they only defended themselves. There was widespread protest against extraditing indicted war criminals because that would entail 'judging the whole Croatian nation'. In Serbia, there was less fuss about this: co-operation with the Den Haag Tribunal was even further off, and the official line on the wars was a blatant denial of *any* involvement by 'Serbia'.

The struggle for definition also took place on a second level: there were contradictions between representations of the wars *within* the two national groups as well. First of all, some limited debate took place on the public level, mainly between the diverging nationalisms of government and opposition. Secondly, in most people's representations, the conflicts took on a different nature in different places and at different points in time. For example, some oppositional Croats saw the Croatian war as a legitimate defensive operation against Serbian aggression, while they condemned Croatian involvement in the Bosnian wars. Thirdly, it should be noted that many citizens simultaneously held very divergent views, which were not necessarily logically consistent. Finally, and most importantly, when addressing the war, many people remained vague and general or simply reproduced some powerful storylines.

At least three notions seemed to play a central role in these storylines: defence, righteousness, and misunderstanding. The large majority in both Serbia and Croatia emphasised the defensive nature of their cause: they argued that fear left 'them' (i.e. their nation) no choice but to protect themselves and their families. Another important common denominator was a belief in the righteousness of their cause: most people in all republics claim that they (i.e. again, their nation) only wanted their fair share and nothing more. Finally, it was common practice to lament an alleged lack of understanding and unfair treatment by the outside world. As a corollary of these assertions, the post-Yugoslav wars were almost always defined as an attack by national Others, who were after more than their fair share and who were favoured by the international community. Years of authoritarian policies, war and nationalist propaganda reinforced these representations and had the homogenising effect of a high level of discursive closure. A variety of elements were articulated into moments of pervasive discourses, elevating them in different versions to a certain level of *doxa* (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1994:266-272).

3. anti-nationalist narratives of the wars

One of the crucial characteristics of what I call anti-nationalist discursive practice was its deviant definition of the wars—resisting the discursive closure aimed for by nationalism and subverting its *doxa*. A key concept in anti-nationalist representations of the post-Yugoslav wars was nationalism and its role in the competition for power. In a post-Cold War context, it was then argued, hunger for power led a number of ruthless politicians of different nationalities, first Serbian, then Croatian, then Bosnian and so on, to deploy nationalism as an instrument to mobilise mass support. Nationalism was driven to its extremes and it resulted in a strategic program of creating ethnically clean states. In dominant representations, employing the notion of nationalism in defining the wars was not uncommon in itself, but, ironically, in most cases the charge of nationalism was only hurled at the national Others. However, there were dissident variations emphasising that the aggressors were nationalists of all sides, whereas the victims were non- and anti-nationalist civilians who were affected by these policies, with special attention to refugees, people in mixed marriages and, to a certain extent, minorities.

The centrality of the concept of nationalism in representations of the post-Yugoslav

⁵ On the difficulties of writing ethnography in such a situation, see Feldman, Prica and Senković (eds) 1993; Jambrešić-Kirin & Povržanović (eds) 1996; see Povržanović 2000.

wars was fairly widespread amongst many critical and well-informed foreign observers; of course, often in conjunction with other lines of explanation. Apart from avoiding the trap of attributing blame in an exclusively national manner, it conveniently resonated with received anthropological insights into the essentialising practices of nationalism, always by Others, of course. However, in the post-Yugoslav states, applying the notion of nationalism to one's own group was a strongly marginalised view which was often considered a form of betrayal. As we have seen, a wide variety of definitions of the wars were put forward, and most people relied on different versions at any one time. In doing so, putting all the blame on politicians was a very widespread phenomenon, but it was much less common to address the *success* of nationalist discourses amongst one's own wider population.

In such a context, defining the wars in terms of conflicting nationalisms (and not just that of the national Others) was in itself a dissident practice. Such a critical approach was held only by a small number of dissidents and it was rarely publicly stated. In this way, taking up this mode of representing the post-Yugoslav wars constituted a form of anti-nationalist *altérité*, subverting the legitimacy of dominant definitions. This, again, illustrates the point made throughout this study, that marginal discursive practices of anti-nationalism can only be understood in light of their focal counterpoints, the discourses of nationalism.

During and after the post-Yugoslavs wars, then, a number of dissident discursive practices were developed in response to both Croatian and Serbian nationalism⁶. They articulated a whole range of elements into an alternative discourse of identity; some of those elements were differently incorporated as moments into nationalism as well, and some were not. We shall see how gender differences, for example, had been articulated into nationalism through essentialised notions of masculinity and femininity, and how a number of women reformulated them differently into a subversive discursive practice. In this way, both in Serbia and Croatia, a critique of patriarchy and notions of women's solidarity provided a whole feminist reservoir of material which was articulated into anti-nationalist discursive practices.

In the capitals of these two republics in particular, citizens engaged in a range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) dedicated to peace protest, dialogue projects, humanitarian work with refugees and so on. Through their work, many NGOs, although by no means all of them, tried to develop solutions different from the prevalent nationalist policies. On the level of identification, the very act of working in certain organisations provided alternative routes of narrating one's story of self, as well as publicly locating oneself in opposition to nationalism in the eyes of others. This links in with the strategies of identification developed by some intellectuals and artists, who, regardless of their nationality, engaged in public fora, associations of independent intellectuals, and artistic centres, all of which were positioned as anti-nationalist. In these cases, the very notion of dissidence, with its connotations of anti-authoritarianism and critical thinking, was often elevated to a resource for anti-nationalist discourses.

More straightforwardly engaging in identity bricolage were younger people in Beograd and Zagreb, who turned to the rich reservoir of (mostly 'Western') youth subcultures. For some of them, those subcultural (life)styles and politics served as an alternative form of identification, associated with opposition and rebellion to the dominant nationalisms. A current theme here was anti-fascism, which was also evoked by older people who retained an attachment to the tradition of Yugoslav anti-fascism. Despite deep ambiguities in the ways they were deployed in the post-Yugoslav context, both youth subcultures and Partisan anti-fascism could therefore provide certain people with material for anti-nationalist identification.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of anti-nationalist identification in Serbia and Croatia (another example that springs to mind is regional attachments and localism, especially in the Croatian peninsula of Istra). Many unarticulated evocations of anti-

⁶ For an overview of anti-nationalist oppositional groups in Croatia, see Jansen 1998b.

nationalism existed, and their impact in the long term should not be underestimated. Moreover, it is important to understand that every one of the elements constituting these alternatives could be articulated into entirely different discourses, some supporting the nationalist causes and others functioning on another level altogether, possibly having little or nothing to do with processes of identification.

Another point should be made here: ultimately, *individuals* engaged in acts of identification and narrated their stories of selves. I have given this sketchy overview of some anti-nationalists, rather than anti-nationalist discourses, in order to give the reader an idea about what kind of individuals we are dealing with. This might create the wrong impression that this study posits a rigid categorisation of post-Yugoslavs into nationalists and anti-nationalists. To argue that would mean scoring an own-goal in many ways: ethnographically, it would be a denial of the complexity of the whole post-Yugoslav situation; theoretically, it would entail misunderstanding the endless series of ambiguities running through the discursive field ranging from nationalism to anti-nationalism; and politically, it would miss the point of a critical look at anti-nationalist discursive practice entirely. The explicit focus of this study is on the reservoir of dissident discursive practices which were available, and on the myriad ways in which they could be approached, deployed, modified and even subverted. Most of the protagonists in this study alternately or simultaneously tapped into a whole set of discourses, and their narratives of self articulated those elements into hybrids which were unique, individual and *theirs*.

4. broken narratives: before and after

What is past is not dead; it is not even past.
We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers.
Christa Wolf - A Model Childhood

The dramatic changes in what was once Yugoslavia were experienced most severely by people who were directly and physically affected by the wars that turned the federation into independent states. Regardless of debates on just how harmonious inter-national relations in Yugoslavia were, it is clear that there was at least a relative absence of violence between people of different nationalities. The wars of the 1990s, which included extreme brutality on a national basis, saw hundreds of thousands, mainly civilians, murdered, driven out of their homes, raped, tortured, imprisoned, sacked from their jobs or otherwise abused. Many 'ordinary men' engaged in killing, raping, and looting for the first time in their lives (see Browning 1992).

These unspeakable horrors, although often co-ordinated in the Serbian and Croatian capitals were, of course, concentrated in certain geographical areas in Croatia and Bosnia, outside of these capitals. However, the violence resulted in massive displacement for many post-Yugoslavs in a wide range of ways, and the millions who lost their homes⁷ were followed by millions of others who found themselves metaphorically homeless (Jansen 1998a). This experience of a defining narrative break was exceptionally strong amongst those who mounted opposition to the dominant nationalist discourses. This became particularly clear in the stories of people who had spent some time abroad and returned home. A typical comment, at the start of my fieldwork, came from Maja, a Serbian woman who had spent a number of the war years in Scandinavia as an au-pair and as a student and who had recently returned. Highly educated and multilingual, Maja was now unemployed and living with her parents in Central Serbia. We met socially, sometimes in her village and sometimes in the city, when she would be there for business. Like so many other people, Maja made a little

⁷ Almost two million in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone (Žunec 1997:33; Kasapović 1996; see also Praso 1996; Petretić 1995).

money through postsocialist, nylon-bag capitalism, in her case a minor textile trade venture on the Istanbul-Beograd line. It was one of those days when Beograd really looked like the poverty-stricken city it often succeeded in disguising under a stylish *promenade*. The weather was miserable with brown heaps of melting snow everywhere and money-changers, cigarette vendors and beggars shivering in the cold. While guiding me through the crowds at one of the bus terminals, Maja disapprovingly pointed around her and told me that when she had first returned to Serbia, she had been 'like me', 'like a foreigner'. She had looked around in disbelief, for this was not how she remembered the country she had left.

Even when not physically displaced or otherwise directly affected by military violence, many people felt dislocated by the symbolic violence of nationalism. Of course, the transition towards independent successor states also relied on elements of continuity. But even these bridging links often emphasised rather than undermined a strong sense of *before* and *after*—a break which, in this case, was incorporated *into* narratives as a defining moment. In Serbia, we had the declared Yugoslavism of Milošević's regime and the widespread feeling amongst the Serbian population that some things hadn't changed at all ('communists' in power, corruption, nepotism, etc.); similar opinions about the ruling elite were voiced by Croatian citizens. In both cases these feelings went side-by-side with experiences of a near-total break.

Not surprisingly, certainly amongst those critical of nationalism, there was a sense of *too little* change, of missed opportunities. These people often thought change was desirable, but not the kind of change that was forced upon them. When experienced through an anti-nationalist perspective, most of the breaks with the Yugoslav past were either catastrophic (nationalist homogenisation, xenophobia, violence, isolation etc.), or completely beside the point (ceremonial national euphoria, self-congratulating rhetoric by the elite, cosmetic changes, etc.). However, the debate about whether the recent changes were seen as a positive or a negative evolution was second only to a widespread feeling of confusion and disorientation. I have mentioned before that, apart from in intentionally analytical comments, people rarely, if ever, referred to the wider picture of the post-Yugoslav wars in anything more detailed than general, vague terms. Everyday conversations both in Serbia and in Croatia mentioned them simply as 'the war' ('*rat*'), or even more commonly, one avoided the word altogether and spoke about 'all this' ('*sve ovo*'), or 'this shit' ('*ovo sranje*').

This sweeping vagueness doesn't imply that the post-Yugoslav wars were insignificant in people's lives. Quite the contrary, throughout my fieldwork I was struck by the extent to which 'this shit' took centre stage in many people's experiences of self. In virtually all spheres of post-Yugoslav life, from the dizzy heights of presidential power to the nitty-gritty of everyday life, narratives were structured around, or better, *by* this defining break. The idea of *before* and *after* did not just serve as a chronological narrative mechanism—it was a defining element in the construction of meaning within different contexts. Despite its divergent, contested interpretations and the absence of discursive closure, the omnipresence of that narrative break had profound implications.

How did this come about in the case of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practice? Through narrative, people can divide time into periods and structure it around key events which give meaning to that narrative. As Portelli argues, a narrator chooses a unit of time in order to structure a story, and these units can be related to different spheres of life, such as individual health, employment, family, politics and so on (Portelli 1981). Of course, the identity narratives of post-Yugoslav citizens did contain reference to breaks of an individual or family nature, such as births, deaths, moving house, beginnings and endings of love affairs, studies and jobs. However, these largely private narrative ruptures were often overshadowed by the grand events of the last decade. When experienced through nationalist discursive practice, this provided an opportunity to reinterpret individual narratives and insert them into larger contexts of, for example, National History. However, in the realm of anti-nationalist discourses, it implied at least some sense of loss, of being stripped of one's individuality and normality. Branka was a

young woman whose parents, like many of their generation in Croatia, had felt themselves to be 'Yugoslavs' only to be now, willy-nilly, thrown back on their Serbian background. She complained about many things: she didn't like her studies, nor her job in a feminist campaigning group, nor her colleagues—in short, she didn't like her life in Zagreb. She achingly longed for what she called 'a normal life'.

Despite enormously different interpretations, in order to come to any kind of understanding of post-Yugoslav realities, I had to come to grips with this pervasive experience of a division into *before* and *after*. The power of this narrative break was underlined by its often implicit omnipresence and by the fact that 'before' was almost never specified as 'before the war', but simply 'before' (*pre/prije*). As I shall argue in the next chapter, only with the advent of nationalism and war most (post-)Yugoslavs were called upon to empathically position themselves in relation to 'the national question'. And precisely because it was only then that nationalism, as it were, 'interpellated' them, I believe we have to focus on discursive practices of identity rather than on deeply ingrained beliefs of belonging. To put it bluntly, my schematic continuum between nationalist and anti-nationalist discursive practice only makes sense when seen in the light of this defining break: war and the very rise of the nationalism.

5. coping with experiences of loss

In post-Yugoslav everyday narratives of before and after, the break was usually understood as something that overcame a person, that happened to people. Many spoke of the feeling that nothing was the same as before and that, *around them*, everything had changed. In anti-nationalist narratives, the emphasis was plainly on loss. Especially in Beograd, where the socio-economic state was disastrous, few conversations about the current situation would go by without a reference to the fact that one was better-off before. An extreme but not exceptional example was provided by Biljana, a Serbian refugee from Zagreb who lived in Beograd. Her losses throughout the war included socio-economic security (both parents lost their jobs), housing, all material possessions apart from two suitcases, her country (she identified as Yugoslav), her freedom to travel (she had no papers) and much more. Strikingly, however, throughout our conversations, Biljana rarely complained about that. Rather, she said she missed her friends in Zagreb, and she regretted the fact that her brother had started speaking as an ardent Serbian nationalist. But more than anything else, even after six years, she mourned the loss of 'her' Zagreb, which she continued to refer to as 'my city' because 'they can't take *that* away from me'.

Biljana also mourned the loss of her photographs—those visual embodiments of her past, records of her life course. The loss of 'her' Zagreb illustrates how many post-Yugoslavs felt robbed of more than just their material and social security. They also had to cope with the disappearance of certain points of reference which had been implicitly central to their lives and which had provided a sense of existential or ontological security (Giddens 1991:47ff). In the words of the writer Slavenka Drakulić:

'I feel robbed of my past, my childhood, my education, my memories and sentiments, as if my whole life has been wrong, one big mistake, a lie and nothing else. I'm a loser, indeed we are all losers at the moment.'
(Drakulić 1993a:57-58)

The outburst of nationalism was often explained as a thoroughly destabilising phenomenon which took people by surprise. The extent to which the wars could take people by surprise was illustrated by the following story: in 1991, a whole group of Beograd friends had planned a boat holiday off the Croatian coast. They booked a boat and had paid in advance when trouble was rising in Croatia. But even then, in 1991, they did not cancel the holiday but tried to postpone it for a year. What I am arguing

here is that, on top of the enormous losses of lives and livelihoods, the wars that put an end to Yugoslavia also brought a sudden sense of mental disorientation for many people. In the words of dissident writer Ugrešić: 'Suddenly the environment that was yours, isn't yours anymore' (*Feral Tribune* 05/10/98:38). In the cities away from the frontlines, for many people who had constructed their experiences in varying degrees through anti-nationalist discursive practice, actual measurable losses were often less important than the symbolic and emotional losses to do with friendships, memories, identities, beliefs, hopes and ideals⁸. The fact that photos were often presented as key objects puts this in context since they can be seen as material records, evocative of what was lost.

6. 'everything went mad': the liminality of life during wartime

It is important here to note that in many cases people saw a whole set of the changes that took place in their lives during the last decade as very positive: a national state of their own, a market economy, multi-party elections, etc. However, not surprisingly, anti-nationalist discourses paint an overwhelmingly negative final balance. Even if they pointed to certain improvements on ten years earlier, they would often emphasise the fact that all these things would have also been possible without war, destruction and hatred. In post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist narratives, the period of the wars, 'this shit', occupied a place of liminality of sorts (Turner 1969:81). The 1990s constituted a period when all rules of normal human behaviour, of civilisation and of everyday life were disregarded and madness ruled. In this approach, through the frequent use of terms such as 'normality' and 'sanity', it was made clear that the war was simply beyond understanding (Jansen 1998a:102-105).

This reminded me of a scene in Aleksandar Tišma's powerful novel *The Use of Man*, where Sep Lenart, who worked as an executioner in the Nazi camps, talks to his Jewish brother-in-law Kroner. Drunk and hysterical, Lenart recounts how he executed large groups of Jews like an automaton, but Kroner obstinately refuses to believe him and clings to the idea that Lenart must be mad because 'if he is not insane, if anything at all in his whole story was true, then the world would be insane, and that was something Kroner could not accept, because he still felt part of the world' (Tišma 1990:76). Similarly, in anti-nationalist discursive practice, one could grasp the war's geopolitical scheming, its ideological underpinnings, its resonances with patriarchy and ethnocentrism, even the power hunger of its protagonists; but one could never understand the war itself nor the fact that hatred and cruelty had been elevated to the level of normality. Zorica, for example, a middle-aged NGO worker with a Croatian background who lived and worked in Beograd, found herself estranged from the very logic of nationalism. In the blistering heat of a Beograd Spring, she agreed to meet me for a chat about my work, and over lunch on a tree-shaded terrace, she warned me straight away that national identity didn't mean anything to her. She simply didn't understand it. For her, Zorica argued, there were just different people: good people and bad people, unconnected with nationality.

Similarly, the 1992 Beograd film *Geto*, by Mladen Matičević and Ivana Marka, a documentary testifying to the despair of the city's alternative art scene, echoes Zorica in one of its main lines of thought:

'This is Beograd. The city in which *they* live. And so do *we*. They have no dilemmas about what to do, but we are undecided. We don't know what to do.'

There were some strong differences between Serbia and Croatia in this respect. In

⁸ In later sections we shall see how anti-nationalist narratives often centre upon representations of loss and recovery of personhood, of the city, of 'Europe' and so on.

Croatia, the dominant discourses increasingly incorporated what were called 'generally accepted', 'European', or 'world standard' rules of behaviour. Through Croatian nationalism a concerted effort was made to construct the war as a founding moment and a clear break with 'Balkan' oppression: it was a liminal period after which a new Croatian identity was to be integrated within what was seen as accepted 'Western' codes, at least on the rhetorical level. In Serbia this was much less the case, and I found a pervasive sense of ongoing experiences of liminality, which was later reinforced by the Kosovo crisis and NATO air strikes (Jansen and Spasić 2000). It seemed that normality had been suspended for an indefinite period of time, and people often indicated that they didn't foresee an end anytime in the near future.

In this liminal state of affairs, I was often assured, *nothing* remained the same. Reality was ruled by different codes, and therefore it would be very difficult for someone who hadn't been there to understand anything about the war (see van de Port 1999). Both in Serbia and in Croatia, I was often reminded that retrospective judgement was impossible because the situation was out of touch with 'normal' ideas of right or wrong, of possible or impossible. This pervasive experience of liminality was a serious problem for post-Yugoslavs who worked towards a better understanding of the war and towards dialogue and peace. Their interventions were more often than not discarded; it was as if anything they could possibly refer to which was not part of war and nationalist rhetoric was always already boxed and labelled: N/A.

However, often even those who were involved in anti-nationalist activism referred to the suspension of normality when explaining certain issues regarding the war. This was illustrated sharply on the occasion where Jadranka, a girl who had lived abroad for twelve years, joined the Zagreb NGO dialogue project in which I also participated. Jadranka, highly educated and well travelled, was clearly from a privileged family background. Her parents had bought her a flat in Zagreb which we, as her colleagues in the NGO project, helped to decorate. Afterwards, covered in paint and dust from the furniture, the whole gang sat down and chatted over a couple of beers. Jadranka was keen to talk about issues of war and nationalism—in itself an unusual move, but not for a recent returnee. She spoke in very general terms, detached from the specific experience of war in Croatia. One of the men present had a Bosniac background and we discussed his troubles with the Croatian administration and its mechanisms of bureaucratic ethnic cleansing. Jadranka, wanting only the best for him, reproached him for being unassertive and crudely made clear that he should have stood up for his rights. In a context of increasing embarrassment due to our hostess' behaviour, our colleague Suzana, herself from a mixed family in the war zone, intervened. Even though visibly furious, she attempted to defuse the situation by telling Jadranka that assertivity and standing up for one's rights might have worked in a normal situation, but that at that time nothing had been normal anymore. Tactfully she reminded Jadranka that she had left the country long ago. During the war everything was crazy, Suzana said, and previous codes of normality did not count anymore. One simply had to live with madness as if it were normal.

Importantly, Turner's analysis of the ritual process highlights the liminal experience of 'communitas', of 'intense comradeship and egalitarianism' (1969:81). In the post-Yugoslav context, life during wartime was certainly not a complete suspension of hierarchical rank and status, but there was a sense of chaos and people found it hard to make sense of anything at all. Turner's insights on communitas shed light on this situation in many ways, both with regard to nationalist and anti-nationalist practice. The dominant discourses represented post-Yugoslav nations as discrete collectivities of equals united by pervasive solidarity, but also by submissiveness and silence (Turner 1969:89). However, this was only partly reflected in everyday lives, and often even overturned as soon as the national Others were out of the picture. During my fieldwork in Serbia, for example, some people laughingly apologised for subjecting me to a never-ending series of stories about life during wartime, especially 'inflation stories', characterised by underdog solidarity, sarcastic humour and jokes about the Serbian

regime itself (see Jansen 2000a). The latter phenomenon was also prominent in wider post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist narratives of life during wartime, which centred upon memories of small-group feelings of *communitas*. This was illustrated in the stories of many NGO-activists, who recalled isolation and confusion but also solidarity amongst their immediate colleagues and friends, stories complemented by memories of surreal parties and self-deprecating humour.

Because of its marginal status in the post-Yugoslav context, anti-nationalist discursive practice itself was to a certain extent structured as a liminal engagement in liminal spaces. Myerhoff has pointed out that in these situations, people often construct contrasting discourses of moral superiority and structural inferiority (Myerhoff 1986:272). Such discourses frequently rely on a claim of validity and applicability to a wider context than the dominant discourse and, possibly, even to the whole of humanity (Turner 1969:98). In later sections I show how this was the case in post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discourses, conveying supranational ideas of feminism, urbanism, anti-fascism etc.

7. memory and continuity in anti-nationalist discursive strategies

We have seen how Croatian and Serbian nationalisms articulated their versions of the Yugoslav past through different degrees of official amnesia. That in itself was not a new phenomenon. Official Titoist representations of history were also based on a selective reading of previous events, which is why the (re)construction of certain WWII memories played an important part in the nationalist upsurge that led to their demise. However, the deployment of memory as a strategy of resistance was also incorporated into anti-nationalist discursive practices of subverting the post-Yugoslav amnesia.

In that way, memories informed both public discourses of anti-nationalism and alternative everyday life narratives. In the Bosnian town of Tuzla, for example, an anti-nationalist poster campaign remembered one of the most important holidays of the former Yugoslavia. The poster simply contained the date of Tito's birthday, known as the 'Day of Youth', and the words 'It is human to remember'. But also on a personal level, many people expressed their disgust at what they considered to be the overnight mass-conversion of large parts of the population to nationalism. For example, in the early 1990s, the successful actress Mira Furlan was subjected to a media witch-hunt, relying on a vicious combination of nationalism and sexism. She left Croatia and talked about her experiences in an interview with a dissident Croatian newspaper. She deserves quoting at length:

'It is amazing to see how people forget with indescribable speed. Memories are being erased and nothing is important anymore. Who did what, who said what, who wrote what, it all becomes completely irrelevant. Everything will in the end be levelled, nobody will remember anything'

[...]

As for me, I had to choose between a range of possibilities that were all equally unacceptable to me, that were completely out of touch with my life and my thinking. I had no real choice [...] In fact, I have in the end decided to remain myself.

[...]

And now, the people who haven't calculated in this war, those who didn't try to please the new regimes, those who are the last ones to stay themselves for themselves, precisely those people are proclaimed whores and betrayers, and others are patriots and heroes.'

(*Feral Tribune* 14/12/98:4-7)

This quote illustrates how the notion of large numbers of people turning their coats so drastically and so easily constituted an important counterpoint for representations of

self⁹. Another example can be found in the words of singer-songwriter Đorđe Balašević, a prominent critic of the nationalisms that made an end of Yugoslavia:

'You can be beaten in the elections, you can lose out in a lot of things... [...] but there will always remain normal people.'
(*Globus* 15/01/93:21)

In most anti-nationalist narratives, people would stress that *they* stayed the same despite changes in the context and the people around them, thereby emphasising continuity in their personal stories. This was made clear in the following extract from an interview with a prominent Beograd-based dissident intellectual. We first attended a book launch in one of Beograd's more fashionable theatres, and then moved on to a terrace nearby, where we spoke for several hours.

Stef: 'You mentioned earlier that you have a lot of contact with people in other republics. How did that evolve? Did it ever pose a problem?'

Slavko: 'It never really was a problem. From the very beginning I have been very critical of what was going on here. I have publicly spoken up against it, I have written about it, here, in other republics, and abroad. I think that was important. My friends and the people I know there saw that I spoke up against it. We are experiencing very dark times. But even in those times there are moral patterns, principles,... So in that way, my friends in other republics knew ... I haven't changed. Many people have changed, for many different reasons. But I don't think that I have changed. Of course it has been hard sometimes. I lost my job, I was unemployed for two years, I have a family... But I did not get any bombs on my head like my friends in Croatia or in Bosnia, so ... In times like these, it becomes clear who is who. Some people who seemed cowards turned out to be courageous, and some people who seemed courageous turned out to be cowards.'

This strategy of narrative continuity on the personal level was often reinforced by an attempted assertion of everyday life normality as a way of coping with the suspension of normality on the public level. Time routines, hobbies, work habits as well as a more general disbelief in the surrounding events could serve as such strategies. In Serbia, especially, this resulted in widespread scepticism about anything public ('all lies') and often plain withdrawal. In a climate of extreme media manipulation, many people prided themselves on never reading newspapers or watching TV news reports. Often, as a result of disorientation and war-tiredness this attitude translated itself into apathy, as illustrated in this typical e-mail extract from Mira, a Montenegrin lawyer whom I'd met on a human rights course in Beograd:

Stef: 'What's going on in the Montenegrin elections?'

Mira: 'It's a beautiful day today. Let's not spoil it by talking about that shit.'

This withdrawal, then, allows for certain highly individual strategies of mental survival, based on narrative continuity. In the previously mentioned documentary *Geto*, the protagonist-cum-narrator's very last line is:

'The only wish I still have is to keep my soul in this madness.'

At this point, I would like to point out a paradox of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism. One could wonder why, unlike in many lines of dissent within alternative or, dare I say, progressive politics elsewhere, we don't find the same predominance of discourses of change and renewal here. Of course, on the level of societal discourses, post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism did argue very explicitly for change and a 'fresh start', but throughout this study it is clear that on the individual level they played a smaller role. In post-

⁹ More examples, including many from Beograd, will be given in the Chapter Ten.

Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practice, I argue, narratives of self focused on the opposite pole of continuity. A variety of reasons existed for this, but I believe that, again, it was mainly a consequence of anti-nationalism's reactive nature, i.e. the fact that it was conditioned strongly by its counterpoint and its *raison d'être*: Serbian and Croatian nationalism. While asserting continuity on a grand level of history, these dominant nationalisms relied strongly on the above-mentioned narrative break with regard to everyday life—to the extent that they almost colonised the discursive material concerning change. Dissident discursive practice, then, often focused on its opposite, continuity, so that mundane memories of personal experience and everyday practices of all sorts became crucial instruments of resistance¹⁰.

¹⁰ This will be discussed in detail when addressing the notion of *Jugonostalgija*.

[chapter six]
national identity before and after:
anti-nationalist everyday perspectives

Bosnia, 1980s. The census man comes knocking on the door of a Gypsy man. 'What nationality are you, comrade?' he asks. 'I'm a Gypsy', says the man. 'I see,' probes the official, 'But what sort of a Gypsy? A Serbian Gypsy? A Muslim Gypsy? Or a Croatian Gypsy?' 'Hey', the man retorts angrily 'I am not *that* much of a Gypsy!'

At this point in the text I want to step back, look at the work done so far and ask myself: why does this study seem so preoccupied with changes? Changes in themselves are a completely normal and banal part of social reality, and if all I end up saying is that they had a more extreme character in my fieldwork setting than in many other places, that seems a thin argument. In this chapter, I ethnographically explore one crucial aspect of post-Yugoslav dynamics: recent everyday life changes with regard to national identification.

Much has been written about national identities in Yugoslavia, but even most critical observers who have focused on their constructedness either assumed that they were always an issue already, or conversely, argued that national identities were virtually absent from Yugoslav everyday life. I find both approaches problematic for they seem to share an implicit focus on the fixity of national identification—the debate revolves around the question whether or not national identities *existed* before. Even in the recent ethnographic work that has been done in the region (Čale-Feldman et al. 1993; Jambrešić-Kirin & Povzanović 1996; Povzanović 1997), what seems to be missing is an answer to two crucial questions. First, what was the *relative* importance of nationality in relation to a whole series of other distinctions in the former state? And, secondly, how did national identities *become* so important that people went to war for them? Far from claiming to provide definite answers to these questions, I hope to add to the debate a focus on the changing significance attached to issues of national identification on an everyday level. The specific case of anti-nationalist discursive practice sheds a critical light on this question, as does the timing of the research: the fieldwork was not carried out during Yugoslavia's disintegration, but in the relatively peaceful years of 1997 (Serbia) and 1998 (Croatia). We are talking about retrospective narratives here.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the anti-nationalist narratives I engaged with in my fieldwork (re)constructed the changing significance of national identification on a mundane level. First, working back from individual narratives and locating them within large-scale developments, I explain how the issue of national identity *became an issue* in the everyday lives of the people in question. Secondly, I demonstrate how these narratives are related to representations of life in the former state, both locally and abroad. Thirdly, I present some detailed examples of the minute ways in which national identity became an issue in some of the most intimate spheres of life, and I analyse some mundane anti-nationalist strategies of coping and resistance. Finally, the ethnographic material feeds into the beginning of a critique of citizenship and political subjectivity under the former regime.

1. situating a story: some peculiarities of nationality before and after

The extent to which issues of nationality came to dominate large parts of everyday life was made strikingly clear to me in a long conversation between Suzana and Gordana, two old schoolmates. Again, the terror of blood-group-thinking enters the story here: it's

important to know that Suzana had a mixed Serbian-Croatian background and Gordana was ethnically a Serb. This is my report of that conversation:

We met by coincidence in Zagreb station, waiting for a train—not just any train, but one of the first post-war trains to Beograd. Suzana and Gordana had grown up in the same town in a heavily mixed area in Southern Croatia but they hadn't seen each other in 12 years.

Both of them had moved to Zagreb long ago for reasons of study, while their parents were forced to leave their hometown in 1991. At that time, local Serbian civilians were being terrorised by radical Croatian militias led by a returned émigré, while the opposite was taking place in some surrounding villages. Only Suzana's mother, a woman with a complex national background who identified as a Croat, stayed on and kept her job, even during the ensuing war when the town was under fire from heavy Serbian artillery.

Gordana broke off her studies and tried her luck in Germany, but she had recently decided to come back to Zagreb. However, without a degree, being a Serb, she saw no future there. She had few friends, no prospects, and she wanted to leave—anywhere in the West would do.

Here I was, sitting in a train compartment with two women from the same town. They spent their entire youth there. Now, for eight years, they had hardly been there at all and if they did go, it was reluctantly: Gordana went to pick up some official documents, and Suzana sometimes visited her mom. As the train crossed Slavonia and we were moving slowly between the two centres where the post-Yugoslav wars were co-ordinated, the two women talked—as old schoolmates do—about schoolteachers and friends, about fun at school, and about subjects they liked or hated. They moved on to who got married and who got a good job. As it goes.

On the surface, it could have been a conversation between any ex-classmates in the world on any train. Only it was not. Below the gently flowing small talk there was an undercurrent of surrealism. Their town had been heavily destroyed during the war, and furthermore, it had changed dramatically in their minds as well—it had become a powerful icon of the terror of war and nationalist violence. For every common friend or acquaintance they mentioned, there were a number of open questions; sometimes they explicitly asked them, and sometimes they left them hanging in the air, casting their shadow over their childhood memories. Who lived, who died? Who killed? Who left and who stayed behind? Of those who left, who left for Zagreb and who left for Beograd? Who returned and who didn't? As the conversation followed its course, I realised that every single one of these questions was intimately tied up with the nationality of the people in question—which left the two women sometimes wondering if some person was a Serb or a Croat. In most cases they knew, but, in the town of their memories, it was an issue of minor importance for schoolgirls.

Let us locate this extract within the wider post-Yugoslav developments. We have seen how both Serbia and Croatia, each in its own way, experienced a dramatic discursive shift to nationalist representations of identity. For the nationalisms of the 1990s this represented a change only on the *public* level—according to them, in the private sphere national identities had been of enduring importance under the Titoist regime. Post-Yugoslav nationalisms explained this with contradictory reference to primordial glorification and to national victimisation. On the one hand, they argued that the Yugoslav regime attempted to suppress the development of national identities, but that it failed because those national identities were simply primordial and indelible. On the other hand, although suppressed, it was argued that nationality was still the basis for discrimination in and by the former state. In this way, post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses centred upon opposing national claims of privilege and disadvantage in Yugoslavia—ultimately, even Yugoslav communism itself was blamed upon national Others by both Serbian and Croatian nationalists. In other words, the official nationalist versions of the Yugoslav past claimed that national identities had always been important, but that 'ours' had been temporarily suppressed by national Others. When in the late 1980s nationalist leaders articulated exclusionary political discourses built around the concept of nationality, large parts of the respective populations welcomed this discursive shift in identification. They deplored the alleged discrimination

against their nation in the former state, representing the situation *before* as ruthless oppression of their identity by communists (who were depicted as national Others, or at least as controlled by national Others). Reference to this oppression was often embedded in a wider claim, not uncommon in other postcommunist states, that their nation suffered from an underdeveloped national consciousness. I was told many times that, before, most people sadly didn't know anything about their national culture and history. 'With the end of Yugoslavia', it was often argued, 'we were finally free to find out about our roots'. The importance of doing this was repeated over and over again by 'nationally conscious' people in both Croatia and Serbia, and it often functioned within a mosaic representation of the world as a 'family of nations' (compare Malkki 1994). For example, on our visit to a music festival in Central Serbia, Beograd musician Katarina argued that all people should be more interested in their traditions in order to understand themselves. She considered the global diversity in 'roots' something to celebrate. Even five hundred years of Turkish rule and fifty years of communism, she said, had not erased Serbian traditions! Very much a product of 1980s rock subculture, Katarina had only recently become fascinated by 'traditional' Serbian music, and she had since become a well-known figure on the Beograd 'ethno-music' scene. By singing her 'own' songs, she felt she created a visceral link between herself and the place she was from, the place that created her.

Interestingly, Katarina saw this attitude as an expression of *cosmopolitanism*. Through her engagement in the global 'world music' scene, she had compiled a large record collection as well as a wide network of contacts and a whole reservoir of knowledge about different musical traditions spanning all continents. In fact she was the only singer in South East Europe who commanded the art of diphonic singing—a technique that had originated in far-away, Central Asian Tuva. Katarina often juxtaposed her approach to my views, arguing that one can only respect and love other traditions if one knows one's own roots. I know where I come from, Katarina argued, and therefore I know who I am. This point about true cosmopolitanism was a real storyline, which figured even in extreme nationalist narratives. On an everyday level, many, like Katarina, explicitly made time to re-educate themselves and learn about their own national culture without thereby necessarily developing negative attitudes towards others.

2. understanding evocations of nationalist discourse

2.1. belief, tradition and trauma

This spiritual hunger for 'national tradition' is one of the key factors in the massive popularity growth of the church in the post-Yugoslav states. Despite great differences in recent and distant history, the boost in the appeal of the church, particularly amongst young people, seemed to go hand in hand with a clearly secular lifestyle, both in largely Catholic Croatia and in largely (Serbian) Orthodox Serbia. The case of Đorđe and Milica, a Beograd couple in their late twenties who were heavily into youth subculture, illustrated this. In a smoky room, with the British cult band *Joy Division*, who could hardly be accused of religious conservatism, on the turntable and a pile of empty bottles on the floor, they subjected me to a speech on the unique role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in preserving and uniting the Serbian nation under Turkish and Communist brutality. Allegedly, Tito had wanted to destroy everything Serbian, and 'the Turk' had had only one goal: to make the Serbs into Turks. Thanks only to the church, they argued, Beograd had not become a Turkish city where women have to wear veils like in Istanbul.

Of course Đorđe and Milica had never been to Istanbul and despite their present clerical fervour, they could not boast a long history of religious allegiance. Like so many

other young people, they had only turned to the church very recently¹. A certain pattern emerged: young people, whose parents were atheists and whose knowledge of the bible and of doctrine was minimal, embedded their frequent references to the church systematically in a national, not religious discourse. Interestingly, this sometimes brought them closer to their grandparents, who had memories of pre-communist times. This was also the case with twenty-seven year old Jovan, my language teacher's partner, who kept a watchful eye on me during the classes I took in their flat in a Beograd suburb. Jovan was an unemployed *Beogradanin* with no apparent political or religious interests. Once, when I sat back over coffee after an exhausting series of declensions, he told me out of the blue that he'd been baptised the day before. Startled, I asked him why. He stated that he reckoned it had been time for it. Not the one to take this for an explanation, I stared at him in wonderment. Jovan then argued that the Serbs had been under communism for a long time, and that they had neglected and eventually lost many traditions. In this way, he located his baptism in a desire to preserve Serbian culture.

Across the border there existed a similar belief that the (Catholic) church had been historically crucial in preserving cultural continuity in the face of anti-Croatian oppression. An example was provided in a speech by president Tuđman at a ceremony with high state officials, the archbishop and other top figures of the Catholic church. Rather than addressing strictly religious affairs, the president emphasised the role of the church in the historical survival of the Croatian nation, adding, in a speech some days later before military officials, that the church had a responsibility with regard to the morale of the Army (see *Novi List* 01/10/97:2-3; 03/10/97:20-21). Such clericalism was matched by both church hierarchies, who collapsed the national and the religious² in their drive towards discursively closing the equations Serb/Orthodox and Croat/Catholic. In both Serbia and Croatia, these articulations of nationhood and religion were widely reproduced through storylines.

Very much in tandem with these evocations of religious worth, the sudden freedom of expression of the late 1980s saw an upsurge of attention to WWII trauma, both in public discourse and in the private sphere. I have mentioned above that I feel uneasy with certain accounts of this period because, while critical, they sometimes unwittingly verge on essentialising, retrospective ratifications of trauma (Hayden 1994; Denich 1994; see Jansen 2000b). The role of WWII trauma in the post-Yugoslav context was just as complex as that war itself, as exemplified in a discussion amongst my two flatmates in Beograd. A couple of around thirty, Vesna hailed from Central Serbia and Goran from the Northern province of Vojvodina. Both with Serbian national backgrounds, one set of Goran's grandparents had come from Bosnia after WWII. In one of our many nightly discussions over coffee and cigarettes, Vesna emphasised the role played by memories of WWII massacres in the Krajina secession. Such traumas, she argued, provided political manipulators with a particularly explosive reservoir of Serbian readiness to go to war. Goran did not agree. By way of example, he said that

¹ This did not stop them from responding to my amazement by referring to a deeply ingrained cultural otherness: I could never understand because I didn't know their history, and, more importantly, I hadn't *lived* it (see also van de Port 1999).

² The Serbian Orthodox Church rarely if ever addresses 'believers', but almost always 'the Serbian people'. Examples of the ultra-nationalist positions of the Orthodox hierarchy include the issuing of the 1997 *Declaration against Genocide on the Serbian people* and, in the same year, the blessing of the *Declaration demanding that the Hague Tribunal criminal charges brought against Dr. Radovan Karadžić, President of Republika Sprska be repealed*, because of, amongst other things, 'his exceptional contribution to the peace process'. Many Serbs would feel rather uneasy with the assertion that the charges against the Bosnian Serb leader were charges 'against the whole Serbian people'. For more discussion of the articulation of the national-religious, see for instance Radić 1996; Ramet 1995b, 1996a; and the regular contributions of Mirko Đorđević to the Beograd weekly *Republika*. For detailed discussions of the Catholic church and Croatian nationalism, see for example Buden 1996; Kristo 1995; and the articles of Luka Vincetić (†) in the Split weekly *Feral Tribune*.

his own great-granddad had actually been killed by the Ustaše but that, for him, this had nothing to do with the Croats of today.

In this case I hadn't actually brought up the issue, but my presence did often provide an opportunity for people to address certain questions related to the recent wars and their historical background. A similar tension to the one above had been present in the story of Marina, a human rights activist, with whom I talked at the very beginning of my stay in Beograd. She invited me to the office of her organisation, where she was on duty with a legal helpline, so that our conversation was repeatedly interrupted by her advising people on all kinds of problems to do with citizenship, refugee status, discrimination and so on. Marina told me that her father's family had suffered heavily under the Ustaše, but that this had never affected his dealings with Croats in any particular way. She had been brought up as a Yugoslav and laughingly admitted to still feeling like one. It was only recently, she said, that her father had started to talk in negative and generalising terms about Croats.

Obviously, religion and WWII trauma were only two of many issues at stake in the rise of the post-Yugoslav nationalisms, although I would argue they were central ones. But rather than going into this further, I now turn to the question of intensity of the attitudes in question.

2.2. storylines: how deep is your love?

The conceptual framework developed by Laclau and Mouffe is instructive again (1985). At some points in Yugoslav history, but only explicitly and successfully so in the late 1980s, nationalist leaders articulated 'national identity' into a crucial *moment* of a political discourse of opposition. Of course, as I have argued in Chapter Four, we must understand that 'national identity' was differentially articulated into a moment of the Titoist discourse as well, an articulation deeply contradictory on at least two levels. First, whereas (perceived) political assertions of nationalism were strongly suppressed, to a large extent, the republican elites of the communist party still constructed national power bases themselves. Second, although nationalism was taboo, Yugoslav legitimacy was based upon a celebration of the co-existence of discrete cultures—a 'family of nations'. These contradictions were made possible through the privatisation of explicit assertions of national identity. They were contained in the private sphere and in the realm of folklore and encyclopaedic ethnology.

Apart from during some specific periods under the former regime, it was only in the late 1980s that exclusive and politicised nationalism took centre stage. As Godina argues, this did not imply the construction of entirely new identities, but rather a reorganisation within a matrix of identification (1998:410). The Yugoslav regime relied on nationalism as an internal enemy and dealt with it accordingly. However, despite recent allegations, its concept of Yugoslav identity was never intended to exclude national identification, and those two levels were not in conflict for the majority of the population (1998:416). In the late 1980s, a drastic reshuffling of the discursive landscape destabilised the position of Yugoslavness and radically enhanced the impact of national identities in all spheres of life³.

As an illustration, let me refer to Sabina, a young woman who did administrative work in the Beograd refugee organisation where I occasionally did translations. During our coffee breaks Sabina often reminisced about the past, emphasising that she had never really made decisions in national terms before. She was a Serb who had remained in Knin during the war and, as such, had seen her plans for university education changed. Rather than studying in Split, Zagreb (Croatia) or Sarajevo (Bosnia) as

³ In contrast to this Habermasian picture of systemic colonisation of the lifeworld (Habermas 1984), one could follow Bauman's argument that the private actually colonised the public (Bauman 2000). Applied to the post-Yugoslav case, one could argue that a private issue such as one's ancestry and, particularly, the national background of one's parents had come to dominate the political. I would argue that these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive.

anticipated, Sabina ended up at a Serbian institution, far away from her hometown. In 1995, she fled to Beograd.

We have seen how, for many post-Yugoslavs, one of the primary ways of relating to the new dominant discourses of identity was through a wide variety of storylines. This allowed them to evoke the power of nationalist discourses and reposition themselves. I am aware that I am moving onto slippery ice now, but I would like to add a critical twist to the story for I believe that this important role of storylines could indicate the relative shallowness of the roots of post-Yugoslav political assertions of nationalism amongst the wider population. Yes, I did come across an overwhelmingly widespread commitment to ardent nationalism, often through storyline evocations of the power of nationalist discourse (for example, 'every Serb would die for Kosovo!' or 'in Yugoslavia, we Croats were always second-class citizens!'). And, of course, this was often embedded in an unquestioned framework of historical continuity both on the national and on the personal level ('Deep down, I've always been like that, only I couldn't show it in public, because I'd go to jail'). But, despite these performative narratives, it was never clear to me how *deep* these beliefs were or to what extent they were rooted in the current context rather than in previous experience⁴. During an interview in his flat, a Beograd academic explained things as follows:

'My cleaning lady is a Kosovo Serb. She sort of thinks I am an important person because I have money to pay for a cleaning lady. She regularly moans in general terms about *Šiptari* [abusive term for Albanians, *sj*]. But when I ask her how it was to live with Albanians in Kosovo, she says: "Oh, but the Albanians in my neighbourhood were lovely people, I got along better with them than with the Serbs". So you see, her moaning seems to be a strategy, used by many people, to deal with persons who they perceive as powerful or important. They say certain things because that's what you say.'

We can conclude that opinions could be very shallow. Sometimes I even knew that the very same person who now preached national revival had proclaimed him/herself a committed Yugoslav communist less than 10 years before. While I would argue that this was often the result of blatant opportunism, I think it could sometimes be an unlikely, but possible, combination over time of two cases of intense, deep commitment. Maybe some nationalist 'beliefs' were really overwhelmingly deep, while at the same time historically shallow to the point of having been brought about, for example, by recent media manipulation.

How else can we understand some of the electoral results and public opinion polls in the area? For example, in a 1996 large-scale survey on Bosnian attitudes towards the possibility of post-war co-existence with other nationals in one state, people had a choice between two answers: 'yes, we can live together in peace again' or 'no, we can't live together in peace again because the war has done too much damage' (Žunec 1997:32). The results were stunning in their simplicity: almost 90% of Bosnian Serbs and Croats answered negatively, whereas 80% of Bosniacs chose the positive answer. Many reasons could be posited for this systematic national division, but I refuse to believe that Bosniacs are somehow 'naturally' more prone towards multiculturalism than others. Moreover, let's not forget that they were the weakest side in the Bosnian war and arguably suffered the greatest 'damage'. A more important key, I believe, lies in the discourses of the three main (nationalist) political parties: the Serbian SDS and the Croatian HDZ, at that time enjoying an overwhelming majority of support amongst their nationals, were openly anti-Dayton and systematically argued that co-existence was unthinkable because of the scale of the wounds of war; the SDA, mainly representing itself as the protector of Bosniac interests, always relied on a rhetoric which supported a unitary, undivided Bosnia.

One could, of course, argue that the three main nationalist Bosnian parties were truly democratic in that they represented the public mood perfectly. An alternative

⁴ See Čolović (1994b:61) for other examples.

explanation of the poll results sees them as a reflection of the popular urge to evoke the power of the dominant discourses of these nationalist parties. This would also shed a critical light on the widespread use of storylines from the nationalist discourses in Serbia and Croatia. National issues had come to dominate the public scene to such an extent that most people, *when asked about it*, simply resorted to the 'default' practice: reformulating storylines which evoked a dominant discourse.

3. nationalism and the struggle against ambivalence

Despite the overwhelming dominance of nationalist discourses in the public sphere and their increasing significance in the private realm, the closure (or *suture*) desired by the new regimes did not come about. In a very general sense, these attempts were often swamped by confusion and disorientation, as illustrated during a meeting of refugee organisations in a small town north of Beograd. We sat around a large table in a dilapidated school building, surrounded, ironically, by old maps of Yugoslavia. Suddenly, Peki, an elderly refugee, said that he had had enough of having to declare himself on official and unofficial forms. He threw his arms up in the air, moved back his chair and sighed that he didn't know anymore to which category he belonged: was he in Serbia, or in Republika Srpska, or in Bosnia, or in Yugoslavia or in this new Yugoslavia?

The struggle against ambivalence, so prominent in nationalist programs (Bauman 1991; 1992a), was therefore never completely successful. In an interview on a Beograd terrace, the writer Slavko argued:

Slavko: 'It's ironic in a way, Slavenka Drakulić writes somewhere that all her life she has been trying to be a citizen and in the end she finds herself to be a Croat. That is true for a lot of us. We all worked on being citizens, and now there are only Croats and Serbs and so on. But there are many people who feel they don't fit in that system. At the census for instance a lot of people declared as Eskimos or as Chinese. Really a lot. They don't accept it.'

Stef: 'What did you write?'

Slavko: 'I wrote "Jew". It was my way to escape... It doesn't mean much either. Because, of course, I am a Yugoslav Serb, I am not a citizen of Israel, I don't have double nationality. So what does it mean to write that I am a Jew? It is just a form of protest against manipulation. Okay, I am a Jew in the diaspora, but it means nothing really. I don't speak Hebrew; I grew up here; my wife is Serbian... My children don't know what they are and they don't care at all. We have to learn that. It is not so important. Being a citizen of Serbia is enough said. It doesn't mean anything about being good or bad. If you really want to talk about what my identity is, you would have to take into account many more things: I am born here, I am a writer, I am a professor, I am a member of this and this organisation, I am a Serb and a Jew at the same time, and so on... all this together, and many more things, for instance that I am a social democrat, that is also a part of me, all these things make up my identity, my personality, my view of the world.'

This extract highlights an important aspect of anti-nationalist narratives. In many cases people did not necessarily opt for an *a-national* identification, aiming to do away with national identity. Rather, many of them argued for a more fluid, ambiguous sense of national belonging. Some people who identified in national terms beforehand felt increasingly disenfranchised by what they perceived as something that had become an oppressive, uneasy and shameful straightjacket. When I met up with my friend Tanja, a Beograd academic, in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, we went for coffee in a bar called *Nostalgija*. Talking about the beginning of Milošević's reign, she told me that her initial reaction had been to say: 'Those primitives are not Serbs, I am a Serb.' Tanja had always thought of herself as a Serbian Yugoslav but, with the war, she did not want that Serbian identity to be part of her anymore. This had been a painful process. Now, she argued, she was not a Serb anymore.

In the late 1990, the kind of national identification in alternative terms that Tanja had previously subscribed to was more prevalent in Croatian anti-nationalism. In Zagreb, more so than in Beograd, it was considered a feasible option to identify as a national without being tainted by nationalism. One reason for this difference was the fact that, whereas Beograd anti-nationalist narratives considered a Yugoslav sense of belonging as an alternative to nationalism, this was less common in Zagreb. Yugoslav identification existed amongst Croatian dissidents, but many of them simply saw it as another, compatible level of identification. For example, Silvija, a Zagreb historian in her thirties, did feel a sense of belonging to the former country, but she always thought of herself as 'a Croat in Yugoslavia'. She had agreed to be interviewed by me on the condition of anonymity, because she didn't want any trouble at the institute where she worked—in fact, she had recently seen her research subject changed dramatically to a topic of higher national(ist) urgency as part of a top-down restructuration of the institute's program. Silvija enjoyed chatting over coffee in a café near her workplace, but she repeatedly expressed her doubts on it being of any interest to my work. She warned me that, for her, national identity had always been a private matter and that she had never had the need nor the will to shout it out in public. How could it be suppressed as they all said, she wondered, if it was just a private thing?

The assertion that nationality was something private was omnipresent in anti-nationalist narratives in Beograd as well. On the benches of the theatre where she worked, I had a long interview with Dubravka, a middle-aged artist who was very active in the domain of cultural politics. Hardly allowing me time for any questions, she talked for two hours.

'We considered that to be a completely private issue. Not one hair on my head would think about who was of which religion or nationality, and which colleague or friend was what. There has never been such a feeling. Probably, there were people for whom it was important, you understand, but more as a question of a political system... [...] And then you got a political system, which as part of its program took that question. [...] Social arrangements and state systems determine in some way a more global disposition. That means, for instance, that before, in Bosnia, when a neighbour stole your cow, then that was a bit inconvenient ... But now you give people the possibility to see the disappearance of a cow as a case of national repression—you say: he stole my cow because he is *Musliman*.'

Many people now narrated the past in terms that matched the contradictions of the Yugoslav regime discourse on nationality and argued that it had always belonged to the private sphere. However, this could imply very different interpretations. In cases like Dubravka's, the importance of nationality was downplayed by its irrelevance to anything other than the private, and it was asserted that this was the way in which it was actually experienced. In nationalist narratives, however, people resented the containment of *their* (and not the Other) national identity in the private sphere, as imposed by state oppression (organised by that Other). In both cases, the *political* implications of the status of nationality under the former regime were narrated almost always in terms removed from everyday life. Even nationalist narratives rarely included actual stories of national discrimination on the small-scale level; stories of oppression were almost always told in terms of the public sphere of politics.

It is not surprising then that some anti-nationalist narratives explained their dissident, low profile forms of identification as contingent on current state policies. This transpired in a rather unusual confession, particularly to a relatively unknown person like myself, by Josip, a middle-aged accountant from Zagreb: 'I have never been much of a Croat. You know, it was Yugoslavia at the time...'. Hence, Josip recalled how his relation to notions of Croatian-ness in former times was not really an issue because, at that time, he lived in a state called Yugoslavia. The logic underlying this kind of statement led many anti-nationalist narratives to blame regime policies for the sudden rise of nationality to a position of importance in post-Yugoslav life. Zorica, a Beograd NGO

worker with a Croatian background, met me in a restaurant for lunch and, unsolicited, informed me that nationalism had really been orchestrated from above. First in Serbia and then, as a response, in Croatia, systematic and long-term propaganda campaigns had spread stereotypes and the idea that national identity was crucial.

Such a rather exclusive attribution of blame to 'politicians' was very common in both Beograd and Zagreb as well as in a wider post-Yugoslav discourse which pitted 'ordinary people' against 'the regimes' (Jansen 2000b). Although few observers would deny the role of manipulation, such discourse might also contain an element of strategic remembering and forgetting in anti-nationalist narratives. If 'little people' were simply victims of nationalist indoctrination, and if they had been more or less unaffected by nationalism before the end of Yugoslavia, then that implied that their current nationalist sentiments were not something primordial, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the present dominant discourses. In the chapter on *Jugonostalgija* I elaborate on these ideas and later in this chapter I go into some specific narrations of how nationalist campaigns impacted upon everyday lives, but for now it should be clear that the systematic simplifications of nationalist discourses were undermined and questioned by a myriad of contradictory stories on the everyday level. This was most certainly the case amongst individuals who were politically or otherwise active in the struggle against nationalism, but it was also present amongst a much wider circle of people, including supporters of the nationalist regimes.

4. narrations of nationality: how it became an issue

4.1. 'that went without saying': stories of elements not moments

In the previous paragraph, we saw a glimpse of how the role of national identity in Yugoslavia was constructed in alternative representations. A common thread running through them held that, *before*, national identity was a much less important issue on the everyday level. Certainly when compared to the current situation, it was often argued that it was simply *not* important. A small anthology from interviews with very different individuals:

'Before, it wasn't like this at all. Beograd was a very cosmopolitan city and people didn't care about nationality at all.'

(Sonja, a chic, thirty year old human rights activist, Beograd – in the office)

'It was never important for me to identify with a state. [...] And I don't feel the need to belong as a national—but when I have to, like, situate myself, I say: "I am a citizen of Croatia". Or "I am from Zagreb"—like, different things depending on the context.'

(Monika, a well-known middle-aged feminist intellectual, Zagreb – in the classroom)

'For me and for many other people of my generation, national identity wasn't important at all. When were students, for instance, nobody even knew, nor was it important, who was from where. [...] That was simply not a thing we were thinking about. Only when it had to do with the topic, somebody would maybe say something about it. But it was simply not important. Probably because we didn't feel it was under such a codification into a program, a political program.'

(Dubravka, a famous, alternative middle-aged artist, Beograd – in the theatre)

'To be honest, I really don't know how it was before for other people. In my family it really wasn't an issue. I only... I *think* that my mother declared as a Croat in the census, I think so... I never wrote anything at all. Not Yugoslav, not Croat. It was only in 1971, when I saw what nationalism in its aggressive form is – only then I learned that 'nation' existed. Before, I must admit, I wasn't aware of that. I was aware of some local belonging [...] and of other local identities, like I knew that *Dalmatinci* got on my nerves [*laughs*]... But

Croatia is so diverse, I mean ... I don't believe there is something like a Croatian identity. [...] So... anyway, we wrote things like Eskimo, or Gypsy or whatever. Just provocations.' (Vera, a fifty year old feminist activist and ex-journalist, Zagreb – in her flat)

'Before, national identity didn't play such an important role at all. There were always some people of course.... But mainly, people just got on with their lives. Maybe in some parts of Yugoslavia, yes, like in Krajina... Maybe there.' (Dražen, an ambitious, thirty year old journalist, Zagreb – in the bar)

Hence, many anti-nationalist narratives of the past were characterised by a pervasive sense of the previous *irrelevance* of nationality. Once, a young couple in Beograd, who had heard about my research through a relative, offered to talk to me because they thought I'd be interested in their quite unusual story. Tereza, a Croatian woman in her twenties, had followed her Serbian husband to Beograd during the war. I went over to their house, and after lunch and a long interview, Tereza sat back and sighed:

'So is that it then? Pfff, all these things about nationality, and about Serbs and Croats and all... Now is the first time I think about them. To be honest, really, never before did I know about them. I never even thought about it.'

It must be emphasised that I found an imbalance here between Beograd and Zagreb. In the former, people spoke a lot more about nationality not being an issue, whereas in the Croatian capital, people were much more likely to say that while national identity was simply a private issue for them, it was a more important factor to many others. I say 'people' because this distinction was between inhabitants of Zagreb and Beograd, *not* between Serbs and Croats.

Anyway, I was confronted with a massive paradox: here I was, in a region bloodily torn apart along lines which only some years ago, according to many individual narratives, were not even *issues*. Let us not ignore the problem inherent in these examples. If someone asserted that national identity was not important before, did this mean that it was not a factor in interaction? Or, did it mean that it was a factor which didn't play an important role? For the bulk of the Yugoslav population, I argue, the second interpretation carried most validity with regard to the mundane. Representations of Yugoslav society as a multicultural melting-pot in which people didn't even know each other's nationality were only marginally relevant with regard to the past—they tell us, however, a lot about the present (see section 5). From the individual narratives, it transpired that national identities were simply taken for granted on the everyday level, an often acknowledged, but not a vital, factor. So, even if language, looks, style and, in a secularising society, religion were not defining markers of national difference, people did usually know 'who was what'. They could know for a variety of reasons, such as one's name, one's parents' names or one's place of birth—although none of these criteria was ever entirely decisive. Still, people simply knew other people's nationality most of the time, particularly in smaller towns and villages.

Thus for many, national identity was *neither important nor unimportant* but was simply there, one out of many rather unproblematic parts of a mundane context. This representation relied on narratives of a Yugoslav past in which the person in question experienced national identity as an *element*, as a line of differentiation which was present but left largely unarticulated for discursive practice. Later in this chapter we shall see how its impact was contingent on the context in which it figured, explaining why the above assertions do not necessarily contradict accounts of how nationality did play a role in certain realms of everyday life. However, in anti-nationalist narratives its non-articulation was emphasised, and I think it is fair to say that *before* it was at least *less* articulated into a moment than it was *after*. In one interview, in the office of a Zagreb NGO, a middle-aged human rights activist expressed this as follows:

Stef: 'Before, was your identity as a Croat something important in your family or in your life in general?'

Vladimir: 'Bah... not really'

Lucija, his wife: [*shouts from the back of the room*] 'That was implicitly understood'⁵

Not surprisingly, many anti-nationalist narratives were constructed around this low intensity of feelings about national identity. We have seen already how nationalism and anti-nationalism were played out in terms of public and private spheres. This suggests that we are dealing here with different modes of narration: the way to address nationality issues was through a story on a collective-historical level, whereas playing them down was done through individual narratives of the recent past.

4.2. remembering your first time: narrating how nationality entered everyday life

Anti-nationalist discourse converged on a depiction of the last decade as one in which the rise of nationalism and the wars had changed everything dramatically for everybody. Many people rather suddenly discovered a long-buried sense of national pride and patriotism—national identity became a badge to wear in public, and it was imposed on virtually all spheres of society as a significant factor. Nela, a Zagreb journalist whom I met several times for long conversations in her office, argued that national identity had never been an important issue at all. She spoke with derision about the many who had recently become Great Croats, the ones who said: 'I am a Croat, so I should get this job, or that house'. Nela had no time for people who thought that their Croatness was the most important thing in the world.

Many narratives spoke of being taken by surprise, like Vesna, a young woman who always had a sense of belonging to the Serbian nation but still remembered with horror the first time she realised nationality had become something you had to take into account.

'My friend Staša was walking around in town with one of her friends, a guy from Croatia. The thing is that he was a Serb from Croatia, but, before, that didn't matter. You know, ... you would never ask something like that, like "Are you a Serb?". It didn't matter, it wasn't a relevant question to ask. He was from Croatia, so he spoke like they speak there and of course you couldn't see it. They met Bogdan, another friend of hers and they started talking. Staša told me that Bogdan was watching, and she knew what he was thinking. And, for the first time, ... and it was really terrible, ... this was suddenly important. She felt that she *had* to tell Bogdan that, although her friend was from Croatia—I mean, of course he could hear that anyway—that he was a Serb. That was the first time that you knew that it really began.'

The case of refugees is telling here, for they had to cope with drastic losses after leaving their homes precisely because of their nationality. Darko was the teenage son of a Yugoslav Army officer who had served in Zagreb until 1991. Then his family had exchanged that comfortable life for refuge in Beograd, where Darko went to school and was an active member of an anti-nationalist youth organisation. In a double-interview with him and his friend, Darko stated that his nationality hadn't meant anything to him. Nevertheless, he explained, it had *become* an issue:

'When the war started it was really horrible. But even before, it was... you know, we experienced some little provocations. Then... in class, in your diary, you know, you had to write down what nationality you were. You know... terrible. I wrote, really as a statement, "Serb". So imagine, the teacher turns round your diary and sees: "Aha, Serb!" It was horror, ... fucking hell. I think I was the only one who wrote down "Serb" ... I think. One girl whose name was Snežana [a typical Serbian name, *sj*], wrote that she was a Croat,

⁵ In Croatian: '*To se podrazumijevalo*'. Other ways to translate this include: 'that was taken for granted', or 'that went without saying'.

can you fucking believe it? I did it really on purpose... you know what, not out of some... not because I wanted to revolt because I was a Serb, but because it was really pointless to me. I mean why would I hide that... really pointless.'

A similar expression of disbelief came from Biljana, also a Zagreb Serb who had fled to Beograd. Biljana was a student and she was active in the youth section of a refugee organisation. We met up regularly, usually in the student hall of residence where she shared a room with two others. After a long saga of bureaucratic trouble, she had finally succeeded in sorting out some of her citizenship problems in Vukovar, Croatia. Nevertheless, she rang me up in a rage and told me that when asked to declare her nationality, she had of course written 'Serbian'. Then she had met an acquaintance, a Serbian refugee girl from Knin who had told her that she had written 'Croatian'. After having been forced to leave her beloved Zagreb, Biljana cried, after having her whole life changed because of that, after having lost everything, she met this girl who had written 'Croatian'. If only people in Knin would have thought about these things before, if only they had realised that it doesn't really matter what you write down... But now, after all that, *she* had ended up being the one who said 'Serbian', and the Knin girl had said 'Croatian'.

Biljana's despair didn't change the fact that, in almost no time, nationality had become a crucial factor in everyday life, whether people liked it or not. I would even argue that in the post-Yugoslav context, through the sheer obliteration of alternatives and through articulation with other differences, nationality had almost *eaten* the whole notion of identity. The meanings with which the post-Yugoslav nationalisms subsequently filled up these nationality labels were highly polarised—as we have witnessed on our TV screens for many years. But it also affected the personal development of those who worked against nationalism and the war. My flatmate Vesna, a feminist NGO activist, told me about her disgust with herself when she realised on some occasions that xenophobia had invaded her own mind as well. She recalled that, especially during the wars, she had been very angry and had felt hostility towards *anything* foreign. The whole situation, she told me, had made her think things she would never have thought before.

Nationalism had been extremely successful in evacuating the space of identification processes and colonising them with one-dimensional discursive practice. During my fieldwork, the question 'Šta je on/a?' ['What is s/he?'] referred almost always, and almost always exclusively, to nationality.

5. the golden age: reconstructing the irrelevance of nationality

5.1. stories of innocence

It is clear now that the pervasive recognition of national identity as *the* issue had unsettling effects, also for anti-nationalist discursive practice. Even unintentionally, for purely circumstantial reasons (as in this text), descriptions of a person very frequently included their nationality, but there would often be immediate apologies for mentioning this issue. I was often told that, regrettably, such things had become important in recent times. And it has to be said, in many cases obtaining information about somebody's nationality was really necessary to assess the situation regarding that person—sadly, this truly was often the only thing that made a difference. In some cases it even determined whether a person was alive at all; it was an important key to whether s/he was able to live at home or had to flee, and it greatly affected his/her chances of getting or keeping a job.

One frequent way to deal with this contradiction in anti-nationalist discursive practice, that is to say with the unease and slight embarrassment at the frequent mentioning of nationality, was to tell soothing anecdotes illustrating the irrelevance of national identity

before. Take, for example, the stories told (independently of each other) by Biljana and Darko, the two young people with a Serbian background who grew up in 'Yugoslav' families in the Croatian capital. Both had fled Zagreb with their families and now lived in Beograd, where they experienced not only the general deterioration but also the stigma of being a refugee. When she was little, Biljana told me, she simply didn't know about nationality. She remembered the first time her brother and she had been asked what nationality they were, and the confusion they had felt, not understanding what was meant. Her brother had answered that he was 'male' ['*muški*'], but Biljana had immediately corrected him and said: 'No, stupid, we are Croats!' Darko had a similar story:

'We were completely, you know, my brother and me, we really didn't have a clue what nationality we were. For instance, in the second year of secondary school, they asked my brother what nationality he was. And he really didn't have a clue, you know, he just said... "Well, I think I am a Croat, because my parents are from Croatia", you know. And they asked me as well, in the sixth year of primary school. A schoolfriend asked me what nationality I was, and I said... "Well, I don't know...", and then I first said "Yugoslav", and then, because I was born in Bosnia, "maybe I am a Muslim [*musliman*]". (...) So I wanted to find out, and asked my parents, and they told us that we are Serbs. I was very surprised. How could I be a Serb if my parents were from Croatia... So it didn't mean anything to us.'

Such stories of innocence, of some golden age before nationalism—almost in the biblical sense of 'before the fall'—were frequent and very similar to each other. They were usually told in a bittersweet way which seemed to offer a moment of light relief. People with urban Bosnian backgrounds were particularly keen on such narratives (see for example Lesić 1995), as illustrated by Veljko's case. Veljko was a Beograd academic with an outspoken, public anti-nationalist profile. In a long interview in his office, he told me:

'I grew up in Sarajevo. That was an outspoken, multicultural milieu. I mean ... never, between us, my generation, my friends, *never* have we had any national or other divisions. I always identified as a Yugoslav, and I'll tell you how that came about. At school, next to me in the school desk, sat my dear friend with whom I shared a desk for years, not just a class, but a desk [...] a *Musliman*. And then there was some census or something, and our teacher, a wonderful woman, asked us, "Right, children, who is a Serb?". And I stood up, but next to me, my friend, who is a *Musliman*, also stood up. Eh, when she asked "Who is *Musliman*", he stood up and I stood up as well, because we were completely identical. Between us there were no differences at all. And now, if you think it was just us who were in such good relations to each other in our class, ... our dear teacher, when she counted in the end how many of us there were of every nationality, it turned out that in a class of 30 pupils, there were actually 52 pupils. And she grabbed her head because we messed up her statistics...'

The frequency of these anecdotes within anti-nationalist narratives and the delight with which they were told posed a sharp contrast to the general post-Yugoslav environment. Their emphasis on the light-hearted and ultimately irrelevant character of nationality in Yugoslavia shed a critical light on the surrounding obsession with national identities. However, quite often I felt that these stories were slightly exaggerated and that they served as oppositional statements about the present context rather than as realistic descriptions of a past that had gone for good. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter Ten. Here, I take up another dimension of the anecdotes. Apart from voicing a critique of the current situation, I felt that many of these idealised stories were designed to dispel what post-Yugoslavs involved in anti-nationalism quite correctly saw as a common Western misconception about their plight. On numerous occasions I was informed about these two interrelated issues. First, I was told that the recent bloodshed could not possibly be explained as century-old hatreds or 'Balkan' national obsessions.

Secondly, I was informed that Yugoslavia had had a communist regime, but not quite so communist that the war could be explained with reference to crude suppression of national identities by Tito.

5.2. implications for the foreign gaze

There seem to be good reasons for the anti-nationalist rejection of depictions of Yugoslavia as a land of age-old tribal hatreds and of claims that it was a mismatch of national communities oppressed by Stalinist internationalism. However, I would argue that the anti-nationalist narrative strategy of representing the former state in terms approaching a humanist-leftist, multicultural paradise also had dubious effects on foreign observations. The ensuing pictures of the former country as one in which national differences all blended into a Yugoslav melting-pot, epitomised by the Western love affair with Sarajevo⁶, completely misses the point and cannot account for the past conflicts. The permanent downplaying of differences within Yugoslavia, popular amongst critics of nationalism, strikes me as theoretically contradictory and politically counterproductive. I, myself, as a scholar and as an activist, certainly struggled with this throughout my fieldwork—and it took me a long time to come to grips with the contradictions of such views. It meant building some understanding of life in Yugoslavia, which was characterised by the very existence of national differences within. And we are talking here not just about the sphere of government, but about mundane experiences of Yugoslavia; for example, long before the war, the most popular jokes were at the expense of certain national groups, including one's own⁷.

It seems contradictory that the same people who, in the name of multiculturalism, celebrate the diversity of their Western home countries, should disregard similar patterns in Yugoslavia. It is clear that Tito's state was riddled with contrasts—also in the private sphere. Of course, as we have seen, national differences were blown out of proportion, they were being falsely represented as discrete and natural, and they were being elevated to manic heights by the recent nationalisms. It is an important part of anti-nationalist critique to point out that they were only relative, and that, often, they were simply forcible boundary-drawings in a hybrid Yugoslav context. It could be argued that the many close similarities between Serbian, Bosniac and Croatian national identities actually contributed to the horrific character of the wars (see Harrison 1999). All this needs to be said; but I would argue for a positioning which tries to avoid the pitfalls of both essentialising representations: one which depicts national identity in former Yugoslavia as a crucial and deeply ingrained factor in all spheres of life (the 'Balkan' tribes version); and the other which says that nationality was an utterly unimportant factor in everyday lives (the Yugo-melting-pot version).

As we have seen, in large parts of the public sphere, nationality was certainly articulated into a moment of political discourses. However, I argue that for most people national identities existed, that they were acknowledged and reproduced, but that, in a wide range of contexts, they constituted an *element* rather than a *moment* within everyday lives—a largely unarticulated difference in mundane discursive practice. If we want to subvert the legitimacy of post-Yugoslav nationalisms, we cannot simply discard these differences. This is not to say that we should 'naturalise' them, for, paraphrasing Malkki, it is clear that a depiction of Yugoslavia as a 'family of nations' cannot account for its complex character because it relies on the presumption that nations are discrete entities (1994:58; see also 1992). However, we have to take on board the fact that

⁶ This pattern had existed before, with a range of leftist scholars from the 'West' coming very close to simply legitimising rather than critically studying the Yugoslav system (Allcock 1993). During the recent wars, the new Sarajevo romance blossomed in particular amongst French and American intellectuals and artists (see for example Douailler, Poulain and Vermeren 1993; see also Rushdie 1994).

⁷ As epitomised by the popular pre-war episodes of the Sarajevo TV series *Top Lista Nadrealista*. See also, for example, Đorđe Balašević' song 'Soliter' in which he describes Yugoslavia as an apartment block, with a different republic on every floor—all characterised through strongly stereotyped mockery (Balašević 1998:87-88).

dominant representations of the former state, both negative and positive, are based precisely on this image of Yugoslavia as a group of separate nations. So rather than glossing over these lines of division, I think, we can undercut *their significance*: we can point out that, as in every country, national dividing lines were only one type amongst a whole range of differences. And as we saw, for many people, in many spheres of life, national lines of differentiation were not the most important ones on an everyday level, and even if they sometimes were, they certainly weren't always⁸ (Duijzings 2000:12, 19).

Therefore, rather than obliterating mundane national differences in Yugoslavia, I think we should highlight their *relative* importance in relation to a whole series of other distinctions. Only in this way, I believe, can we start to understand the hybrid nature of everyday life in the former state without ending up implicitly underwriting an incorporative brand of Yugoslav supra-nationalism, which after all can become a specific kind of, yes, *nationalism*. Moreover, it critically undermines the smug positioning of many Western observers⁹, based on the representation of Yugoslavia as a society entirely different from their own home countries. Only by refraining from this process of absolute othering, whether through negative 'Balkan' stereotyping or through positive Yugo-melting-pot depictions, can we foreigners develop an appropriately modest and self-conscious stance towards the post-Yugoslav conflict.

6. nationality colonising the mundane: language and love

It should be clear that, in the post-Yugoslav context, there was no consensus whatsoever on the status of national identity in the former state. Even within strategies of anti-nationalist opposition, this was subject to debate, as illustrated in a conversation with two activists from a small Beograd-based political party with a platform that was explicitly critical of nationalism. We were sitting in the small backroom of their offices having coffee and looking at the newspaper reports of the anti-regime mass demonstrations that were going on outside. I told them about my research interest in anti-nationalism, and a conversation unfolded. Young activist Toni stated plainly that to him nationalism was the biggest problem Serbia faced, but his elder colleague Mara argued for a more nuanced view. Former Yugoslavia, she said, was not a democratic system, and the only space for dissent was in private. So people would get together, talk politics and sing Četnik songs. Here, Toni interrupted her to say that, more importantly, they got drunk and threw up. Mara continued that the opposition had been mainly nationalist and its particular shape was a product of an undemocratic system. Despite these disputes, there was little debate about the overwhelming significance of national identity during and after the break-up of the former state. The ubiquitous gaze of the national could be felt in a million different ways, but in this section I focus on its workings in relation to two specific themes: language and love. The rationale for this choice goes beyond the alliteration: these are two particularly powerful examples of how, even in the most intimate spheres of everyday life, national differences were articulated into defining 'moments'. As throughout this study, there is a specific interest in mundane strategies of coping and resistance.

6.1. language before and after (and how to deal with it)

As we have seen, both in Serbia and in Croatia, albeit in different ways and to different extents, the nationalist regimes engaged in the creation of discrete national cultures. An important part of the endeavour was the canonisation of a Serbian and a Croatian

⁸ Later we shall see that these other lines of distinction, e.g. village/city, or man/woman, played a central role in a variety of anti-nationalist discursive practices.

⁹ For a blistering critique of liberal analyses of postcommunist nationalism, see Žižek 1992.

language, separate from each other. This ran counter to the previous official line that there was one language, Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian, existing in different variants. In practice, during my fieldwork, most people referred to their mother tongue as 'Serbian' (in Serbia), or 'Croatian' (in Croatia). The internationally more frequently used label 'Serbo-Croatian' (or 'Croato-Serbian') was used much less frequently, particularly in Croatia. In many anti-nationalist narratives this was explained simply in terms of habit or brevity, but there were people who used the 'double' terms with the explicit intention of going against the grain of nationalist discourses, a practice which was certainly more common in Serbia than in Croatia. An ironic example was provided by my friend Goran, who in the 1990s explicitly started referring to his native tongue as 'Serbo-Croatian' precisely for this reason—before, he had always said 'Serbian'. In a final twist of irony, my colleague-activists in a Zagreb NGO project referred jokingly to the language, not as '*hrvatski*', nor as '*srpskohrvatski*' or '*hrvatosrpski*', but as '*naški*' ['ours', 'our language']¹⁰. In this way they self-consciously avoided the traps of the name game and its potentially contentious political associations.

It should be clear by now that quite strong differences existed between the Serbian and the Croatian situation. In line with the ambiguous character of the Serbian dominant discourses of identity, the regime only made a number of half-hearted moves with regard to language. For example, although 'ekavian' was considered the standard Serbian variant of the language, it was common in Beograd for 'ijekavian', the variant spoken in large parts of Bosnia and Croatia, to be heard in public and written in the press. Quotations were usually verbatim, and on the whole ekavian and ijekavian seemed to be considered simply two variants of the same language. Moreover, in contrast to what was often said in Croatia and abroad, both Latinic and Cyrillic scripts were widely used in Serbia. With the rise of nationalism, Cyrillic script was promoted as the truly Serbian way of writing, but, in Beograd, the effects of this campaign were limited mainly to the realms of official use and nationalist media. Of course, it was hardly a coincidence that, with Serbian nationalist writings systematically employing Cyrillic, dissident texts were almost always set in Latinic.

However, for many in Serbia little had changed in this respect: for personal purposes, many people used both Latinic and Cyrillic script, and I was unable to detect any significant meaning behind the choice. People simply alternated between the two without paying attention to it—often, they use Cyrillic for ordinary writing and Latinic for print capitals. I asked some people why they did so, but they were just startled by my question and unable to answer. An illustration of the perfect interchangeability of the two scripts, emerged in the anti-regime demonstrations of 1996-1997, where banners were both in Cyrillic and Latinic. A young man wrote the Serbian word for 'strike' on the iced-up windscreen of an abandoned bus¹¹, and just when he wanted to move on he realised that he had mixed up his letters (which is possible because of the one-to-one equivalence between the two scripts). The first character was in Cyrillic, but he had completed the word in Latinic. Unimpressed, he corrected it out and walked on.

In Croatia, such a light-hearted approach to the language question was unthinkable. We have seen how Serbian nationalism tended to incorporate differences, whereas Croatian nationalist approaches usually emphasised those differences and opposed incorporation. This became clear in the language issue as well, particularly, but not exclusively, on the higher political and cultural echelons. As part of the endeavour to radically separate Croatian identity from the Serbian/Yugoslav 'cancer', the nationalist Tuđman regime set out to prove the existence of a completely discrete national language. In practice, this meant that a new, unique and above all exclusive variant of Croatian was consciously created. Through changes and shifting emphases in vocabulary and syntax, the national language was constructed as differently from

¹⁰ '*Naški*' literally doesn't mean anything. '*Naš*' is a possessive pronoun ['ours'], and by adding the suffix *-(s)ki* it resonates with other names of languages (i.e. adjectives): *Engleski*, *Francuski*, *Ruski*, *Hrvatski*, *Srpski*, etc.

¹¹ The word is actually a borrowing from English: *štrajk*.

Serbian or Serbo-Croatian as possible. This implied cleansing the language from elements which were culturally or ideologically undesirable. Not surprisingly, in the Croatian nationalist discourse, those two aspects were inextricably linked. Any word that sounded vaguely 'oriental' or 'communist' had to go. For example, the greeting 'zdravo!' literally refers to health, but it was now tainted by its Yugoslav connotations and, therefore, its alleged Serbian and communist character. 'Bok!', another pre-existing word used exclusively in certain parts of Croatia, was deemed more acceptable as a greeting.

In this context, it was possible for Srđan Dragojević's *Rane*, the first post-1991 Serbian film to be officially shown in Croatian cinemas, to be screened with Croatian subtitles. Note that there wasn't a single soul in the audience who could not follow the spoken words and that there had been a long tradition of co-operation amongst actors and directors from Beograd, Zagreb and Sarajevo, so that films with a 'Yugoslav' cast were common. *Rane* subtitled in Zagreb was, therefore, somewhat akin to subtitling a Spielberg film in British cinemas, or maybe even *The Full Monty* in Brighton. However, the language issue also worked the other way around: the explicitly anti-nationalist Zagreb publication *Arkzin* made a political statement simply by quoting ekavian speakers literally. This wouldn't go down well with people like the Dean of Mostar University in Bosnia, himself a linguist. In an interview with a Croatian regime paper, he argued for the recognition of 'Herzegovinian Croatian' as an integral part of the Croatian language because its 'orientalisms and Serbisms', he stated, did not deny its Croatian character¹². If we take this point to its logical conclusions, pre-war Mostar must have been at least a trilingual city with local Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs each speaking their own language, not to mention others, such as Jews and Yugoslavs—who presumably spoke 'Jewish' and Yugoslav.

Such views are very problematic when we take into account that the urge to prove the separateness of the Croatian language was not just an academic question. Although many people obviously did not think these questions of language were of vital importance to their lives, they were very likely to be confronted with them at some point. On many occasions, for example in job applications, proof of knowledge of Croatian (not Serbo-Croatian) was required. Moreover, the language question had become part of people's everyday life strategies as well. This was illustrated by the following event, which took place during a conversation I had with a family who occupied a house owned by Serbian refugees in a war-affected area in Croatia. The present residents were from Gradić, now a Bosniac-controlled town just across the border in Bosnia. When explaining their reluctance to return to their Bosnian home, the parents justified this with reference to language rights and argued that 'they didn't want their children to go to school in Gradić, where they couldn't study in their own language'. Both parents were born in Gradić, and spent all their lives in that town, where they had always spoken the same dialect as their neighbours of other nationalities. Like most Bosnian Croats, they were seen as 'Bosnians' by the locals—their accent being precisely the way in which others established this identity.

Again, it is crucial to point out that people in Zagreb *did* talk differently from those in Beograd, regardless of nationality. The question whether Serbian and Croatian are distinct languages is better left to linguists, but I can personally say that I did not feel like I learned two languages during my fieldwork¹³. Moreover, intensive travel within the post-Yugoslav states brought me in touch with many different accents, and a wide variety of typical words and syntactic peculiarities, but this reflected largely regional,

¹² Interview in *Večernji List* 02/05/98.

¹³ Norris argues that Serbian and Croatian relate to each other like Northern and Southern English (1999:60-61), and I have heard others compare it to American and British English. For a crystal-clear discussion of the language issue, see Detrez 1996:35ff. The author, a linguist, concludes the section on language by saying: 'With the material provided one could equally "naturally" or "legitimately" construct a Serbo-Croatian standard language, as a Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, or Serbian standard language. [...] What eventually happens has nothing to do with linguistics, and everything with politics.' (1996:40, my translation from Dutch)

not national patterns. During my fieldwork in Zagreb, I paid two or three long visits to a couple (wife and husband) of prominent dissident writers, whom I met in their book-packed flat. Although I best remember the quality of their Scottish whisky, I also recall the man, a well-known literary critic, saying that Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs really speak the same language, with regional differences. Any linguist, he argued, would have to recognize that, like it or not.

Often, in the case of writers, this was accompanied by a quotation of some famous literary figure, which usually came down to the assertion that language is what constitutes the homeland. Although the above statement is from a Zagreb Croat, there was a fairly systematic difference here between the situation in Zagreb and in Beograd: people in the latter city would usually be relaxed about the lack of a clear distinction, which is not surprising given the nature of Serbian nationalism. However, predictably, this Beograd attitude was vehemently denied by most Croats, as illustrated by the young journalist Velimir. He had heard about my work through a friend and asked me out for a drink on one of my first days in Zagreb. Velimir stated that there had always been two different languages: Serbian and Croatian. Because of recent history, he argued, they were mixed and they had become increasingly similar. However, Velimir did admit that people understand almost everything from the 'other' language. Still, he maintained, there were quite a large number of different words because, after all, they were and had always been two separate languages.

What was clear was that Serbian and Croatian literary languages were *becoming* more separate every day as a result of explicit linguistic policies, through the ideologisation of everyday life and as a consequence of physical and cultural separation. What had changed, according to anti-nationalist narratives, was the significance attributed to differences between 'Serbian' and 'Croatian'. This led to the weird situation whereby one of my Zagreb housemates, speaking his mother tongue, apologised for his word use. I had only just arrived from Beograd, and he warned me that many of the words they (the Croats) used were in fact Serbian words. Before, he argued, they had never really thought about that, but he assured me that for every Serbian word, there was a Croatian one as well.

With the language question being so prominent on the public level in Croatia, it was bound to seep into everyday life in many ways. However, this didn't mean it had an unambiguously hegemonic effect. The same people who vigorously asserted the separateness of Croatian at some occasions, mercilessly mocked their president's archaic word use or the latest neologisms at other times¹⁴. When certain newly invented nationally correct words were used on TV, a salvo of laughter would often be followed by discussion about what it might mean. In many matters confusion reigned. When I visited Biserka and Branislav, an elderly Serbian couple in Zagreb with some presents from their relative in Beograd, they spontaneously reassured me about my language. At the time, I had just arrived from Serbia and I spoke with a thick Beograd accent on top of my obvious foreign one¹⁵. Sitting round the kitchen table, they fed me and explicitly wanted to inform me about a number of things that 'I should know'. With regard to language, Branislav said that there had always been some differences, like for example, they would say '*hiljada*'¹⁶. Before, nobody had ever made a problem about that, but now one really had to pay attention. Laughingly, Branislav added that he and Biserka couldn't really tell me about it because they didn't know the rules themselves. The Croats, themselves, had to learn it, he added, as they were recuperating words

¹⁴ See, for example, 'Uvrtnjak ili zrakomlat?' *Globus* 04/12/92.

¹⁵ It would be a 'Dutch' or 'Flemish' accent, I assume, but I intentionally use the word 'foreign' here. I have never heard anybody in any of the post-Yugoslav states refer to other former Yugoslavs as 'foreigners'. The term '*stranci*' was reserved strictly for non-Yugoslavs like myself. Even the term '*naši*' ['ours'], was often used interchangeably for one's own nation *and* for other post-Yugoslavs.

¹⁶ 'Thousand'. This word, used by millions of Bosniacs and Croats, had by then been disqualified as a Serbism. The nationalistically correct term was '*tisuća*', previously used in certain parts of Croatia, but not outside of it. Still, '*hiljada*' was still very frequently used by many Croats.

from centuries ago. Branislav told me that, while you could still hear the other words everywhere on the street, you wouldn't see them on TV or in the newspapers anymore. There it was a matter of reading the rest of the sentence and trying to get the point. Biserka, whose work in a kiosk required talking money and numbers, had previously used the word '*hiljada*' but now tried to stick to '*tisuća*'. Still, she often mixed things up and simply resorted to avoiding the use of those numbers in general.

A similar case was presented to me by Anđelka, a middle-aged woman with a Croatian background, who worked in the archives of a strongly nationalist magazine in Zagreb. Although rather hostile at first, she grew more friendly when she found out about my research interest, and we sat talking a lot, even if only when her colleagues were not there. Anđelka ridiculed the language reforms and the Croatian nationalist urge to exorcise alleged Serbian/Yugoslav/'Balkan' elements, and demonstrated how she dealt with the changes in an easygoing, sort of underhand way. For example, she told me that, before, in Croatia two sets of names were commonly used side-by-side for the twelve months of the year. In some parts of Croatia it was common to hear *Siječanj*, *Veljača*, *Ožujak*, etc., whereas in other regions, as in Bosnia and Serbia, the Latin-based calendar was in use: *Januar*, *Februar*, *Mart*, etc. Many people had used both sets of terms, but the militant 'nationally correct' Croatian rhetoric now denounced the Latin-based words as Serbisms. In the ensuing confusion, Anđelka said, she and many of her friends chose to avoid trouble altogether by relying on a third possibility, which had also existed previously: they referred to months simply as 'the first', 'the second', 'the third', etc.

A similar strategy was prevalent in explicitly dissident circles, albeit often with a much sharper angle to it. Both in Beograd and in Zagreb, I found that for anti-nationalist discursive practice the language question was almost always a completely irrelevant issue on the personal level. Strategies based on mockery, light-heartedness and avoidance were widespread in post-Yugoslav everyday life and not limited to the language issue. In the wider society, this often led to an uneasy cohabitation of ardent nationalist absolutism and a relativising approach based on self-deprecating humour, with attitudes varying not only from person to person, but also from occasion to occasion and from issue to issue. In the case of language, even within one and the same everyday conversation the ambiguities were piled up to a level that would leave the most militant zealot of nationalist order speechless.

6.2. love and nationality (and how to deal with it)

Let us now look at narratives about a second sphere of everyday life: that of love and romance. As we shall see, the situation here was different, even though the narratives were strikingly similar to those above in their emphasis on the colonisation of the mundane by nationalist exclusivism. In a letter to her daughter, written in April 1992, the Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić recalls what it meant to her to marry a man of a Serbian background:

'I was aware of the fact that he was from a Serbian family while I was from a Croatian one, but it didn't mean anything to me, one way or the other. World War II was long over when the two of us were born and throughout my life it seemed to me that everyone was trying to escape its shadow, to forget and just live their lives. Your father and I never even discussed the different nationality of our families. Not because it was forbidden, but because it was unimportant to the majority of our generation. It wasn't an issue.'
(Drakulić, 1993a:129)

We have, of course, no statistical data on inter-national romance. What we do know is that Yugoslav percentages of mixed *marriages* were a small minority when considered on the federal, or even republican level. Smits and Ultee state that, in 1981, 7.8% of all existing marriages in Yugoslavia were mixed (1996:15; see Petrović 1985 for a more detailed discussion). Botev analysed official statistical data and came to these results

for the late 1980s: 13.1% of all marriages registered in Yugoslavia between 1987 and 1989 were exogamous (1994:469). This can be broken down to 17.4% for Croatia, and 12.9% for Serbia (with internal variation from 4.7% in Kosovo to 28.4% in Vojvodina). These rates certainly underestimate the real proportions: for methodological reasons, Botev chose not to include people who filled out 'Yugoslav-undeclared' on the census. This means ignoring 8.2% of the Croatian population and 4.7% in Serbia (ranging from 0.2% in Kosovo to 8.2% in Vojvodina), if we take the 1981 census as a guideline¹⁷. With many of these 'undeclareds/Yugoslavs' living precisely in 'mixed' families, the proportion of exogamous marriages must have been much higher than the above figures indicate. Moreover, in the context of this study, it is important to note that there were large differences within republics as well, with Zagreb and Beograd having a much larger proportion than certain rural areas. For most people, particularly in the towns and cities, having friends or relatives in mixed marriages was, therefore, a common feature of everyday life.

With hindsight, we have to note here that the term 'mixed marriage' contains a misleading tendency to postulate two partners with distinct pre-existing national identities. As we have seen in this chapter, this was frequently the way it was actually experienced by the persons in question and by others, but the above story by Drakulić demonstrates its relativity. While she and her husband did acknowledge their different nationalities, it was an irrelevance to them. Moreover, for couples where the two partners identified as 'undeclared/Yugoslav' the term 'mixed marriage' seems inadequate, even if their families were of different national backgrounds. Still, this is the term used, yet another category imposed by a system designed to eradicate ambivalence¹⁸. It is clear that the rise of nationalism and its drive to create discrete cultures also affected the significance of nationality in these contexts. With 'Yugoslav' identity becoming a publicly undesirable and often privately unacceptable label, the ambivalence was forcibly cleared up, and in many people's narratives the fact that they lived in a mixed relationship—now *really* mixed—became a relevant factor in everyday life.

In what follows, I focus on one particular set of mixed relationships, namely those in Zagreb between partners with Serbian and Croatian national backgrounds. Due to the diverging, if interdependent mechanisms of Serbian and Croatian nationalism, and as a result of Serbian nationalist flirtations with 'Yugoslavness', the issue of mixed marriages was much more problematic in Croatia than in Serbia. Although extreme Serbian nationalists did place mixed families on their ever-growing list of enemies of the nation, on the whole they seemed less troubled by them than their ideological counterparts in Croatia. With the Croatian president Tuđman publicly proclaiming himself happy that his wife was not a Serb nor a Jew (Silber & Little 1995:92), it was not surprising that mixed families often found themselves in uncomfortable situations in Croatia¹⁹. The HDZ regime, in particular the President himself, also regularly attacked critics of the regime under the heading 'Yugo-nostalgics, children of Yugoslav army officers, and children of mixed marriages'. Similarly, one of the 'charges' in a widely reported media attack²⁰ on five dissident women intellectuals was the fact that some of them were married, or had been married, to Serbs (*Globus* 11/12/1992:41-2).

In such a situation, anti-nationalist narratives systematically (re)constructed the past in terms of the irrelevance of nationality with regard to love relationships. This was embedded in a wider depiction of co-existence on local and large-scale levels as normal, self-evident, simply there. Moreover, even when involving people from different

¹⁷ *Statistički godišnjak SFRJ*, 1983, 439.

¹⁸ This idea grew from a discussion with Sophie Francis, on the basis of her assignment for the module 'The rise of ethnic nationalism in Central/East Europe: Post-Yugoslav identities', at Hull University. See also Bauman 1991.

¹⁹ In an ironic twist of fate, the next First Lady of Croatia turned the tables. Tuđman's successor Stipe Mesić, elected in January 2000, is married to a woman from a Serbian background. Franjo Tuđman didn't live to see it happen.

²⁰ I have written about this public lynch party, waged under the title 'Croatian feminists rape Croatia', in Jansen 1998a.

regions, romance was something that occurred between individuals, so it was argued, and national identity was not something that was articulated into such everyday life decisions. For example, during an interview in his office, a Zagreb academic who had been married to a Beograd woman for many years, explained:

'I have always thought of myself as a Croat, but that didn't... I mean, like I myself have been married to a *Beograđanka*. A Serb. It never crossed my mind that that was something problematic. I mean ... you went to the coast, and you met people from Serbia all the time. When I was younger, particularly during summers, we always used to hang out with girls from Beograd.'

Anti-nationalist narratives then proceeded to explain that nationality, sadly, had become a crucial issue in people's everyday lives, even in the intimate sphere of love and romance. Those who had not previously looked at relationships in this way experienced it as a form of intrusion, as an imposition of nationalist ways from above. This was illustrated by the following story, told to me in an interview by Ivana, a young Serbian student from Zagreb:

'My first love... his father died in the war. The Četniks killed him. Then he went to fight in the war as well. He was under age, but at that time anyone could go if they wanted to. He was there for a year... We got to know each other, but we never talked about this. We just never talked about these things. Then, one night, he got drunk and he told me everything. And when I told him that I was Serbian... we broke that relationship off... Since then I tell it straight away. When I meet someone I like, I tell them. So they can decide if they think it is worth it or not.'

Such situations were often contrasted with descriptions of how it was before, when people simply related to each other 'as individuals' and their national background was not articulated into a decisive moment (see Chapter Eleven). In this sense, anti-nationalist narratives depart strongly from the statistical data available, as well as from other versions of the past. Glenny, for example, argues that, even after thorough secularisation, it was precisely in the context of kinship that tradition did *not* fade away (Glenny 1999:11-11). In Yugoslavia, he argues, the key repository for a national sense of belonging and exclusivist practice was the extended family, sustained through widespread endogamy (see also Erikson 1999; Bringa 1995:149-153). When confronted with such contrasting, alternative representations, anti-nationalist narratives were usually quick to denounce them as 'maybe true for some rural areas'. And it must be said that there were marked differences between patterns of kinship in the cities and in the countryside—particularly involving people with an Islamic cultural background (Bringa 1995:150). However, even if it cannot be my intention here to research the validity of such claims, it seems fair to say that they were usually denounced *too* quickly in anti-nationalism. In their general urge to defend a perspective on social reality which was opposed to xenophobia, anti-nationalist narrations of the past often glossed over real, existing articulations of national identity in everyday life in the past. As we shall see in the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*, I argue that we should see the relevance of such narratives of the past more in terms of their providing political commentary on the present than in terms of their actual historical accuracy. In any case, the post-Yugoslav situation was less contested as it became increasingly undesirable, even in urban areas, to engage in love relationships (or indeed in any relationships) with national Others. Jasna, a young Serbian woman from Zagreb who did not feel very strongly about her Serbian identity at all, told me on several occasions about her reluctance to get involved with a Croatian man. In a long interview she confided:

'My worst nightmare is that I would fall in love with a Croat. Let alone that I would want to marry one. I mean, it's terrible, but you know, when I meet a bloke that I like, I'm quite

afraid. You know, I don't want to cause trouble... For myself, or for my parents... and, ultimately, for my children. So no Croats, no thank you.

Similarly, Ivana, apart from feeling obliged to inform potential boyfriends in advance of her Serbian nationality, explained that her love life had taken on nationalised dimensions in other ways as well:

'Soon, a Croatian guy I know is going to marry a Serbian girl. And already there's trouble. The two families are having a huge row before they even get married! [...] I hate to admit it, but when I think that I would marry someone in a couple of years, I think not only "He should be nice and kind and good-looking", and so on, but I think it would be nice if he was Serbian... I wish I didn't have that in me, but, you know, ... I suppose it is some kind of protection. Of course, I wouldn't *not* marry someone because he was a Croat. ... I think particularly of this, you know, ... if I would have children. It's terrible that you have to think about these things, but it's like that... So I think, okay, for me it might be okay to have children with a Croatian man. But... what about these children themselves? What if this happens again in twenty years!?'

The whole story becomes even more interesting if we know that Ivana, who explicitly identifies as Serbian, is herself the daughter of a mixed marriage, and her father is a Croat. Also, note that both girls claimed that, despite their self-protective attitudes towards Croatian men, they did not necessarily look for a Serb. In fact, they argued, they would happily go out with any other foreigner.

With the war in Croatia, love relationships between Croats and Serbs came to be seen in a negative light by most people. This sometimes led to extreme situations, such as in a Croatian village where I worked with an NGO dialogue project: the first people to be threatened and finally chased out were a mixed family (Jansen 2000b). They represented too much of a reminder of the ambivalences questioning the conflicting nationalisms, and they were expelled even before the campaigns of ethnic cleansing started. Military operations as well as tendencies towards ethnic homogenisation and physical separation were important here, but it is clear from the stories above that even for those who stayed behind in multinational environments, there were important social barriers. Most mixed couples that I knew were together from *before*. Still, this didn't mean that romance between people from different nationalities didn't occur. Particularly in anti-nationalist narratives, it was even quite commonly mentioned. It was generally assumed that, for obvious reasons, people from mixed families were over-represented in anti-nationalist initiatives. This was explained as a normal thing by Nela, a middle-aged journalist, who was herself born from an extremely unusual marriage. Her mother was a Serb from Croatia, who, in WWII, escaped death when her entire village was massacred by an Ustaša formation. She later married Nela's father, a Croat, which would not be quite so unusual were it not that he was himself a soldier in an Ustaša unit. In the polarised situation of the 1990s, Nela said, she was sometimes called a Četnik when speaking up against 'primitivism'. Her answer was always that she was not a Četnik, but a mixed person [*mjesanac*], and that she was proud of that. In Nela's view, people in mixed marriages were the most 'normal' ones left.

So, of course, love between people from different national backgrounds was still possible. Every year, hundreds of former Yugoslavs, particularly young people, took part in one of the numerous foreign-sponsored summer camps, seminars, conferences and workshops dealing with post-Yugoslav issues. On these programmes, holiday romances were the order of the day, and, afterwards, the participants often revelled in the fact that national dividing lines hadn't mattered there. Still, it seems to me that these occasions were exceptional and even liminal in nature. They were events where the new nationalist rules of normality were suspended and where a sort of multinational *communitas* reigned (Turner 1969:81). This was reflected in one of the main difficulties of these initiatives, often mentioned by the organisers: how to ensure that the spirit and practice of co-operation of the event spills over into normal life, when people return to

their, usually nationally homogenous, old or new homes? A friend of mine who worked in an international Bosnian NGO told me how, on the way home from a conference, two young girls in the bus were talking (read: crying) about the boys they fell in love with during the event. The conference had just ended, and immediately, the perverted normality of divided post-war Bosnia pressed its stamp on their conversation, as one of them remarked: 'But you are lucky... at least yours is from the same Entity!'²¹.

7. anti-nationalist narratives of city minorities

In the cities where I did my fieldwork, the most radical changes brought about by the elevation of nationality to a crucial touchstone in social life were experienced by those belonging to a minority group. There were strong differences here between the Serbian and the Croatian capital. Zorica was an NGO activist who had lived in Beograd for twenty-odd years. Although she was born and raised in a Croatian family in the Dalmatian town of Split, she saw Beograd very much as her city. In an interview, Zorica argued:

'I have never had any trouble here in Beograd because of my background. It wasn't a problem here for Croats. Of course, there were individual cases, but it wasn't like in Croatia. There, it was a different story... but of course, they had a war there and we didn't...'

Although there were cases of harassment, on the whole, Croats in Beograd felt much less threatened than Serbs in Zagreb. This had to do with the fact that the Serbo-Croatian conflict was fought on Croatian territory, but also with the different natures of the opposing nationalist discourses. We have seen that, whereas Croatian nationalism strongly centred upon anti-Serbian negation, Serbian nationalism had more incorporating tendencies, as expressed through its uneasy but continuing flirtation with some kind of prolonged Yugoslavism.

During the war, therefore, Zagreb Serbs in particular felt caught in-between as large parts of the country they lived in were being destroyed by 'their' co-nationals. Before the break-up, there were actually more Serbs in Zagreb than in the whole of Krajina, and overall, the Serbian vote in the first Croatian elections is estimated to have been 70% for the reformed communist Party of Democratic Change, *not* for Serbian nationalists (Thompson 1992:283). Even though, at that time, they themselves might not have perceived their Serbian background as an important factor, it became impossible to avoid the issue when people were being killed because of their nationality. Of course, the reaction of the Serbs in Croatia to the outbreak of Croatian nationalism varied widely, and many of them were strongly engaged in formulating their own exclusionary discourse. However, in this section I look at some specific cases: anti-nationalist narratives formulated by *Zagrepčanke* who identified as Serbs.

Again, Ivana's interview is an interesting one to start from. Born and raised in Zagreb, she kept a low profile with regard to the fact that she identified as Serbian. She was determined to get on with her life and she was aware of the disadvantage she might face because of her national affiliation. Even now, after the war, she argued:

'I have the impression that things are not changing so strongly. On the outside, yes. but the same pressures are there. Only now it is official policy that there's no discrimination. So it seems like everybody is equal, but under the surface the same climate exists. Say for instance, it would be very hard to get a job. Nobody will say it in your face that *that* is why, but you won't get it. Or simply..., you won't get any privileges. Like, if someone does

²¹ In the Dayton Agreements of 1995, the military and demographic results of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina were consolidated in a state form based on two Entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniac- and Croatian-controlled), and Republika Srpska (Serbian-controlled).

something wrong at school, everybody will get a second chance, but they will throw *you* out immediately... Sometimes I think it is even worse than some years ago, because at least then it was explicit. Now it looks like nothing is going on... but really...'

Before the war, Ivana never actually visited Serbia. Apart from some distant relatives, she knew nobody there. Throughout the war, her Serbian identity, and Serbian Orthodox religion in particular, had become important to her, and as an indirect result of the war, she got to know people in Serbia through NGO-meetings, through her ecumenical work and through members of her family who have fled there. This points to a perverted kind of cross-frontline national homogenisation through the backdoor of the war: many inter-republican contacts (mainly inter-national) were broken off completely, but many others (mainly intra-national) were actually established as a result of the war... In this way, Ivana, very much a Zagreb girl, said:

'I remember the first phone call I made to Serbia. It was after the war. I was in tears of course. It was very special.'

On an interpersonal level, Ivana, who spent the war years in the relatively safe, albeit hostile environment of Zagreb, responded to distrust and aggression from Croatian former friends by withdrawing into a rather small group of close loved ones—both Serbs and Croats—'who knew' (that she was Serbian). Outside of that group she never identified as Serbian, even when put on the spot. This was made possible by her neutral sounding name. This was, of course, a widespread strategy of coping with hostility. Tamara, another Serbian Zagreb-girl, drove this exercise of dividing public and private, and the ensuing paranoia, to the extreme: virtually nobody, including some close friends, knew about her Serbian background. Nevertheless, she did insist that her Serbian identity had become important to her during the past decade.

However, these extreme situations should not prevent us from seeing the subtle ambiguities that can be wrapped up in strategies of (partial) secrecy. For example, *before*, Ivana never considered her identity as a Serb an important issue—nothing to be proud about, nothing to be ashamed about. Now, whether she liked it or not, it had become crucial: her social environment was divided into those who knew and those who didn't, a divide grounded in, amongst other things, the above-mentioned experience with a former boyfriend-Croat. In Ivana's case, it should be clear that she resented and regretted the fact that her nationality exercised control over so many aspects of life and that she experienced it as imposed upon her. In this way, although she was very young when the war started and had therefore lived almost as long in independent Croatia as in former Yugoslavia, when I talked to her, she thought back to *before* as a time in which nationality was irrelevant. As so often, however, this nostalgic view blended with a longing for an alternative reality in the present.

'I just wished that... I wished that you could go somewhere and that they would ask you: what kind of music do you listen to? That kind of questions... and nothing about nationality at all. [...] When I was in Italy, where I worked as a baby-sitter, it was really great. You just walked out and bought a newspaper and read it and nobody, but nobody was asking any questions about "Šta si ti?" ["What are you?"] or "Čiji si ti?" ["Whose are you?"]'

While thus far I have focused mainly on individual coping strategies, national homogenisation by the majority group can also provoke collective counterstrategies by minorities. Once again, this was much more obvious in Zagreb than in Beograd. Certain groups of moderate Serbs who stayed behind in Zagreb had organised themselves in order to demand equal political rights and full respect for their national identity. This sometimes amounted to celebrations of Serbian culture and traditions, which pointed to a certain reification of what it meant to be Serbian in response to Croatian nationalism. Ivana told me how this came about:

'Many Serbs, particularly young men, isolate themselves. At some point, some time ago, that was really necessary. I am not saying it is good, but we had to, really. You would be confronted all the time with distrust and aggression and threats, and there you found some kind of a safe place. A place where you didn't have to be careful or watch your words. You know, *there*, people would believe you if you told them what happened to you. They would understand because they went through it themselves. But now, some of them really exaggerate. There is this radical current... they isolate themselves completely. There are people I know, who never, but never, would want to go out with a Croatian girl. They take pride in the fact that they never had Croatian friends or girlfriends. And then there is... like Miroslav for instance, he prides himself on the fact that in their family they are I don't know how many generations pure Serbs. Jesus Christ! That's not normal I think. Imagine that! [...] And when they meet, they listen to *turbofolk*, and then they tell me: "Ivana, you should listen to this". And I say: "Why?" And they go: "Because this is ours!". But I think it is crap music, why should I listen to it because it comes from Serbia... I hate it, I think it is horrible.'

So in a further twist to the story, here we have a case of national counter-homogenisation, which in turn exercised pressure on individuals who did not wish to participate in any kind of national homogenisation. The extent to which the emphasis on discrete national cultures was affecting people's everyday realities became clear in trivialities like the following one, where Ivana explains the importance of proper kissing in those groups. Note that in Serbia, it is common to kiss three times, whereas it is considered 'Croatian' to kiss twice.

'They insist on kissing three times, rather than two. So they would say: "But we have to do this, we have to make clear we are different". [*laughs*] There was a time when we kissed like this [*acts out one kiss on one cheek, and then two quickly succeeding kisses on the other*]

The interplay of majority homogenisation and minority counter-homogenisation led to a catch-22 situation for many supposed members of that minority who were reluctant to close ranks. Ivana, again:

'It is a really difficult situation ... I find I constantly have to defend myself. And I always have to prove myself. To one side I am not Serbian enough, and I have to show them that I am a really true Serb... To the others I am of course too Serbian, and I have to prove that I am not too great a Serb to live here...'

Jasna, another Zagrebian with a Serbian background, told me about a visit to Beograd. She was delighted about it, but at the same time she expressed unease about her position in between two fires. She told me how she attended a party in Beograd where someone jokingly referred to her as a foreigner. She got furious and said: 'I am a foreigner *there* [in Zagreb] already, and I am not going to be a foreigner here as well!'. Note that Jasna, although Serbian by nationality, grew up in Zagreb and hardly knew Serbia at all. In a later comment in the interview, she said that she sometimes thought of emigrating,

'...but not to Serbia. I would not want to live there. If I want to live somewhere else, then it must be really abroad, really somewhere where I am a foreigner, where I speak a foreign language, and where I know I am a foreigner.'

As mentioned by Ivana in a previous quote, gender and generational differences often crosscut these patterns. This became clear in the following exchange with a previously mentioned, Serbian family in Zagreb:

Branislav (father): 'I have to tell you something that you should know when you write about this. Because it stands, it is the truth. Yugoslavia was a socialist country and

when in 1990 socialism fell all around, some countries dissolved, but in a peaceful way, like Czechoslovakia. Here, Croatia and Slovenia wanted to separate, and the Americans supported this because they wanted to get rid of socialism as soon as possible. Then some people came to power here who were in favour of that. Now they say things like "Serbia was occupying Croatia" and that kind of nonsense. But at the time, in Yugoslavia, everybody lived together. You know, even after WWII—when particularly Serbs suffered terribly, and also Jews and Roma, and also Croats, but those who were against—even after WWII people still lived together. And now, again, they say that we can never live together again. And the Croats now want a country where only Croats live... Can you imagine that? But they will live together again. You'll see. They will live together again...'

Goga (daughter): 'No they won't. Too many things have happened. They won't.'

Branislav: 'Oh yes, they will, you'll see.'

Goga: 'I am so incredibly sick of these stupid politics. I don't care about who is who and why you should treat people of different nationality in different ways.'

Vanja (Goga's friend): 'I don't understand what gets into people. I never learned to hate somebody because he is a Muslim or so.'

[*all loudly agree*]

Biserka (mother): 'Of course that is nonsense. What matters is if you are a good person or not. Not which nationality you are.'

Branislav: 'There are differences though. It must be said that the Serbs on the whole are more hospitable than the Croats.'

Biserka: 'Oh please don't, that's not an issue.'

Branislav: 'Oh yes, it is really true.'

Biserka: 'No, no, I don't want to hear any of that.'

It is clear that, even within anti-nationalist narratives, there were many different ways to relate to the new dominant discourses of nationalism. One pattern seems to run through these stories, and through this whole study for that matter: people reconstructed how they were taken by surprise, and how they found themselves obliged to react in a situation where different nationalisms suddenly affected their everyday lives.

8. half-subjects: identity and non-politics in Yugoslavia

So far, I have shown how many anti-nationalist narratives, in contrast to the official versions, reconstructed the Yugoslav past in terms of the relatively irrelevant nature of nationality in everyday lives. Although I believe these stories provided a welcome alternative to nationalist claims of discrimination and selective suppression, in many cases, such alternative representations ran the risk of glossing over certain differences that did play a role in the past as well. In other words, by emphasising the shock they experienced when nationalism established itself as the new 'truth', they sometimes disregarded the fact that, in some areas of everyday life, certain elements had *already* been articulated into moments of exclusionary discursive practice. Whereas on the everyday level, national differences seemed to have been largely unarticulated with language, this was probably not the case with regard to love relationships. Surely there were examples of the previous importance of nationality in other people's love lives, if not sometimes in one's own.

In this last section I want to weave what might strike the reader as an ambitious story, tying in some lines from this chapter with the previous sketch of Yugoslav politics and elaborating on what I have written elsewhere with regard to the biographical writings of three dissident women-writers (Jansen 1998a). In addition to providing a background against which to view the narratives above, this section also aims to throw a critical light on the absolutist divide between politicians and citizens that was prominent in much anti-nationalist discourse.

8.1. living the Yugoslav dream?

Let me start off with mentioning one element of the self-perception of most post-Yugoslavs, regardless of their national or ideological affiliation: their unique position in-between communist and capitalist Europe. The Yugoslav regime was authoritarian in nature, but its citizens were keen on setting their lives apart from those in the 'really' communist states: they had the right to travel freely, there was a wide range of domestic and Western imported consumer goods and they enjoyed a large degree of cultural freedom, albeit it with a taboo on nationalist statements (Ugrešić 1995:48-51). The protagonist in the documentary *Gefo* sums it up nicely:

'Beograd was my city. There were days when I wished it was Amsterdam, but there were more days when I was happy it wasn't East Berlin.'

Emphasising the not-quite-as-communist nature of the Yugoslav situation was common, and it sometimes involved a sense of hurt pride at the sight of the current comparison with neighbouring states, particularly in Serbia. However, as explained to me in an interview by Predrag, an outspoken critic of the regime in Beograd:

'We certainly lived better than people in other real, socialist countries; we were a lot freer. But I was a dissident before as well—and I was attacked for that by the regime. I lost my job, for example. So saying that we lived better, doesn't mean it was good, it just means better than some others. Maybe it corrupted citizens into an inability to have a critical look at that regime...'

This last remark suggests that the Titoist regime, apart from its authoritarian policies, also affected public opinion in a more underhanded way. By representing the past and the present in simplistic categories, any sense of a future in political terms was seriously impeded. Tightly interwoven with the communist narrative of a bright future was the assertion of the primacy of the Party, in its conflicting range of republican elites. As a result, large layers of the Yugoslav population did not relate to the level of political decision-making in any way—for them, politics took place in another universe. This, of course, is not an exclusively Yugoslav pattern at all, but it might help explain why a strong, collective and organised alternative to the nationalist violence did not come about. Many people did not necessarily like the former system, but they were lulled into persistent apathy by 'the good life'. Drakulić, for example, invokes the notion of a 'contract with the government'. Individuals on the urban-intellectual scene, in particular, were prepared to abstain from claiming political freedom because they were 'doing okay', they felt 'at home' in Yugoslavia (Drakulić 1993a:135). With the private sphere largely isolated from politics, it was possible to nurture a generation of what Iveković calls 'adult minors and pseudo-subjective individualism':

'"We" (I was born in 1945, in the second Yugoslavia) should have been a generation without political destiny, the embodiment of their happiness and their political project ("they", the generation of Partisan parents). *Through us*, they would enjoy the fruits of their creation in advance, by projection, but it meant that we had to be a *generation made historically irresponsible*, a political epi-subject where they were the political subject.'
(Iveković 1997:101)

Large parts of the Yugoslav population did not engage with politics at all, but they got on with their lives and forgot about it—consolidating the status of half-subjects granted to them by the regime (Iveković 1994; 1997). Martina, a middle-aged intellectual who used to live 'on the relation between Zagreb and Beograd', told me over drinks in a trendy Beograd bar that sometimes she wondered whether 'it had all been a purely generational thing'. The generation of her parents had seen Yugoslavia as their toy:

they played with it and blew it. Martina's generation grew up in a prosperous time, but, she added, perhaps they were living their fathers' dreams.

In an interview in the office space of her Beograd human rights organisation, Jasmina, an outspoken NGO activist of the same age as Martina, argued along similar lines:

'My generation, they're very angry. I know them all too well, I deal with them every day. And what do you do then? You work in an NGO or so... because, before, we didn't really do anything about it at all. My generation never did anything.'

This did not necessarily imply passivity since a wide variety of cultural initiatives emerged, particularly in the republican capital cities. In contrast to the increasing drive towards republican autonomy, and contrary to the thinly veiled nationalist programs of the ruling republican elites, this scene often included a pan-Yugoslav aspect, embedded in a staunchly individualist ethos (Dević 1997:145).

In the context of the economic crisis in the last decade of Yugoslavia, Dević scathingly describes a pan-Yugoslav layer of 'semi-employed and unemployed urban youth [...] often with degrees in social sciences, journalism, law, literature and the arts, [who] were able to maintain their cosmopolitan lifestyles in the 1980s because of the social benefits and their parents' savings' (1997:145). Both in Zagreb and in Beograd, the 1980s were often described to me as the 'golden years'. On a trip to the Dalmatian coast, Lidija, a highly educated Zagreb NGO activist in her thirties, repeatedly compared things to how they had been *before*. Over a plate of fresh fish and a couple of drinks on a sunlit terrace, she recalled times gone by, and she explained:

'There were times when I used to go to the cinema almost every day. The best films always came from Beograd. And we listened to music. People here liked to listen very much to music in their own language. The words were always the most important, you know. We would know all the words to the songs. In those times, that is what we did. We went to see films, listened to music, read books. That was what we talked about. That was everything. We didn't talk about politics at all. Never. It was like "You can't do anything about it", so we kept ourselves busy with other things: films, music, books... Of course I am talking about *before* the war now. It is completely different now. Zagreb is a completely different city now. You know, I live in Novi Zagreb, and that used to be such an alternative place. There was always something going on. But now... pfff... it's a really boring place. Zagreb has changed completely. People are all extremely boring now. They're all the same. Nobody is original, nothing original happens...'

Less than two months later, Lidija had arranged for emigration to the US. In the late 1980s, while communism was increasingly delegitimised and ridiculed in the press, there was very little political articulation of alternatives from within these highly educated, self-proclaimed cosmopolitan layers of the populations in Zagreb and Beograd, unlike the situation in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana (see for example Kovač 1988; Mastnak 1990). Therefore, I would argue, the political field was left open to the increasingly autarkic republican elites of the Communist Party and to hard-line nationalists at home and abroad. As we have seen in this chapter, these combined forces of nationalism proved entirely incompatible with the everyday lives of many people in Zagreb and Beograd. With nationality being an unproblematised element in mundane discursive practice for them, they were simply not prepared for the shock.

8.2. too late now for alternatives...

Even on the brink of war, there was only limited reaction because people who saw no links between their everyday life narratives and the rising nationalisms often didn't take it very seriously until it was too late (with notable exceptions of course). Their a- or anti-political habitus, nurtured in the former state, prevented them from estimating the true contours of the changes (Dević 1997:147). Many of those who lived according to a

'Beograd' or 'Zagreb' ethos only realised when it was too late that their life-styles, based on individualism, cosmopolitanism and sometimes Yugoslavism, had become entirely irrelevant. Only when the war had started did they understand that 'the rhetoric of ethnonationalism was not (just) a pitiful rambling of the provincial arrivés, but an avant-garde of draft notices' (Dević 1997:148). For some people, this resulted in strong feelings of guilt, and of having been deceived, as illustrated in this extract from an interview with the actress Mira Furlan:

'My greatest mistake and what I feel most guilty about is that I was overcome by the events. They surprised me—I was completely unprepared. When I look now at the development of pre-war events, I see how we have been deaf and blind, as if we didn't want to see the whole horror and the seriousness of the situation. [...] I consider myself guilty for that naïve optimism and blindness. I should have known, I should have seen. [...] I lived in an illusion, in lies, as we have seen afterwards.'
(*Feral Tribune*, 14/12/98:6-7)

Sometimes, these guilt feelings were explained within a context of rising pressure and intolerance towards diverging opinions, but often it was also part of a general reflection on responsibility. Two extracts from interviews illustrate this:

'If there is something that I regret, then it is that I did not speak up more in public. I did so in the work environment, in meetings, and in private, but I did not become a public advocate. Maybe I should have done so. But I did not, out of fear, particularly because of the children. I would be afraid for them.'
(Nela, a middle-aged journalist in Zagreb)

'I don't feel that anyone can be... not happy, we can't be happy because, eh... this war, all this that happened in the former Yugoslavia makes my generation responsible, and maybe more than other ones... because we are *biologically* responsible. We are the generation which should have filled up this vacuum... and taken the responsibility for the country. [...]. We lived in a beautiful country and it had, you know, some atmosphere, and now, we all, we are all scattered throughout the world with our former lives and it is very difficult to start a new life. The only thing that we can do is to sit and reflect on it and, you know, sum up our own lives [...]. My generation is a lost generation. [...] One has doubts... one feels isolated, there are few friends, you know, and you can see the process of collapse... not only of society, but of the integrity of individuals... You see how difficult it is to take this daily deterioration? [...] It is eh... the generation which has really paid the price. In my view, many of my friends get angry when I say this, but we are responsible... We just didn't try enough [*laughs*]. [...] I just say, when I had this general reflection, that we are responsible because... because we didn't take our responsibility earlier. In time, not only now, but during the war. Or much earlier...'
(Jasmina, a middle-aged NGO activist in Beograd)

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to return briefly to the introductory remarks I made about resistance and the term 'anti-nationalism'. If Yugoslavia was far from a harmonious paradise, it is still fair to say that many people's everyday lives contained a sense of non-politicised, unproblematic co-existence. From the narratives analysed in this chapter, it transpires that their mundane discursive practice did not articulate nationality into a moment. They perceived nationality issues as functioning on the level of politics, which was far removed from their everyday experience. Thus, the discursive practices on which this study focuses are articulated only in response to the relatively recent drive to closure effected by the different post-Yugoslav nationalisms. Therefore, although those discourses often relied on narratives of continuity, they can only be understood as reactive practices, as *anti-nationalist* discursive practices.

[chapter seven]
anti-nationalist constructions of
'the city' and 'the village'

Zoran: 'There are so many *Hercegovci* in the Croatian government. They are really primitive. They are very different from the other Croats.'

Tereza: 'Yes, much more different than the Serbs in Zagreb.'

Zoran: 'I think it also has to do with the land they come from. Herzegovina is very stony, rocky. These people are taught from when they are small that they have to defend themselves, to fight against nature. It is ingrained in them when they are kids. And it is these people who now have the power in Zagreb.'

Tereza: 'They all stick together. They are like a big lobby and they are all arranging things for each other. It's like the Montenegrins in Serbia!'

(Zagreb Serb Zoran and his Croatian wife Tereza, now living in Beograd, both unemployed)

At several points, I have emphasised that post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discourses were articulated as responses to dominant nationalisms, and in more than a strictly chronological sense. This is not to say that there was no pre-existing basis to rely on, but the character of anti-nationalism and the ways in which it functioned can only be understood if we see it as a set of reactive strategies that drew a large part of their meaning from their relation to the discourses they opposed. In contrast to dominant tendencies in the post-Yugoslav context, anti-nationalist discursive practices resisted the drive to treat national identity as a crucial factor for the evaluation of social reality. They formulated an alternative definition of the situation—a subaltern explanation of how things were, why they were like that and where the reasons could be found. This means that there was little or no sense of solidarity with co-nationals *for the sake of nationality*. However, interestingly, some of the most powerful articulations of anti-nationalism could be found precisely amongst people who worked in solidarity with survivors of the nationalist violence in refugee centres and rape victim shelters—a different discursive practice of solidarity, which did not articulate the national identity of victims and perpetrators into a moment.

Like any other discourse of identity, anti-nationalism was partly defined and defined itself through a construction of categories of Others, of an 'outside'. As a logical consequence of the dynamics of anti-nationalism, these Others were not the same ones as in nationalist discourses, where enemy nations and 'internal collaborators' functioned as such. Instead of *national* Others, anti-nationalist discursive practices located themselves in opposition to *nationalist* Others, such as dominant politicians, war criminals, media personalities and to everything those people stood for, regardless of national background.

In this chapter, I argue how these processes of self-positioning frequently articulated fragments of discourses employing the concepts of urbanity and rurality¹. Through an analysis of stories from Zagreb and Beograd, I show how very specifically defined discursive constructs of 'the city' and 'the village' functioned as central metaphors in the experience of discontinuity. Moreover, I demonstrate how urbanity was articulated into alternative discursive practices relating everyday life narratives to 'big stories' on a cross- and supra-national level. This means that, after a brief sketch of some patterns

¹ Despite semantic tensions between 'urban' and 'urbane' in English, I have chosen to follow my informants and only use the term 'urban'. Not only does this reflect usage in Serbia and Croatia, but it also emphasises the perceived link between civilised manners and city life, which is at the heart of the analysis in this Chapter.

in (post-)Yugoslav urbanity in its geographical sense, the analysis quickly moves to another level, that of the deterritorialised discursive spaces of urbanity and rurality (Silverman 1975:ix).

Throughout this chapter, it will be clear not only that there were great differences between Zagreb and Beograd anti-nationalist discourses, but also that these differences were interrelated and, in turn, conditioned by and conditioning a discursive formation that I call Balkan orientalism. For analytical reasons, I have attempted to disentangle those two issues, but, importantly, the analysis presented in this chapter should be read in relation to that in the next chapter.

1. the village and the city in the (post-)Yugoslav context

1.1. post-Yugoslav nationalism as a rural phenomenon?

The establishment of the different post-Yugoslav nationalisms as the legitimate discourses on identity in the late 1980s involved the re-articulation of pre-existing discourses of urbanity and rurality. Critics have often described these nationalisms as containing strongly romantic views of rurality (Ramet 1996b; Popov 1994; Buden 1996). It is true that intellectuals glorified what they saw as 'rural ways', particularly in Serbia where nationalism gained political legitimacy first. A significant role was played by writers of what I would call national-realist works, urban-based intellectuals who promoted a revival of epic traditions through novels and poems focusing on rural themes. For example, several Serbs who became politically prominent in the 1990s, such as Dobrica Ćosić, Vuk Drašković and Matija Bećković, represented 'the Serbian peasant' as a pure expression of Serbdom (Popov 1994; Đorđević 1996). The writer Ivan Aralica was often mentioned as their Croatian counterpart (Buden 1996:40-45), although, in Croatia, nationalist evocations of rural purity were permanently crosscut by images of a modern, Central-European Croatian identity.

In both the Serbian and the Croatian case, the rural affinities of nationalism were reinforced by the articulation of nationalist discourses with a religious revival, since the church and religious traditions were more prominent in the countryside. Culturally, then, discourses of rurality were important to the rise of post-Yugoslav nationalisms, and many critics of the regimes converged on the depiction of the post-Yugoslav nationalist regimes of Milošević and Tuđman as profoundly rural phenomena. In the Serbian case, some people went as far as saying that the nationalist revival meant a 'victory of the countryside over the city' (Ramet 1996b:76).

Post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses were not only laden with images of rurality, but they were also strongly rural-based with regard to electoral support. The very campaigns leading to the rise of Milošević and Tuđman relied heavily on rural symbols and style. This was certainly the case in Serbia, where Kosovo Serbs served as the foot soldiers of Milošević's so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution, but also in Croatia the nationalist revival gained momentum through similar mass rallies with a predominantly rural character. Electorally, both Milošević and Tuđman rode to power largely on their success in the countryside, and articulated opposition against the regimes was strongly concentrated in the cities, few of which were still controlled by the ruling parties during my fieldwork (*Glasnik* 07/02/97; *Tjednik* 25/04/97:28; Perazić & Belić 1997:7-8). I would like to add immediately that, since most opposition parties were strongly nationalist themselves, this didn't mean that nationalist votes were only to be found in the villages; rather, nationalist parties got their votes everywhere, whereas the (very small) non- or anti-nationalist vote was overwhelmingly urban².

² With the important exceptions of the Croatian region of Istra and the Serbian province of Vojvodina. But those are interesting stories in themselves. Also, we should take into account recent developments, both in Croatia, where Tuđman has died and HDZ has lost power, and in Serbia, where opposition increasingly appears to come from

It is interesting to see how this contradicts classic accounts, which refer to education, a literary language and standardised printed press as crucial elements in the rise of nationalism (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). In the post-Yugoslav context, and maybe in other cases of postcommunist nationalism as well, these relations seemed to be inverted. A large-scale survey in 1993, in the then embargoed FR Yugoslavia, pointed to a strong correlation between illiteracy or low levels of schooling and attachment to nationalist values (Golubović 1995:447). Authoritarianism and traditionalism, as well as nationalism and xenophobia, scored particularly highly amongst the lowly educated, the elderly and the peasantry, and the opposing values were much more prevalent amongst the young, the educated and the urban. However, the question is to what extent this data can be seen as a measure of largely verbal conformism. In fact, this conformism constitutes an interesting phenomenon in itself, one that might reinforce other elements of modernist explanations of nationalism such as the crucial role of the people sometimes condescendingly referred to as 'semi-intellectuals': teachers, social workers and clergymen. In any case, in this chapter, my focus is on the ways in which discourses about such patterns of rurality and urbanity were incorporated in (anti-)nationalist narratives.

1.2. the place of rurality/urbanity in Yugoslavia

A striking number of people in Zagreb and Beograd spontaneously emphasised the importance of the rural/urban divide when explaining their views on the violent end of Yugoslavia. Before we move on to discuss this point and the effects of the wars on the discursive construction of 'the village' and 'the city', let us briefly look at some background factors in the urban/rural configuration of the former state.

1.2.1. the slow rise of the city in Yugoslavia - or not?

Considered within a European context, the lands that comprised Yugoslavia long retained a remarkably rural character. Urbanisation took off very late, and industry and education developed very slowly (Ramet 1996b:74-75). It was only with the post-WWII Titoist regime that a real program of industrialisation was launched. However, despite its program of socialist modernisation, the nature of the Titoist attitude towards the city remained a matter of debate, with at least two perspectives. On the one hand there were those, like the US scholar Ramet, who argued that Yugoslav communism was a strongly urban-based ideology, aimed at eradicating what it saw as backward or traditional cultural patterns and replacing them with egalitarian and modern social relations (Ramet 1996b:72-73, 76). On the other hand, a number of post-Yugoslav urban intellectuals argued that the Partisan victory in WWII and the Titoist regime that followed had a strongly rural character (especially in Serbia, see for example Velikić 1992a:33, 36ff; Vujović 1992:61; Bogdanović, 1993:38). These people blamed the Communists for waging a traditionalist, authoritarian campaign against the city veiled by a thin rhetoric of urbanisation and modernisation. In reality, it was argued, Titoist urbanisation was plainly anti-modern (Vujović in Bolčić 1995:112-115).

What nobody denied was that post-war Yugoslav times were characterised by a wave of urbanisation: in the period 1948-1981, some 6.5 million Yugoslavs migrated from rural areas to cities (Vujović 1992:61). Even so, not until the mid-1980s did more than half of the population live in urban areas³. Strong inter-republican differences existed, with Serbia simultaneously having both the highest proportion of farmers (27.6% in

smaller towns (for some indications of the latter, see the contribution of Žarić in 'Belgrade after the bombing' (*iNtergraph*, 2, May 2000).

³ In 1981, 53.5% of all Yugoslavs lived in villages, and one fifth was engaged in agriculture (Vujović 1992:61; Ramet 1996b:75). At the outbreak of war, in 1991, 53.5% of the population was living in urban areas (Vujović in Bolčić 1995:112).

1981), and the largest city—also the capital—of Yugoslavia. Croatia, with the second city, Zagreb, counted 15.2% farmers in 1981 (*Statistički ljetopis RH* 1997:87).

1.2.2. everyday experiences of urbanity and rurality: mind the gap

Both in the former country and in the post-Yugoslav states, the gap between the urban and the rural represented more than a mere statistical phenomenon or an item of exclusively academic debate. It featured prominently in people's everyday lives as a popular topic for conversation, with few disputing that the village and the city were worlds apart. This was reflected in the fact that many city-born people had only rarely visited the countryside (not counting the coast) and had a very limited knowledge of relatively nearby rural areas. Others did move between the two locations, but this often reinforced the perception of a strong divide. I met up with Maja, a young woman who'd lived abroad for many years, in a cinema bar in the centre of Beograd. While the anti-regime demonstrations were in full swing outside, she explained that she felt like she lived two lives: one in the city and one in the village. After having lived in a large city abroad for years, she now found herself in her small, native village again. While she loved the peace and beauty there, Maja explained, she needed to escape every now and then, if only to see what was happening in the world.

The gap between village and city life was continually discursively reinforced through a juxtaposition of representations of past and present. For example, Emin, a young man from a provincial town in Bosnia who worked for a Zagreb NGO, told me that before the war nobody had ever asked 'what' you were. He argued that national differences had not been important and people had never talked about them; often they hadn't even known. The real difference, Emin said, had always been between people from the town [*čaršija*] and those from the village. Lifestyle and popular culture played an important role here. At a party shortly after my arrival, Dragan, a *Beograđanin* of just over thirty, told me about his military service in the former Yugoslav army. The conscious policy of the Titoist regime to create nationally heterogeneous groups of recruits was reflected in the stories of several generations of men for whom this was their primary experience of inter-republican contact. In his army days, Dragan said, the *Beograđani* always had more in common with *Zagrepčani* than with Serbs from some small village. The urban kids had grown up in similar contexts, developing similar lifestyles—they were, in Dragan's words, the rock and roll generation.

It is not a coincidence that, in order to explain the cohesion of urban recruits of different nationalities and the gap between 'ruralites' and the 'urbanites' within one republic, Dragan referred to youth subculture. The role of Yugoslav rock music was especially pertinent in the construction of some level of common Yugoslav belonging within his generation (see the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*).

1.2.3. straddling the gap: the ruralisation of the cities

The perception of a wide gap between urban and rural experiences in former Yugoslavia seemed contradictory in relation to another phenomenon, the massive migration to the cities after 1945. As a result of this recent growth, cities were often seen as urban only in part. Slavenka Drakulić wrote that as a result of the relatively short tradition of urban life for most citizens, 'cities retain the flavour of villages' (1996:196). This, she argued, was especially the case in the suburban outskirts, where most recent 'immigrants' settled in apartment blocks. Drakulić is ambivalent about this process of ruralisation of the city. She rightly points out how the situation reflects a pattern in most former-communist countries whereby the city retained strong links with the village because of its status as an asset in the struggle for survival (food, networks...). On the other hand, she mentions the mud in the city streets as a 'ghost of your peasant origins', a permanent reminder of your rural roots that haunt you throughout your city life (1996:199).

The title of Drakulić' essay, *Still stuck in the mud*, is paradigmatic for the image that many urbanites had towards their more recent co-citizens. Whereas the backwardness of the village was always taken for granted, the absence of a strict dividing line between urban and rural was seen as a symptom of a more worrying underdevelopment (Bogdanović 1993:16-17). This was illustrated by a conversation with a colleague from Zagreb during a conference in Slovenia. At first, she approvingly described the centrally located place where a festive dinner had been served as a typical 'citizen's' or 'bourgeois' flat [*građanski stan*]. Later in the evening, she did not hide her lack of enthusiasm for the hotel we were staying in. She stated that, despite its location in the capital, it was not really a *građanski* hotel. It had preserved some typical Balkan features, she said, a typical mix of urban and rural.

I would argue that such views could partly be explained by the fact that the critics themselves were often only first- or second-generation citizens and, therefore, strongly felt the need to establish their urban identity. As we shall see, many deplored the perceived ruralisation of the city in much cruder terms, an attitude that had intensified enormously with the recent wars.

1.2.4. national heterogeneity and the city

The urban/rural gap in former Yugoslavia, although destabilised by the influx of rural migrants, certainly retained its relevance in relation to issues of nationality and multicultural co-existence. In the Yugoslav federation, a pattern existed whereby many cities and towns were strongly nationally heterogeneous and contained relatively higher numbers of mixed marriages than villages (Vujović 1996:149; Bringa 1995:149-153; Smits & Ultee 1996; Petrović 1985). This was certainly the case for the capitals of Serbia, Croatia and, of course, Bosnia. Moreover, in multinational areas, a common pattern included a nationally heterogeneous town surrounded by similarly mixed municipalities (Duijzings 2000:10). However, within those municipalities, there was often a tendency towards more national homogeneity on a smaller scale: villages, hamlets or even streets were more likely to be nationally homogenous. Mixed marriages were less prominent in such rural settings. Having said that, it should be clear that this did not mean segregation: public life, centred around institutions such as school, work, shopping, officialdom, administration and medical care, was often town-oriented and thus more mixed. Needless to say, with the ruthless ethnic cleansing campaigns of the recent wars, a tendency towards national homogeneity became the rule in most areas.

1.3. uricide: destroying the city and 'the city'

It is a sad fact that many towns and cities in Croatia and Bosnia suffered irreparable damage during the post-Yugoslav wars. In post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist narratives, it is often argued that attacks on cities were not just a part of the military strategies of conquest, but also constituted a conscious effort to destroy multicultural communities. This would explain why, apart from destruction caused by fighting, there were systematic campaigns to eliminate structures with strongly symbolic value, such as the Great Mosque in Banja Luka or the Old Bridge in Mostar. Some cities derived a whole new set of meanings from these campaigns of destruction, as in the case of Vukovar which, through its complete annihilation by Serbian forces, gained the epithet of 'hero city' in Croatian nationalism. Similarly, the relentless Serbian and Montenegrin bombing of Dubrovnik, a Unesco heritage city on the Croatian coast, was presented as the ultimate proof that Serbs were violent barbarians aiming for the elimination of civilisation *tout court*. Mostar, once a multicultural Bosnian city, saw its meaning condensed into its Old Bridge—that is, in the *idea* of its Old Bridge, for it was destroyed by Croatian forces.

To finish this incomplete list, we should, of course, mention Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital turned into worldwide symbol of multiculturalism and urban resistance during its merciless siege by Serbian forces. Significantly, this view was shared by many Serbian Sarajevans and by dissident Serbs in general. It was in the latter circle that urban intellectuals often employed the term *urbicide*, a neologism developed for what they saw as one of the main issues at stake in the post-Yugoslav conflicts, the conscious destruction of cities. Urbicide, then, did not only refer to the physical destruction of cities, but also, and maybe even more importantly, to the killing of *urbanity*.

1.4. suffering and ambiguous city discourses of rurality

With the wars and with nationalist discourses of identity rising to dominance, the attitudes in the cities towards 'the rural' took on a very ambiguous character (see also Rennie Short 1991). On the one hand, the idea of rurality as somehow purer, more real than the urban experience pervaded much of the city talk about the village. In this sense, I was reminded of the specificity of my urban-based research on many occasions: 'The city is quite different. It's not representative', many *Beograđani* told me, 'You should go to the villages and see the *real* Serbia.' It is clear that this discourse was reinforced by the experience of war and the increasing influence of nationalism. The Croatian and Bosnian countryside was where *the real thing* happened in the war, and consequently, rural folk were often represented as the epitome of victims. Above all, it was their land and livelihoods that had been sacrificed—they knew what suffering was, and they took the heaviest blows while defending the nation. Even when framed within a less explicitly nationalist discourse, some images of rurality made a defining impact on city populations. A particularly strong example is the Beograd experience in the summer of 1995, when, after the fall of Krajina, a stream of refugees entered the city within days. *Beograđani* of different backgrounds and persuasions had vivid memories of the endless columna of tractors entering the city on the motorway from Croatia, previously called 'Motorway of Brotherhood and Unity'. Of course, images of 'peasant' suffering were not reserved for Beograd audiences. TV reports showing burning villages in Eastern Slavonia and the influx of displaced Croats from rural areas in Bosnia and Croatia struck a similar chord in Zagreb⁴. Also, apart from images of rural suffering in both Serbia and Croatia, the wars seemed to have brought about a stronger economic interdependence between city and village. With drastically falling living standards, the urban population increasingly relied on food from their networks in rural areas (Drakulić 1996:199). This was particularly striking in Beograd, where the socio-economic situation was disastrous. The luggage compartments of buses heading for the capital from all over the country were always packed with large bags full of food. They were usually unaccompanied, and, especially during weekends, Beograd bus station buzzed with people waiting for food packages delivered to them by a co-operative bus driver. Alongside this interdependence and the images of rural suffering, many everyday narratives in Beograd and in Zagreb incorporated a host of negative elements of rurality. While even in mundane nationalist discourses it was not unusual to ridicule peasants and their alleged primitivism, the war only seemed to strengthen this practice. Again, I have to highlight a pervasive ambiguity within nationalist narratives in Croatia. Often, even when *Zagrepcani* derided the alleged primitivism of peasants, the stigma of ultimate backwardness was still reserved for Serbs, those Balkan barbarians who constituted the most important Other of Croatian nationalism.

⁴ Media representations rarely showed urban, professional, rich refugees. This resonates with Malkki's discussion of the essentialised images of refugees (1995a:8-11).

2. the place of frontline ruralites in the post-Yugoslav context

Let us now have a brief look at certain specific groups of people whom, for lack of a better term, I call 'frontline ruralites'. In this section I focus on Herzegovinians (in this case, Croats from Southern and Western Bosnia⁵) and on Bosnian and Krajina Serbs. Arguably, a number of similar points could be made about Croats from other 'frontline' areas including Lika, Kordun and maybe Slavonia, and for some Southern Serbs and Kosovo Serbs. In the Beograd imagination, Montenegrins in particular play a role that resonates with that played by the Herzegovinians in Zagreb. However, with regard to national identity, Montenegrins represent a very specific case with many ambiguities, and they can certainly not just be seen as 'super-Serbs', although a number of them do feel that way⁶. Therefore, I mention Montenegrins when appropriate in this section, without including them in the general analysis.

Focusing on Herzegovinians or Bosnian and Krajina Serbs as groups is not to disregard enormous variations *within* these populations, nor contested representations of them. I simply highlight some patterns in the way the discursive constructs 'Herzegovinians' and 'Krajina and Bosnian Serbs' functioned within both nationalist and anti-nationalist discourses. In the former state, the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs, as well as the Herzegovinians, were situated rather centrally in geographical terms; but with the shifting of borders, they came to be represented (again) as frontier populations. As in WWII, and given that the post-Yugoslav wars involved conflicting campaigns of ethnic cleansing, it is not surprising that these groups played a crucial role in the violence, both as victims and as perpetrators.

2.1. frontline nationalist self-perception: more national than thou

By using the term 'frontline ruralites' I hope to capture the tension that these populations represent in the cities where I was based during my fieldwork. The rural areas from which they hailed could be considered peripheral from a city perspective—urban folk rarely went there—but, as we shall see, they occupied a central place in nationalist discourses of blood and soil and, by inverted extension, in anti-nationalism. The dominant discourses of self-perception amongst these populations displayed striking parallels, built as they were around notions of the nation, purity, and sacrifice⁷. Recently, the dominant discourse of self-perception amongst Bosnian and Krajina Serbs represented them plainly as Serbs, referring to their orthodox background and to the cultural traditions they shared with other Serbs. Similarly, the dominant discourse on identity in Herzegovina saw Herzegovinians as nothing but Croats. In both cases nationalist discourses of self-perception left no stone unturned to prove their belonging to the 'mother nation', and any specifically local aspect of identity was played down, ignored, or denied, unless it furthered the idea that they were *more* typical than those in the motherland⁸. As in Herzfeld's study of a Cretan mountain village, many liked to portray themselves as an ideal type of 'how their nation should really be' (1985). The politician Biljana Plavšić, for instance, 'noting that it had always been said in her family that Serbs in Bosnia were better Serbs than those in Serbia, added that as with all living

⁵ It is important to note that I employ the term *Hercegovci* for Herzegovinian Croats, reflecting use in Zagreb, although Herzegovina was inhabited by other national groups as well.

⁶ At the time of writing, about half of the Montenegrin population, mainly in the mountainous hinterland, supported a political faction which strongly identified Montenegrins as a specific kind of Serbs. Unsurprisingly, they perceived themselves as more Serbian than the *Srbijanci*, the Serbs in Serbia.

⁷ I didn't carry out systematic fieldwork amongst Herzegovinians or Bosnian and Krajina Serbs. Therefore, when I say 'dominant discourses', I rely on information available in the public sphere. There is little doubt that, on the political level, nationalist discourses were overwhelmingly dominant amongst those populations. For a study of the ways in which people in small villages positioned themselves in relation to nationalist discourses, see Jansen 2000b.

⁸ In the case of the Serbs, this is entrenched in language: '*Srb*' means 'Serbs', whereas '*Srbijanci*' specifically refers to Serbs from Serbia.

organisms, those species that live near and are threatened by others are best able to adapt and survive' (Mostov 1995:211). In their nationalist discourses, therefore, these populations presented themselves as more national than their 'brethren' in the motherland, 'unspoilt', 'pure' or 'real' Serbs or Croats. With their leaders describing themselves as defenders of a truer form of nationhood, they would also argue that they had made the largest sacrifice on the altar of national freedom.

Amongst Bosnian and Krajina Serbs were some of the most enthusiastic fighters for a Greater Serbia; and they experienced the fall of Krajina and the ensuing exodus as one of the greatest losses in the history of the Serbian suffering. For many, Republika Srpska, the ethnically cleansed Serbian-controlled part of Bosnia, was simply one of the Serbian lands temporarily locked up in another state. Similarly, at least until Tuđman's death, the self-proclaimed republic Herceg-Bosna, the part of Bosnia controlled by the Croatian Bosnian army, was *de facto* almost part of Croatia. The Croatian Kuna was common currency, schools used Croatian textbooks, and nationalist discourses represented the Bosnian state simply as a prison imposed by the 'West'. In terms of elections, both populations gave the vast majority of their vote to ultra-nationalist parties.

2.2. unspoilt frontlines in 'motherland' nationalism

The construction of these frontline rural groups as 'unspoilt' versions of their respective 'mother' peoples was not an exclusive matter of self-perception. Rather, it was part of a wider discourse on boundaries within nationalism⁹. Post-Yugoslav nationalisms were underpinned by, amongst other things, discourses of rurality which articulated notions of naturalness, purity, reality, sacrifice and the danger of contamination and ambiguity. Living on the fringes of the presumed ethnic territory of their 'mother' nation and with neighbours who more often than not were of a different nationality, these populations were glorified in nationalist representations as 'spearhead' populations in potentially threatened territory (Herzfeld 1985:8, 33-35). Both Serbian and Croatian nationalist discourses constructed an image of frontline rural groups as national archetypes through popular imagery and philosophical musings.

The case of Herzegovinians in particular, illustrates how the representation of frontline rural groups as somehow more 'typical' than their blood brothers in the 'mother' state was reinforced by a popular image related to their geographical position. In ethnological representations, unsurprisingly a smash hit in post-Yugoslav popular-academic discourse, Herzegovinians were identified as belonging to the 'Dinaric' type¹⁰ (this included all Herzegovinians, regardless of their national background). They were, so it was argued, mountain people who were engaged in a timeless struggle for survival against the elements, 'men of stone' heroically making their stand in the face of a rough, rocky, dry and hostile natural environment. And, of course, it wasn't just nature they were fighting. By bringing in notions of frontier, history, authenticity, suffering, threat and sacrifice, the opposing post-Yugoslav nationalisms found a fertile ground on which to develop this image of robust, weathered hero-warriors on the fringes of the motherland. In short, frontline ruralites were represented as *super-rurals* and *super-nationals*.

2.3. extreme visions of purity: hatred of the city

The generally vague, pro-rural stance of post-Yugoslav nationalisms was often reinforced, and sometimes overtaken, by a resolutely anti-urban discourse. Cities and

⁹ Brunnbauer and Pichler have demonstrated that a similar pattern can be found in Bulgarian and Albanian nationalism (2000).

¹⁰ This also became clear in an upsurge of interest in older ethnology such as, for example, the work by Jovan Cvijić and Dinko Tomasić. On Herzegovinian Serbs, see for example Veličić 1992a:33, 38.

towns were represented as promiscuous, impure and degenerate. In extreme versions, they were seen as a sign of the *entartete* times, and it was argued that only a return to rural purity could save the national essence. Čolović draws attention to the metaphors of health and illness that pervade this kind of discourse: the city was represented as a cancer and only radical healing was possible (1994b:33-39). This motif was popular amongst some Bosnian Serb warlords; for example, when Božidar Vučurević, a poet turned warrior, threatened to destroy Dubrovnik, this caused indignation at home and abroad. He dryly replied: 'If necessary we'll build an even prettier and older Dubrovnik' (Vujović 1996:144). In such extreme nationalist discourses amongst frontline rural populations, cities were depicted as disgusting melting-pots where traditions were abandoned and once pure cultural communities contaminated. Frontline ruralites, it was argued, should pride themselves on being faithful to their tradition—their *national* tradition, that is—and on the supposedly unpolluted character of their human and natural environments.

This type of discourse resulted in very ambiguous discourses of the 'mother' nation amongst the rural frontline populations, especially when the former was represented by the capital. On the one hand, the *idea* of the mother nation was *everything*. It was, after all, what they were fighting and suffering for. On the other hand, more often than not, that sacrifice seemed to be met with indifference and even ingratitude. From this we can understand why that same Vučurević directed his primary hatred towards the capital of his *own* supposed motherland: 'Beograd', he argued, 'is Tito's whore. It considers itself Yugoslav, cosmopolitan, democratic. But it doesn't want to be what it is: Serbian' (ibid.:150). This attitude towards the capital was often accompanied by similar attacks on its alleged intellectualism, its armchair politics, its arty flair and, most of all, its indifference in the face of the ongoing suffering of the cream of its own people. In sum, Vučurević argued: 'Beograd is an anti-Serbian container' (Čolović 1994b:39).

2.4. rural invasions: 'hordes from the hills'

As we have seen, the population movement from rural areas to the city that characterised the Tito era underwent a dramatic increase during the post-Yugoslav wars. Both Zagreb and Beograd experienced enormous influxes of people from rural areas, many of whom were directly or indirectly seeking refuge from the violence. Since the conflict showed its most horrific face in some of the previously mentioned frontline territories, the inhabitants of these regions were heavily represented in the new move towards the cities. This resulted in acute housing problems in the capitals and in increased tensions between those who considered themselves urbanites and the newcomers. For example, whereas Beograd counted only 15,000 inhabitants in 1850 and 100,000 in 1914, estimates in the late 1990s hovered around at least one and a half million (Ramet 1996b:74). In 1992, two-thirds of the Beograd population consisted of people who had moved in from rural areas during their lifetime (Vujović 1992:62).

I explained before how post-Yugoslav nationalisms relied partly on a discourse of rural purity and sacrificial heroism. However, in the cities where I worked, these discourses were often destabilised by others, based on the pre-existing view of a wide urban/rural gap and reinforced by the experience of mass migration to the capital from the periphery. The periphery, and the frontline zones in particular, were typically depicted as chaotic, rather exotic and completely lawless places where nothing worked but everything was possible. In short, they were, as one of my Zagreb housemates put it, 'the Wild West'.

As a result, in contrast to the nationalist discourse of frontline heroism and purity, many people in Zagreb and Beograd distanced themselves patently from their 'national brethren' who hailed from what they considered the periphery. This was increasingly the case as the war experience, already relatively remote for many in the city, moved further away into memory. In Beograd, the nationalist regime itself actually failed to deliver on its rhetoric of heroism and sacrifice in a most blatant way in 1999, when

Milošević had the roads to the capital blocked in order to prevent the influx of Kosovo refugees. Unsurprisingly, many refugees, displaced persons and other frontline migrants found this lack of gratitude, or at least sympathy, hard to cope with. The story of Sabina, a Serbian refugee from Krajina who now lived in Beograd, was illustrative. Sabina, the 25-year-old administrative worker from the Beograd NGO I occasionally worked in, argued during another of our many coffeekbreaks that in Krajina they had felt at first that they were defending the Serbs. She said that people had been terribly manipulated by Milošević's men and that when they escaped to Serbia in 1995, they expected help. Sabina was very bitter about this whole experience: her family had owned two houses in Knin and now shared a small flat with many others in Beograd. She was sick of being recognised on the street as a refugee, of being blamed for Serbia's problems and of being treated as more akin to Croats than Serbs.

The influx of what they perceived as 'peasants', and of frontline ruralites in particular, was a source of resentment for many citizens of Beograd and Zagreb. The popular image of an invasion by 'hordes from the hills' pervading conversations in dining rooms, trams and cafés alike also featured prominently in the urban opposition press. Its depiction of people from the rural periphery as an undesirable occupation force rested on several observations, an issue we shall come back to later. For now, I briefly look at the way city-dwellers saw themselves politically and socio-economically victimised by the more recent arrivals.

2.5. chaos and mafia: blaming (frontline) ruralites politically

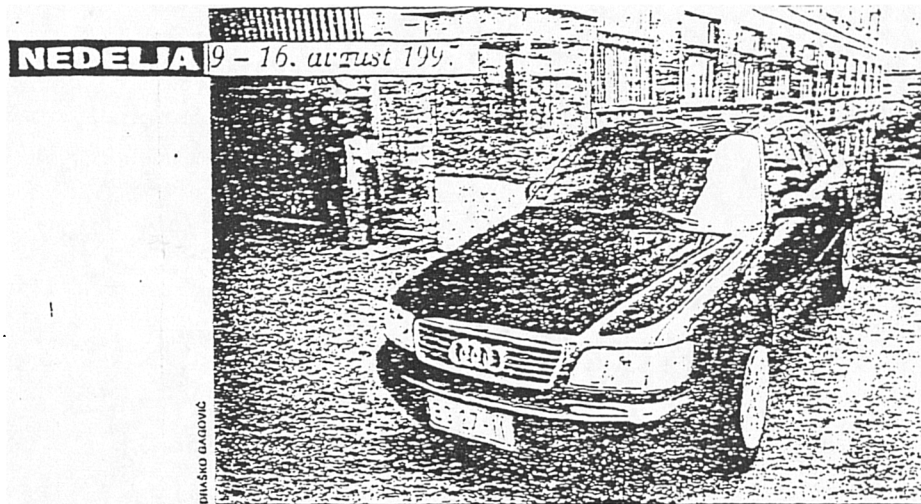
Many citizens of Zagreb and Beograd perceived their regimes as being controlled by ruralites. The now defunct oppositional Zagreb weekly, *Tjednik*, labelled the Croatian government 'a village government', as 15 out of 22 ministers and 65% of MPs were born in a village (02/01/98:27-29). In the cabinet, 3 out of 22 ministers were born in Bosnia-Herzegovina as were 20 of the 195 parliamentarians (most of them from Western Herzegovina). Strikingly, the same number of MPs were born in the capital Zagreb, which by then housed more than a quarter of all Croats. The Herzegovinian lobby, as it was called, occupied a large number of government posts. It was epitomised by two hardliners who became extremely powerful during the rule of president Tuđman: Gojko Šušak (†), minister of defence, and Ivić Pašalić, presidential advisor.

Also, and maybe even more importantly, prominent Herzegovinian HDZ members were the primary beneficiaries of Tuđman's privatisation scams, and there were strong indications of high-level involvement in illicit business. In combination with large (mainly military) subsidies for the para-state Herceg-Bosna, this led many *Zagrepčani* to portray the HDZ regime as being pro-Herzegovinian at the expense of Croats in Croatia. It can hardly be called a coincidence that the promise to deal with this situation was one of the main elements of Stipe Mesić's successful campaign to succeed Tuđman as president of Croatia. In Beograd, the emphasis was not so much on Bosnian or Krajina Serbs, as on people from rural areas in general. However, at least at the time of my fieldwork, it was *bon-ton* to point out the Montenegrin background of well-known figures such as president Milošević, Bosnian Serb leader Karadžić, and war criminal Arkan. Similarly, Montenegrins were said to occupy leading positions in all sorts of business, particularly those of the shady kind.

What we have here, then, is a story of ruralites, frontline ones in particular, invading the city through its centres of power. This image was widespread and it pervaded not only everyday conversation, jokes and anecdotes in the two capitals, but also much of the popular press. In a condensed illustration, the independent Beograd weekly *Vreme* published two pictures: one of a large limousine-style *Audi* with exclusive politicians' number plates; and one of a crowd of people struggling to climb on an already packed city transport bus (Figure Two). The large print title said: 'They hate Beograd'. The accompanying text left nothing to the imagination:

'They travel to and from their Požarevac, Kolašina, Vranja to work; they travel by helicopter or Mercedes. Meanwhile, Beograd citizens suffer like cattle in dilapidated city transport. The federal government has not approved the import of buses from Berlin, a present to this city. They hate *Beograđani* and they hate this city.'

As argued above, apart from leading the country into socio-economic disaster as politicians, ruralites were perceived as being involved in lucrative wheeling and dealing in mafia-like networks with *other* ruralites. All this was, of course, done at the expense of those who lived in the city already and saw it as their rightful property. This was often accompanied by the desperate outcry about Herzegovinians in Zagreb *and* about Montenegrins in Beograd, that 'there were more of them in the city than where they come from'.



Oni mrze Beograd

Oni do svojih Požarevaca, Kolašina, Vranja, i od kuće do posla, putuju helikopterima i mercedesima. Beograđani stradaју kao stoka u derutnom gradskom prevozu. Savezna vlada nije odobrila uvoz autobusa iz Berlina, poklonjenih ovom gradu. Oni mrze Beograđane i mrze ovaj grad.



Figure Two (*Vreme* 16/08/97)

3. anti-nationalist narrations of rurality

3.1. blaming ruralites for nationalism

We have seen how the urban/rural dualism was incorporated in a variety of ways into many nationalist discursive practices. On the whole, post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism relied much more frequently and much more obviously on the urban/rural dichotomy. In many anti-nationalist discursive practices, the village/city divide seemed to be articulated into a crucial moment in both Zagreb and Beograd, albeit in a more outspoken way in the latter. Interestingly, the previously mentioned extreme nationalist representations of urban promiscuity versus rural purity were often not really questioned. In many cases, however, their moral evaluation was inverted: purity was reformulated into backwardness, narrow-mindedness and primitivism, whereas the mixed character of the city was re-articulated into cosmopolitanism, civilisation and tolerance. This pattern stood alongside strong differences between anti-nationalist discourses in Zagreb and Beograd, many of which were closely related to the different nature of the dominant nationalisms.

Anti-nationalist narratives often represented 'peasants' as patriarchal, gun-toting, militaristic, uneducated, uncivilised, aggressive, primitive Others, and in that way reproducing the generalised depictions of rural life which were circulating amongst self-proclaimed urbanites. However, they expanded on this stereotypical image and argued that, on top of all that, ruralites were prone to *nationalism*. In a significant number of anti-nationalist narratives, a large part of the blame for nationalism and the war fell on 'peasants', and especially on those from the frontline zones. Of course, in line with the views of the large majority of other post-Yugoslavs, the first ones to be blamed were politicians—but in this case it was often pointed out that these politicians were peasants, or, at least, that their nationalism was a 'peasant' discourse. As we have seen, this assertion was supported by electoral results, and many citizens of Zagreb and Beograd were keen to point out that without the countryside Tuđman and Milošević wouldn't even be in power. At a party in Zagreb, a student, himself from a town which had been under fire from Serbian artillery, told me that he believed that there were good and bad people amongst Serbs just as amongst others. Only the crazy ones made trouble, he stated, but they were not from the city—they were peasants who 'came into the cities and fucked things up'.

We have seen how in the cities ruralites in general, and ones from 'the frontline' in particular, were often represented as invaders who took over power, riding the waves of nationalist euphoria, war and the ensuing chaos. Many 'autochthons'¹¹ felt extreme resentment towards them. They were seen as powerful (through connections), rich (through corruption) and successful (through the former two and through ruthlessness). This ruthlessness was then linked to another element particularly constitutive of the perception of frontline ruralites: their depiction as primitive, backward and, above all, uneducated. In the words of the dissident singer Đorđe Balašević:

'The cleansing is not just ethnic, there is also a kind of mental terror through the TV programme. There are many illiterates who gaze at their electronic box and believe everything they see.'
(*Globus* 15/01/93:21)

Because of their lack of education, it was argued, peasants weren't hindered by nuances or ambiguities, as 'they wouldn't understand such things anyway'.

¹¹ '*Starosjedioci*' or '*starosedelci*' literally means 'residents from old times' or 'long-term settlers'. Despite its dubious nature, I have decided to employ the term 'autochthons' because it is widely used, and this is how I heard it translated in the post-Yugoslav states.

3.2. explaining nationalist success: no education for the nation

In anti-nationalist narratives, the rural successes of nationalism and of the ruling parties were often linked to levels of schooling and literacy, which were much lower in the countryside than in the cities. As I mentioned before, this contradicts classic accounts of nationalism with their emphasis, for example, on standard education and a literary language. However, for many post-Yugoslav critics of nationalism, survey results of coinciding rural illiteracy and regime support merely confirmed what they already saw as a crucial element explaining the rise of the nationalist leaders—the backwardness of the rural areas. For example, Boris, a student from a longstanding and well-off city family, took me on a walk through Beograd's old town where he almost exclusively showed me landmarks of Serbia's history of European-ness and modernity. While strolling through town, he incessantly commented on passers-by and complained that the current situation was not so surprising if one took into account the fact that most people in Serbia were virtually illiterate. And it must be said that, according to the latest census, Yugoslavia did have a relatively high degree of illiteracy in comparison with other states with similar economic profiles. This was especially the case in the countryside, albeit with strong inter-republican differences. In 1991 6.65% of the population of Serbia and Montenegro were registered as illiterate (excluding Kosovo, where numbers were estimated to be much higher), and 3% in Croatia¹². Illiteracy was three to four times higher in the Serbian countryside than in the cities (Perazić & Belić 1997:8). About half the population of Croatia, and more than half in Serbia, completed primary school only, if even that, and a large majority of the illiterate population were senior Yugoslavs. It only took a small leap of imagination for anti-nationalists to conclude that the rise of nationalism was explained by its appeal to old peasants without schooling.

If lack of education was considered a key element in the rise of nationalism, this was mirrored by the belief that schooling would also provide a way out. Jagoda, who studied psychology in Beograd, was born and raised in a provincial town. I met her for coffee after we had attended a human rights course together, and she argued that the situation in Serbia was best understood as an identity crisis: people were disoriented and therefore very easily taken in by nationalist ideas. The main problem, she stated, was education. High degrees of illiteracy, especially in the provinces and amongst old people, meant that media messages were blindly accepted.

Although it is not my intention here to consider whether the success of nationalism *really* had to do with education or not, I would like to draw the attention to one element which sheds an interesting light upon the above assertions. With regard to the electorate, there was an obvious link between low educational levels and nationalist—or pro-regime—voting behaviour. However, the regimes in both Croatia and Serbia counted an unusually high number of well-educated intellectuals who lived in the city¹³. Still, as we shall see, critics of the regimes both in Serbia and in Croatia would often sneeringly refer to them as 'peasants' (*Tjednik* 02/01/98; *Vreme* 16/08/97).

3.3. anti-nationalist constructions of rural Others

Frequently, anti-nationalist narratives transcended the factual level of electoral results or illiteracy rates and engaged in a *culturally* embedded anti-rural discourse. For example, in Beograd I considered asking the help of a diplomat from the Belgian

¹² Ivanov 1995:371-372; Bolčić 1995:49; *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske*, 1997:84.

¹³ In 1997, the figures for Croatia were as follows: 6 out of 22 ministers held doctorates (24 out of 195 MPs), 5 ministers had Masters degrees (14 MPs), 9 ministers were university graduates (116 MPs) and only 2 ministers did not have university education (41 MPs) (*Statistički ljetopis RH* 1997:57; *Tjednik* 02/01/98:27-29). The interesting thing is that most of these data were provided in an article addressing the proportion of politicians with urban and rural backgrounds, subtitled 'A Village Government' [*Seoska Vlada*] (*Tjednik* 02/01/98:27-29).

embassy in my quest for a residence permit. A friend, an academic who was quite well-connected, warned me that the presence of a diplomat wouldn't make any difference. According to her, the police were primitive peasants and the only way to impress them was by knowing someone who was more powerful than they. Similarly, as we have seen, much of the rural support for the regime and for nationalism was explained by reference to the lack of education, authoritarianism and ultimately, plain stupidity. This also allowed anti-nationalist narratives to formulate an explanation for the continuity in the countryside. A popular view in Beograd stated that 'peasants' simply followed whatever leader was calling them—the question of whether under a communist or a nationalist flag was considered beyond them.

In this sense, it is not surprising that many people in cities all over former Yugoslavia were very keen to point out the distinction between them and their rural co-nationals. I met Milan, a young Beograd technician, in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, where he was attending a specialist computing course. Milan was originally from Zagreb and, intrigued by the fact that I was then living in the city where he grew up, he embarked on a whole series of explanations about 'what people were like in this region'. Note that, although Zagreb was only a couple of hours away by train, he could not possibly go there without a long visa procedure, which might fail anyway. We had some drinks and played cards, and one of the things he emphasised was the specificities of Serbs from different regions: Šumadija Serbs, Kosovo Serbs, Vojvodina Serbs, *Ličani*, Bosnian Serbs, Serbs from around Knin, Herzegovinian Serbs and so on. Each of them, Milan said, claimed to be the biggest Serbs of all—apart from *Beograđani* and *Novosađani* ['citizens of Novi Sad'], who didn't play the same game.

Similarly, when talking about the Serbian revolt in Croatia in 1991, the student Biljana, herself a Serb who had fled to Beograd, often stressed the differences between her own Zagreb background and that of many people (from Knin) in the refugee organisation where she worked. She recalled the 1991 events in Krajina, where Serbian nationalists had been waving flags on the barricades and stirring up trouble, as a 'typical peasant thing to do'. This assertion of difference within the Serbian nation, represented a real problem for Croatian nationalist discourses which, as we shall see, relied on the strict dichotomy of Balkan Serbs and European Croats (Buden 1996:92). The self-consciously urban Zagreb Serb distorted that clear dualism, especially when juxtaposed with the stereotypical images of Herzegovinians. This was reflected with amazing irony in graffiti that appeared in Zagreb only shortly after the war which had pitted, let us not forget, Croats of all regions, including Herzegovina, against Serbs:

'Give us back our Serbs, you can have your Herzegovinians back'
[*Vratite nam naše Srbe, evo vam natrag vaši Hercegovci!*]

Hence, even so shortly after the war, the influx of Herzegovinians into Zagreb, and particularly into regime positions, was seen as a bad development—so bad, that people would rather see their Serbian co-citizens, yesterday's war enemies, return. Again, frontline ruralites figured as prominent Others in many anti-nationalist narratives. This should not surprise us, given the centrality of these groups in nationalism. Particularly in more mainstream, influential, established and respectable assertions of anti-nationalism, such as those articulated by many urban intellectuals and in a large part of the independent press, the stereotypical depictions of frontline ruralites were often *reinforced*. In the drive to minimise the importance of national/natural bonds of solidarity with those populations, a number of these images became part and parcel of discourses which were otherwise examples of tolerance. In this way, not only were the dominant nationalist representations of 'frontline ruralites' in Serbia and in Croatia strikingly alike, but so, too, were their dissident counterparts. That anti-nationalism sometimes fitted in rather nicely with general urban discourses was not so surprising, given the rural overtones of their opponents, and given the fact that most critiques of nationalism were developed in the cities and most activists were city-based.

3.4. urban elites, anti-nationalism and cultural capital

Not only were explicit articulations of anti-nationalist discursive practice strongly concentrated in the cities, they also gave rise to a strikingly professional-looking industry of publishing, education, conferences and so on. As a person with some experience in the Belgian NGO movement, I was sometimes baffled by the up-to-scratch technological infrastructure and the state-of-the-art office facilities of certain post-Yugoslav organisations with a stake in anti-nationalism. It has to be said that this was rarely matched by the private living conditions of those involved.

Although it is not my intention to analyse post-Yugoslav nationalism as a social movement, I think it is important to make a little detour in order to explain the societal position of many public advocates of anti-nationalism. In contrast to what was often suggested by nationalists of different colours, they were not simply the former 'red bourgeoisie' who bewailed their fall in the social hierarchy due to the break-up of Yugoslavia. However, when we limit ourselves to the more established, respectable, often intellectual critics of nationalism, a pattern emerged with regard to their status in society. As we have seen in the discussion of generational aspects of anti-nationalism, many of them were part of a layer of Yugoslav society which I would call the 'urban cultural elite': middle-aged; highly educated; 'Western' oriented; well-travelled; often a-political; and relatively well-off. This set them apart from the groups they perceived as implicated most clearly in nationalism: ruling politicians, uneducated 'peasants' and what they saw as the semi-intelligentsia, who glorified rurality. Some of the latter, of course, were also part of the cultural elite—but they achieved positions close to the regimes, relying precisely on a partial denial of the urbanity that much anti-nationalism asserted (see the discussion of the notion of *palanka* in section 4.6).

For many individuals from the cultural elite, I would argue, moving into anti-nationalist space, or creating such space, allowed them to pursue further certain life ambitions. Paraphrasing a much more lucrative and much less ethical post-Yugoslav industry, this was sometimes jokingly referred to by those in question as 'anti-war profiteering'. This is not to say that private gain explains why these individuals engaged in anti-nationalist critique, but it suggests that there was more to it than purely ideological disputes. Not all life stops when a war breaks out, and for a small number of individuals engagement in the subversion of nationalism had permitted them to obtain or sustain a position in which to accumulate different kinds of capital. It sometimes provided a source of income and economic security, but more importantly, it augmented one's cultural and social capital through contacts, media attention, publication, travel and through the very status of dissidence. The role of anti-nationalism in people's narrations of personal continuity, which is one of the main themes of this study, was therefore not strictly 'psychological'.

The case of the Beograd-based Social Democratic Union, a marginal political party with an explicitly anti-nationalist programme, illustrated this. The SDU had a very limited budget and was housed in extremely poor conditions, but it relied heavily on its cultural capital as a marginal but 'connected' party. Its conference guest list, for example, boasted a host of colleague-politicians from major social-democratic parties in Western Europe. In that sense, for people in urban surroundings the organisational vectors of anti-nationalism, such as certain NGOs and publishing, political, educational and artistic programmes, were simultaneously gateways for the fulfilment of personal ambitions and discursive material for the construction of a cosmopolitan identity (Dević 1997). In the ocean of misery brought on by the war, it was argued, at least some good things came about as well. In Beograd in particular, the relativity of economic capital was also prevalent in the common references to recent emigrants as being on the winning side with regard to money, but losing out on the status front. As we have seen before this fed into a storyline which said those Yugoslavs abroad were 'all washing dishes'.

3.5. diverging anti-nationalist narratives and an alternative undercurrent

Although a large majority of anti-nationalist narratives in both Zagreb and Beograd converged in their representation of ruralites, and especially the ones from the frontline, as prone to nationalism, they didn't all agree on the nature of that nationalism. As we have seen, some narratives, especially those prevalent amongst people who had little direct interaction with the countryside, expanded the more or less general urban view of rurality to include nationalism as a further expression of traditionalism, primitivism and backwardness. Of course, people did this to differing degrees, and many, including individuals who could be considered urban intellectuals themselves, disagreed with anti-rural discourses (Čolović 1994b:31-32). Let us look at two alternative lines of thought expressed in interviews by leading Beograd dissidents in their respective offices. Both were academics with an outspoken independent reputation; one had come from Central Serbia as a student; the other one hailed from Bosnia.

'There is a lot of talk about ruralisation of the city—about the influence of village primitivism on the city and so on. I think that those ideas are a means for self-deception. Like, "We would be citizens, we would be living well, if it weren't for these primitives from the village". But if you look at today's Serbia [...] we should treat the village with a lot of respect. Serbia has survived only thanks to the products of the village. So my attitude towards the village is completely different, although I know that the pressure of people from the village, the pressure of refugees on the city is very strong and a really great problem. But to accuse the village, and those who moved from the village to the city, for the character of the regime, that is an ideological illusion. A serious critic should not allow him/herself to say things like that, because the regime has received much more support from SANU [the Serbian Academy for Sciences and Arts] than from the villagers who moved to the city.'

'All that urban/rural business is an ideological story. Nationalism draws upon the village, often seen as 'in the mountains'. It represents the village as a site of purity, of an uncontaminated, mythical, idyllic, true Serbian identity. Sadly, there is a movement in the other direction as well, which sees all the evils coming from the village. The primitives, they say, come from the mountains into the cities. They destroy multiculturalism, co-existence, etc. I don't agree with that. I believe that the village is also the greatest victim of the war. Ethnic cleansing took place *there*! Those people from the mountains were not peasants. On those mountains, there were poets and teachers. There were Karadžić's there. In Pale [war-time seat of Bosnian Serbian nationalist regime, s] there simply aren't any *seljaci* ['peasants']! So I see all that talk about the urban being destroyed by the rural as a myth, as not rational...'

The latter argument indicates something I have mentioned before—that it would be extremely interesting, I think, to look at the role of 'semi-intellectuals' in the actual rooting of nationalist discourse. Also, please note his argument of rationality at the end. In more sympathetic portrayals, then, the perceived straightforwardness of rural reasoning was linked in turn to an image of the peasant as victim. Refugees, in particular, were seen as victims of aggression, war and, implicitly, of fast changes in social reality, too fast for them to grasp. Still another set of narratives argued that they were not just victims of violence by national Others, nor were they simply helplessly lost in the face of sudden changes. Here it was emphasised that they had little access to information and that they had been (and continued to be) subjected to a relentless flood of nationalist propaganda and manipulation by their own government as well. Despite its more benign character, this representation still related to the rural primarily as inferior, not by ascribing evil agency to it ('nationalism is an ideology constructed by primitive peasants'), but by denying it agency altogether ('peasants are manipulated into nationalism by regime').

As a result of overwhelmingly straightforward electoral patterns, regional legacies of WWII and beyond, and the traditional perception of a wide urban/rural gap confirmed by

relative isolation, there was little public debate about these issues within anti-nationalism. However, there were urban anti-nationalist discursive practices that articulated rural experiences in alternative ways. Those with activist experience in war-torn villages and those who worked with refugees from those villages tended to relate more positively to people in rural areas. This alternative view was often less articulated, certainly in public, where the urban-centric story was clearly dominant. Still, it constituted an important undercurrent of anti-nationalism which refused to go along with the anti-rural bias and, to an even greater degree, with the moral implications of such dissident discourse. These narratives tended to emphasise the importance of the rural war experience and the relative indifference, snobbishness or even hypocrisy of city-based folk. Ela, an NGO activist and a Zagreb woman through and through, had travelled quite a bit and had lived in a large Western European city for a while during the war. She liked to display her knowledge of 'Western' ways and compare them to the situation in her own city, which she found unbearably snobbish. Ela thought the best example was the contrast between the make-up and the trendy clothes one saw on the streets of Zagreb and the lousy quality of the underwear on the washing lines. This critical view was often reinforced by a shift in the depiction of the peasants from only victims to victims/survivors, reflecting a wider discourse in social work—especially in feminism—which intends to do away with the paralysing effect of victim-centred approaches by emphasising agency. Of course, that did not require a denial of the overwhelming role of media manipulation, but it did imply a more detailed look at the different circumstances under which urbanites and ruralites had to exercise their agency. These narratives were often grounded in direct experience in the countryside *and* sometimes, remarkably, in a familiarity with Western European NGO practice¹⁴.

4. war, (anti-)nationalism, urbanity, and the 'loss of the city'

4.1. faces and names

It must be clear by now that the stakes of the post-Yugoslav urban/rural divide could not be pinned down topographically at the boundaries of urban agglomerations. Rather, the discursive practices of many *Zagrepčani* and *Beograđani* represented it as a moral or civilisational issue. The very terminology 'urbanity' and 'rurality' was omnipresent in narratives throughout the whole post-Yugoslav region, and it was firmly anchored in everyday vocabulary. '*Seljac*' literally means 'villagers' (*selo*=village), but it was one of the most frequently used pejorative terms with regard to people who were considered primitive, uneducated, rude and everything else *not* urban. When translating it into English, people almost always went for the term 'peasants', not 'villagers'. A whole range of derogatory terms was available to refer to people from rural areas, and to frontline ruralites in particular. '*Ljudi sa brda*' ['people from the hills'] was still rather innocent and soon gave way to '*primitivci*' or '*divljaci*' ['savages']. Anyway, the pejorative power of village metaphors was so strong that in many contexts simply pointing out that somebody was '*sa sela*' ['from the village'] was satisfactorily judgmental.

If '*seljac*' represented one side, on the other pole of the continuum there were '*građani*'. '*Građani*' (*grad*=city) referred to citizens not only as inhabitants of a city, but also as *citoyens*—educated and civilised self-conscious political subjects¹⁵. The term '*građani*' was saturated with the desirable quality of '*urbanitet*'. This notion functioned as the key to a popular ideology of being civilised, evoking ideas and practices of civility, manners and a sense of civic pride in a very similar way to '*civiltà*' as explored in Silverman's

¹⁴ This resonates with the wider phenomenon, discussed in the chapter on Balkan orientalism, whereby certain things that were considered 'primitive' in the local context (e.g. 'ethnic' dress or music) were made acceptable or even desirable through Western European or North American channels of commodification.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the central role of urbanity in discursive practices of Serbian protest, see Jansen 2001.

study of an Italian hill town (1975:1-11, 36-44). Despite the many overlaps between the post-Yugoslav 1990s situation and Silverman's Umbrian 1960s context, particularly in terms of an emphasis on formal cultural fluency, I have to point out one important difference. In Umbrian '*civiltà*', Silverman highlights a strong element of national pride, a sharing in the glory of Italian civilisation and a loyalty to the Church (1975:5-6). In contrast, due to the specific political context, post-Yugoslav notions of 'urbanity' were precisely articulated with *anti*-nationalism and included a much stronger belief in modernity and progress.

During my fieldwork, the very term 'urban' (written in the same way as in English) was a buzzword amongst all sorts of people wanting to set themselves apart from the deterioration and chaos that surrounded them. For example, an alternative radio station in Novi Sad was called 'Radio Urbans' [sic], an art festival in Beograd 'Urban Provocations', and a subcultural Zagreb collective bore the subtitle 'Urban Guerrilla'. But also in everyday language use, the word 'urban' frequently cropped up, as people talked about an 'urban' party, an 'urban' person, an 'urban' piece of music or an 'urban' bar. Whatever was referred to as 'urban' was thereby declared good—resonating with all things fashionable, stylish, civilised, and 'Western'.

4.2. urbanity as a way of life: manners and mentality

The 'urbanity' discourse had existed before the war, but it emerged in an intensified version with the dominance of 'rural' nationalism and with the effects of the violence. Themes of rurality and urbanity provided important ammunition in discourses of dissidence, and the language upon which they hinged constituted an important element of the idiom in which this dissidence was phrased. Again I have to draw attention to a pattern of differences between Zagreb and Beograd. In the former, manners and civility were certainly considered urban qualities in contrast to 'peasant' behaviour, but they were *also* articulated into a nationalist discourse of Central-European Croats versus Balkan Serbs. In Beograd where nationalism claimed less affinity with 'the city', the divide was more straightforwardly constructed as an issue of urbanity and rurality.

In Beograd, then, patterns of city-centrism were prevalent both in urban everyday narratives and in academic work, such as Vujović's study which refers to the 'consequences of a mass presence of first generation immigrants from the village who slowly and with difficulty accept the city way of life' (1992:62). Often, the 'civilisational wall' dividing the city from the village was represented as insurmountable, and it was argued that becoming a citizen was virtually impossible if one wasn't born and raised as one. Many citizens took pride in the length of their urban status as a family, and even within the city, certain parts were considered more truly urban than others. This sometimes led to bizarre situations, as on one afternoon with Beograd student, Boris. Through a haze of too much smoke and drink, and listening to the latest trendy tunes from Britain on his stereo, Boris spent many hours lecturing me on the not-so-trendy-subject of the Beograd pedigree of all four of his grandparents—not a topic I had ever discussed under such lounging circumstances...

In Zagreb, this city-pride was sometimes expressed through self-assertion as a '*purger*', a notion related to the historical idea of free citizens. Nevertheless, a constant struggle for definition took place here, as one's status in relation to those categories was always contested and permanently unstable. I would argue that, in this way, many post-Yugoslav '*građani*' gave 'urbanity' a definite Bourdieusian slant and represented the urban/rural distinction in terms very similar to those of the embodiment of culture captured by the notion of *habitus* (1992a). In the discursive practices of post-Yugoslav urbanity, even a doctoral degree and a house in the centre of the capital could not save you from being brandished as a '*sejka*' if you were seen as having a rural *habitus*. Sometimes the portrayal of rural character went into semi-racist overdrive, such as in an exposé by the same Boris, delivered to me on a walk through Beograd. Deploring the changes in his Beograd, he blamed the loss of the 'urban spirit' [*urbani duh*] on the

newcomers from rural areas who flooded the whole city. He argued that these people were completely different with regard to culture, speech, behaviour, and even looks. With regard to the latter, Boris assured me that his mates and he were blond and tall, whereas the newcomers were small and dark.

The set of discursive practices on the urbanity/rurality continuum articulated elements such as language, education, phenotype, clothing, body posture, residence, interests and hobbies, hygiene, haircut and accent. On several occasions in Beograd I was reprimanded for pronouncing words the wrong way. For example, when I put a wrong stress in a certain word, I was benignly told off, not for being wrong, but 'because you don't want to sound like a peasant, it sounds really *nekulturan*'. 'Culture' ('*kultura*') was a crucial concept in this context, and urban folk in Serbia and Croatia generously sprinkled their conversation with references to somebody or something being *kulturan* or *nekulturan*.

On one of my trips to Bosnia I met Rahim, an artist in the town of Tuzla. His wife and he lived in a beautiful if slightly neglected old house, filled to the roof with antique wooden furniture. When my friend from a local NGO and I arrived, Rahim sat looking grumpy on a little fence under a tree in front of the house with a half-empty bottle of *rakija* at his side. His unkempt hair was greasy and he was in bad need of a shave. We moved inside and, surrounded by his monumental pieces of visual art, Rahim mounted a litany of complaints about his compatriots. He had spent the war years as a refugee in Germany and upon return was near desperate at what he considered the horrendous levels of barbarity in his native Bosnia. Before this conversation, my friend had told me that Rahim was involved in various civil campaigns in Tuzla and that he shared most of his political views with the town mayor, a leading proponent of anti-nationalism. However, when I asked him about the latter, whom he had known personally for many years, Rahim pulled his face in disgust. Fuelled by more *rakija*, he argued that he couldn't stand the man's 'primitivism' and called him the biggest *seljačina*¹⁶ he had ever met. He underscored this statement by saying that the mayor didn't know how to dress properly and couldn't even hold his cup and drink his coffee like a cultured man.

This reflects the crucial place of 'manners' in the construction of the rural Other. Urbanity, then, was a matter of style and of performative competence¹⁷ with a peculiar moral dimension. It was not so much living in the city which set you apart from 'peasants', but, resonating with early sociological analyses of urban life (e.g. Wirth 1938), it meant displaying the right mentality and the correct way of life (see also Norris 1999:81-82; Silverman 1975). In a conversation about the rise of Milošević, Nataša, a Beograd academic, argued that people had fallen for him because he was like them. She added that people could identify with him, because [in English] 'they don't like somebody who is polite here'. At her partner Aleksandar's birthday party, the large majority of those present were academics and artists, many of whom were well-known public figures. All of them considered themselves *Beograđani*, and the occasion had an outspoken civil, 'urban' character in terms of manners, conversation and interaction. Despite his extremely dire financial circumstances, Aleksandar had prepared an impressive selection of food, buffet-style. When I complimented him on it, he explained to me the set-up of the buffet: half the table was, he said jokingly, 'Serbian cuisine' (lots of meat and typical staple foods such as *proja* and *kajmak*), whereas the other half consisted mainly of seafood, a rare and expensive treat in Beograd (compare Bourdieu 1979; Mennell 1991:126-151). He then explained that he thought it was worth the investment because when one has a certain group of people attending a party, people who know how to appreciate things, then one wants to present them with something appropriate...

¹⁶ *Seljačina* is the augmentative form of *seljak*, and is therefore even more pejorative.

¹⁷ See Williams 1993 for a literary analysis of changing social patterns in relation to the country and the city in the very different English context; see Ferguson (1992; 1999) for an elaboration of both urban ('cosmopolitan') and rural ('local') styles on the Zambian Copperbelt. See Herzfeld (1985) for a discussion of performative competence.

Style is one element here, but I would argue that we are dealing with mentality as well. 'Urban' and 'urbanity' became polysemic terms which took on explicitly moral, or rather *moralistic*, overtones in many contexts. Urbanity, according to Vujović, refers to 'civility, courteousness and decency, without which there can hardly be a democratic culture' (1992:62; see Silverman 1975:3). At times this discourse resulted in outright city-centrism. The same Vujović, for instance, argued that 'all great cultures are born in cities' and that 'world history is actually the history of urban people' (1992:62). Of course, we have to see this in the specific socio-historical context: in a public climate of extreme xenophobia, nationalist euphoria, chaos and war, urbanity came to stand for the 'elementary urban behaviour of educated people based on tolerance' (ibid.:64). In the process, education, intellect and self-consciousness were rather straightforwardly conceptualised as urban, not rural, phenomena (ibid.:62). This intellectualism is pushed further by Pušić, who quotes Hegel's definition of urbanity as 'the most noble urban behaviour of educated people' and argues for 'a civil society with established standards and norms of collective life in largely populated agglomerations' (1995:567). There is yet another twist to the story. Many Beograd urbanites looked down upon Zagreb and portrayed it as a 'provincial town'. *Zagrepcani* opposed this in discourses of urbanity which frequently centred upon the Habsburg past and a general Central-European heritage. People would point to the architecture of the city, certain names of places, historical continuity, as well as geographical proximity to Vienna, for example. Sometimes this was even framed in a sort of Habsburg-nostalgia (*Jutarnji List* 04/07/98:27), particularly prevalent amongst the old, urban middle class, where lifestyle habits and vocabulary (with Germanisms such as '*cajtung*' ['newspaper'] and '*badecimer*' ['bathroom']) resonated with those times.

4.3. civilisation and popular culture

It should be clear by now that the term 'urban', when used in the post-Yugoslav context, was far removed from other phenomena that are often associated with it in other locations. No notion here, as in the case of, say Manchester, Los Angeles, Mexico DF or Marseille, of the 'other' side of urbanity: chaos, dirt, or crime. And, crucially, no mention of Rodney King, Brixton riots or other outbursts of so-called ethnic violence. When I mentioned this to a Beograd intellectual who played a prominent role in anti-nationalism, he waved my argument away, saying that he referred to 'urban' in a strongly historical European context.

Urbanity here was about Vienna, Baudelaire and Elias, and it was conceptualised in a historicist way as a pattern and a process typical of 'Europe', conceptualised, of course, in a particular way (Mužijević 1996; 1997; Prodanović 1997a). However, despite this emphasis on civility and manners, there was a certain subcultural current of urbanity as well. Many young people in Beograd and Zagreb liked to refer to themselves as belonging to a '*gradska ekipa*' ['urban scene'; 'urban crowd']. In my perception, many young people in both cities paid an extraordinary amount of attention to dress, style and presentation, even on sometimes very limited budgets. Also, in line with what I argued earlier, considerable respect was accorded for cultural capital such as knowledge of and conversational fluency in popular culture, for example 'quality' film, music, and theatre.

In Beograd, where Zagreb was often considered 'the province', this was part of a discourse of the city's past as a trendy hotspot of cosmopolitan culture (see also Velikić 1992a:36-47; *Arkzin* 11/97:16-24). Time and again I was told that in the 1970s and 1980s Beograd was on a par with many Western European metropolitan centres with regard to high culture and youth cultural trends. People told me it used to be 'the Paris of the East' or 'the second clubbing city in Europe after London'. They proudly referred to graffiti and used lots of slang words and phrases which were considered typically urban. This is the case, for example, in the documentary film *Geto*, where the narrator

deplores the loss of an icon from the pre-war subcultural scene, the SKC (Student Cultural Centre):

'They have destroyed the places where we used to meet. The worst case is the SKC. [...] That place had to suffer. The Reds knew that there were at least ten generations of urban posse [*gradska ekipa*] here. They also knew that rock'n'roll and exhibitions can teach kids to say "no" tomorrow. [...] Instead of urban types [*urbane face*], now the main positions are occupied by shepherds. [...] In that way, in a couple of months, SKC has become a village cultural centre. The place is now filled with jokers, amateurs from Užice [town in Southern Serbia] and dubious newsreaders, instead of Cave [Nick, singer], the Brejkers [Partibrejkers, a rock band] and Šerbedzija [Rade, a famous Yugoslav actor]. Of course, kids don't go there anymore, except for a piss.'

During my stay, when an 'urban underground' phenomenon emerged, it was often packaged in an 'aesthetic' approach, and people consciously sought to associate themselves with certain 'trendy' developments from Western Europe and North America. This became particularly clear during the anti-regime demonstrations of 1996-1997 (Jansen 2001). In this way, I would argue that this 'popular cultural urbanity' was largely complementary to the above 'civilisational' understanding of urbanity, as they simply shifted the emphasis away from civility and classical modernity towards 'Western' modernity, style, rebellion and popular culture. And here, as elsewhere, if 'rural' elements were incorporated, they were first translated into 'Western' currency—often literally. I return to this point in the chapter on Balkan orientalism.

4.4. cities, villages and local modernisation theories

If the city and the countryside represented two opposites on a moral-civilisational continuum, they did so by evoking a whole range of other oppositions associated with them (see Norris 1999:163). Urbanity resonated with cosmopolitanism, with (Western) Europe, with education, manners and civilisation, whereas rurality was associated with provincialism, with 'Balkans', with underdevelopment, backwardness and primitivism (all in inverted commas, of course). In these discourses of urbanity, the moral evaluation of the city/village divide was an inversion of certain ruralist nationalist representations: the city was seen as modern, and *thus*, open, civilised and civil, free, forward-looking and so on (Vujović 1992:62, 63; Ramet 1996b:71-72; Bogdanović 1993:21-22, 36-37). Heterogeneity and multiculturalism were defined as positive qualities and contrasted with the closed and unchanging backwardness of tradition in the village brought into the city by immigrants. When I visited the campaigning office of a small anti-nationalist party during the anti-regime demonstrations in Beograd, I had coffee with two political activists. One of them was skimming newspaper reports and making two piles of press cuttings. Pointing to each of them, he said that in Serbia there were those who were for the future and those who were for the past.

In this way, the dualism between city and village was conceptualised within a paradigm of evolution which I would describe, following Ferguson, as a local version of modernisation theory (Ferguson 1999:83). Daša, a fashionably dressed young woman who worked as a secretary in one of the more established NGOs, was just one of the many people who implied this, when she said that in the countryside, Serbia was still 'in the Stone Age'. As we have seen, there were enormous differences between the villages and the cities, and these were often integrated into anti-nationalist explanations of the wars and of the rise of nationalism. Some local intellectuals argued explicitly along the lines of modernisation theory, such as Jasmina, a leading Beograd NGO activist whom I interviewed in her office:

'I think you have to look at the whole crisis and the appeal of nationalism in relation to modernisation and modernity. You must see it in the light of a failed transition to a democracy, to certain Western standards and systems. People here just were not ready

for that, and certainly now they are not. We moved a couple of steps back... Of course, Yugoslavia was pretty much Western, and certainly more so than other communist countries, but it went too fast. People just couldn't take it. Yugoslavia was a predominantly rural country until recently. Especially in the South, for instance here in Serbia, it was maybe 85 percent rural in 1945. And then in a very short time it became maybe 50 percent... It went too fast for people. Maybe it is a bit different in Slovenia and Croatia, you must have noticed that. Services are better organised, everything is more rational.'

Similarly, a Zagreb NGO activist, a sociologist by profession, told me in an interview:

'The problem is not in the rural surroundings themselves. It's not an active factor I don't think. The problem lies in the transition. People living in a village have a strong sense of community, of solidarity. There's a lot of social control: everybody knows everything about everybody else. But the community is local, not national. They have no idea about the national one. They live locally. In urban areas that is very different. Even children who are born in the city and whose parents are from the countryside are very different. Colder, more private. In the last decades there was an enormous and a very fast transition in Croatia and in the whole of Yugoslavia. People were moving to the cities, and in one generation enormous changes took place. And that is where the problem lies. These people were confronted with an initial loss of community, a crisis. They could not rely on the local community anymore, so they looked for a new community. And then there was the national one, perfectly fitting in...'

In an analysis of the difficult relationship between the Croatian and the US regimes, Sarajevo-Zagreb publicist Jergović argued that one of the crucial aspects in understanding this was precisely the 'anti-urban' stance of the Tuđman government, which saw America

'as a goldmine, a source of money and a station where whom you use but never take home, nor mention in mass' (Jergović 1998:15)

Time and again, I was confronted with narratives which saw a direct equivalence between development, modernisation, westernisation and urbanisation—and, it should be clear by now, 'semi'-urbanisation was *not* good enough (Bogdanović 1995:231; 1996:25; Pušić 1995). If this chapter seems to reinforce such a view, that is not a result of a theoretical or political argument (quite the opposite), but rather a reflection of the ethnographically overwhelming finding that it was an integral part of a very large amount of urban discursive practice in the post-Yugoslav context (see Ferguson 1999:84-85, 91).

It is not surprising that the urban/rural divide was called upon to explain a wide variety of phenomena, for it related to a representation of the whole society as a clash between primitivism and modernity (see Ferguson 1999:86). In an attempt to explain the success of the ruling HDZ party in the countryside, Zagreb weekly *Tjednik* described urban people as 'younger, better educated, more tolerant, with a mind of their own, better informed and intellectually curious'. Therefore, it was argued:

'A population with urban sensibility, an upbringing and the habits of a citizen's home—and they do not only live in cities—will find it hard to live with the HDZ's decrees of Croathood within the square hearth-cradle-bread-tamburica¹⁸ and the medieval state-building mystique. [...] For those with the city in their heads it is not enough to have lunch and a blanket, but they also want quality schooling, they want to live decently, do their job, listen to classical music, jazz or rock and travel abroad.'
(*Tjednik* 25/04/97:28)

¹⁸ The tamburica is a musical instrument with strings, which is used widely in folk music, particularly in parts of Croatia and in Vojvodina.

As we have seen before, the rural was consequently robbed of most of its agency, as the reason for the backwardness of the village was at least partly found outside that village. 'The village is not to blame [...]', stated *Tjednik*, 'In those places, there's nothing but HTV [Croatian state TV, *sj*], and the screen announces every night what has to be thought about what and about whom. News messages don't reach that far, and for newspapers there's no money'. Therefore, and as a result of strong social control in small-scale communities, it was argued, 'People are afraid of any dissonant decision. They undergo authority more readily and have less trouble tolerating the taste of compromise with their own inner persuasions'. As we have seen, these views were often embedded in a strikingly evolutionist approach to the urban-rural divide: the village is simply *behind*. 'All that which the city thinks today, the village will think in ten or fifteen years, not before that. That is why HDZ loses the cities today, and makes up for that loss in the provinces'¹⁹.

4.5. city-centrism and anti-nationalist narratives

4.5.1. the 'open city'

In the urban-centric discourses of certain anti-nationalist intellectuals, the city *per se*, by its very nature, was a multicultural sediment of memories. Bogdan Bogdanović, a well-known architect and ex-mayor of Beograd, now living in voluntary exile in Vienna, argued in 1979 that 'We, citizens of Beograd, accept memories of the Celts, of Roman, Hungarian and Turkish Beograd rightly as our own' (Bogdanović 1993:22). Why, if the citizens of Beograd were prepared to adopt all these multicultural influences, had many of them developed such a visceral dislike of rural Serbs!? Surely, the multicultural influences of the past were only seen as an asset in as far as they were 'urban' in character...

Despite the existence of alternative stories, many anti-nationalist narratives simply seemed to elaborate on the more general 'urban' attitude towards rurality and expanded it to include nationalism as a rural infliction upon the city. Some urban intellectuals who were engaged in the development of anti-nationalist discourses went a lot further and cherished the very notion of urbanity as the core of a civil, non-violent discursive universe. I now have a closer look at some Beograd elaborations of these strongly developed, self-consciously articulated versions of urbanity discourse²⁰, without losing sight of the fact that they served as an important device for identity construction amongst a wider number of well-educated citizens of Beograd.

An example of urbanity as anti-nationalist opposition was provided by a cluster of intellectuals, publicists and/or political activists around the Beograd periodical *Republika* and the small political party *Građanski Savez Srbije* (GSS, 'Civil Alliance of Serbia'). The periodical's subtitle read 'The voice of citizen's self-liberation—against the elements of fear, hatred and violence', and in its statement of intent, readers were reminded of the origins of its title as an affirmation of a concern for public welfare ('*res publica*'). *Republika* argued that:

'Opposing the primitive forces of fear, hatred and violence [...] we take courage in the conviction that REASON IS NOT HOPELESSLY ISOLATED, and that it can influence events in society'

(*Republika International*, 1996, VIII:2, capitals in original)

¹⁹ Of course, the pro-regime press did not agree. *Vjesnik* gave statistical data on the national composition of Croatian cities (Zagreb: 85% Croatian, Split 87%, Rijeka and Osijek 70%, and Pula 54%), and argued that the reason for HDZ losses in those places was not due to the fact that citizens 'read newspapers or were more fluent in politics', but 'exclusively because "our" opposition received votes from voters who are not Croatian by nationality' [sic].

²⁰ A similar case was put forward in Zagreb by Kangrga (1997:119-129, 228-251).

In a context where xenophobia and hate-speech were rife in most of the available media, this publication provided a strikingly anti-nationalist alternative, relying on keywords such as rationality, a return to normal life, democracy, tolerance, individualism, responsibility and ... urbanity. *Republika* contained a regular section called 'urbanite!', and periodic inserts under the name 'City and Citizen' addressing the situation in cities throughout Serbia. Its articles covered a wide range of topics, providing a voice in the Serbian media-scape which was critical in its analyses of both the Milošević regime and of nationalism in general.

The explicitly anti-nationalist GSS party set what could loosely be termed a social-liberal course and was strongly urban-based both in electoral and in programmatic terms. Related to the anti-war movement, it increasingly presented itself as a party which would give the city its self-respect back. In 1997, GSS ran a campaign *In Defence of Beograd*, condemning destruction, neglect, mafia politics, the fall of living standards and what was called 'destroyed urbanity'. As an alternative it proposed a 'partnership for the urban environment' (*Republika* 01-31/07/97:38).

4.5.2. Beograd once more - the barbarian and the city

Urban intellectual celebrations of the city, as well as wider discourses of urbanity frequently described the city as being under threat from its enemies. In the view of Bogdanović, this related to an age-old Manichean struggle between city lovers and city haters (1993:54). These discourses of urbanity prevalent amongst a section of the Beograd intelligentsia were also strongly reflected in the literature of the Serbian capital (see Norris 1999:96-103, 119-135). Writers such as Borislav Pekić, Svetlana Velmar-Janković, Slobodan Selenić, Dragan Velikić and many others constructed novels around metropolitan middle-class experiences, particularly focusing on the effect of the communist take-over in 1945²¹. In previous times, this kind of literature was carefully dissident towards the Yugoslav regime from a self-consciously bourgeois perspective. However, perversely mirroring Serbian nationalist claims of a revival of WWII fascism in Croatia, after the demise of Titoism it became *bon-ton* in these circles to depict the rise of Milošević as a virtual re-run of the Partisans taking control of Beograd in 1945 (see for example Norris 1999:152; Velikić 1992a:33-39; Selenić 1996). In these literary works, 1990s nationalism and post-WWII Titoism were brought together under the mantle of rural primitivism threatening the very urbanity that characterises city life. As we have seen before, many urban intellectuals in Yugoslavia argued that, despite their urban rhetoric, Titoist communists were essentially enemies of the city: they carried out a false urbanisation programme and got no further than importing high numbers of ruralites into the city. Some even saw this as a strategic goal of the Partisans, in their effort to crush middle-class opposition against the revolution (Velikić 1993: 36ff). At times this was accompanied by a certain nostalgia for the independent Serbia of around 1900 and for the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In such a context, it became opportune for those who wanted to tap into these city-centric discourses to play down family involvement in the Partisan movement. For example, when Boris, the Beograd student who felt strongly about his roots in the Beograd bourgeoisie, took me to the military museum, we spent a lot of time in the pre-WWII sections. When we finally reached the post-1941 exhibitions, he hurried me through them and did not hide his contempt for what was on display there. He said it was all propaganda and added as a *fait divers* that his grandfather had joined the Partisans because of a woman. No politics or anything, Boris assured me, and all that talk about fighting the Germans was a weak alibi for hanging out in the mountains and talking a lot about how things would be after the war. His granddad occupied a position in the post-war order but 'not for long'.

²¹ In English, see for example, Pekić's *The Houses of Belgrade*, and on the post-WWII bourgeoisie, Velmar-Janković's *Dungeon* and Selenić's *Premeditated Murder*.

Even many of those who did not necessarily see the Titoist regime as an anti-urban force would argue that with the rise of nationalism in the late 1980s, the city had come under serious threat. Defending it was 'the only valid moral paradigm for the future' (Bogdanović 1993:66), and 'the only real distinction in modern times was: peasant/citizen, or even better: cosmopolitan vs. provincial'²² (Vujović 1992:62). Following previously outlined views of the village as the place of backwardness and illiteracy, the perceived hostility of the peasant was explained by his/her lack of education. The city was under threat from those who didn't understand it. Peasant attitudes towards the city, it was argued, were based on fear of the unknown (Bogdanović 1993:18, 23, 36). It was the incapability of dealing with the ambiguities typical of the city, which made people hate it (Bogdanović 1995:234). This led Bogdanović, in an article published in Sarajevo 1992, to bewail the fact that Serbs would be remembered as city destroyers, as 'latter-day Huns', after the world watched on television how their armies destroyed cities such as Vukovar and Sarajevo, and succeeded partly in doing the same with a world heritage centre such as Dubrovnik.

4.5.3. Sarajevo and Knin: contested cases of 'peasant threats' to urbanity

This discourse of urban multiculturalism was at least as outspoken amongst Sarajevo intellectuals, illustrated in an open letter written by a number of former mayors of that city. They referred to the aggressors as being driven by fear of the other and presenting a 'threat to the citizens, our city and our civilisation'.

'We experienced the planned aggression of greater Serbian chauvinism with the objective of liquidating the statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its membership in the Western world, as a form of aggression by Balkan primitivism against the achievements of urban civilisation and multinational culture. [...] Sarajevo never experienced a Bartholomew or Crystal Night, and precisely for that reason it had to be destroyed. Because as long as it exists, it is an outspoken negation of the thesis of impossibility of co-existence.'

(*Dana opsade*, an open letter written by ex-mayors of Sarajevo on 10 April 1992, the beginning of the siege)

The equation of urbanity with multiculturalism was solidly entrenched in language. As we have seen, a whole repertoire of derogatory terms was available to represent rurality, but the etymology of the word '*građanin*' ['citizen'] was equally biased. The term '*građanski*' is literally an adjective derived from '*grad*' ['city'], but it had definite overtones of both a civil and a civic nature, thereby immediately setting it apart from primitivism and nationalism²³. When people spoke of the '*građanska oporba*', the 'civic opposition', they meant the small, non-nationalist parties.

An interesting illustration of the contested nature of these definitions and of the confusion surrounding the precise delimitation of the urban and the rural was provided by a debate in the town of Knin, in Southern Croatia. Overwhelmingly Serbian dominated before 1995, Knin's post-war population consisted of a majority of Bosnian Croatian refugees, with Serbian returnees second, and local Croats a small minority. A local opposition politician, belonging to the latter group, argued that 'Knin [was] losing its centuries old urban identity of a Mediterranean town in exchange for a system of values which displays mountain-tribal ['*brdsko-plemenske*'] customs and heavy petty bourgeoisness amongst some inhabitants' (Pilić 1999:24). This was unmistakably an attack on the Bosnian Croats, and his own colleague and member of the same party retorted: 'It is true that a mountain-tribal mentality dominates in Knin [...], but that dates back at least half a century, and is characteristic of all national groups who live in Knin. In fact, it was the Serbs who first brought it with them, long before the war' (ibid.).

²² See also Prodanović 1997b; Bogdanović 1993:37; Velikić 1992a:33, 38-39.

²³ This is maybe less obvious, but certainly also present in the English use of terms such as 'civic', 'civil', 'city' and 'citizen' (and in their Latin roots).

In a later statement, the first speaker replied: 'With regard to my statement that Knin loses its Mediterranean mentality, i.e. that a set of values which are supported by mountain-tribal customs and petit-bourgeoisness rules, I did not allude to one group of inhabitants of Knin in particular. I referred to all those who lack the basic culture of living in the city. I was thinking of people who throw their rubbish from the fifth floor, and of those whose children address adults with "ti" [the informal second person singular]' (ibid., 23). In response, a Croatian refugee from the Bosnian town of Zenica argued that 'What hurts us is not [his] statement but his distinction. We brought the purest and the hardest Croathood into Croatia, and now we are labelled "Bosnians"!'. (ibid., 24). Another one added: 'The Dalmatians think we are stupid and we start thinking that about them. Say, that one who said that we are taking away Knin's urban identity. Well, the two of us came from Zenica, which isn't a big city, but it has more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, so for Knin that is a metropolis.' (ibid., 34).

4.5.4. urbanity as self-evident opposition

It must be clear by now that in Beograd, and to a lesser but still significant extent in Zagreb, many people believed that by virtue of its heterogeneity and scale the city was, per definition, politically oppositional and critical (Ratković 1998:60; Vujović 1992:63). In an elaboration on the case of Beograd, where the central boroughs of the city were all opposition-controlled, Vujović argued that this was because they were inhabited by educated people, often intellectuals, and importantly, '*starosedelci*' [people whose family had lived there for generations]. These citizens ['*građani*'], and in this article this term is reserved for them only] support policies of 'modernity, democracy and the future' (ibid.). In Beograd's extended suburbs, says Vujović, we find 'workers, clerks, non- or less educated, often half-illiterate *došljaci* ['newcomers']'. They vote Milošević or Šešelj' (ibid.).

Of course, the values of city life were incorporated into regime discourses as well, especially in Croatia, but never as explicitly as in dissident ones. That the urbanity theme was not simply a toy for intellectuals became clear once again when it emerged as one of the central discursive elements in the 1996-1997 anti-regime (and only partly anti-nationalist) demonstrations in Beograd. The whole event was drenched in a peculiar blend of democracy and urbanity. The link between the two was continually evoked and reinforced by the slogans, the chants and the stories in the crowds (see Jansen 2000a; 2001). As explained by the writer Slavko, whom I interviewed on a terrace in the centre of Beograd during the anti-Milošević demonstrations:

'The main quality of these protests is precisely this urbanity. Not national issues, not it's against this *palanka* spirit which exists in such a specific way in our society [see section 4.6, *sj*]. In that sense urbanity has to do with the political situation here... There are not so many real urban people here. There is no long tradition of cities like for instance in Holland. Only some 100 years or so. These protests are the very first time that this urban middle class, this *građanski* element in Yugoslavia comes out in public.'

The spirit of the city had risen, so it was frequently argued in those days, and a strong sense of urban self-perception was dominant amongst many protestors. For them, the street demonstrations pitted *us*, the urbanites, citizens of Beograd, against *them*, a tyranny of mad primitives. The urban aspect became particularly clear in the frequent and self-conscious assertions that 'this will finally show the world that Serbia does not only consist of primitives!'

In this context it became possible for people both in Beograd and, to a lesser extent, in Zagreb to assert a strong sense of belonging to their city as an *alternative* to national identification. Predrag was a Beograd intellectual with a career of dissidence spanning both Tito's and Sloba's regimes and a 'character' on the oppositional scene. During an

interview in his office, I asked how he responded when people asked 'Where are you from?'. He said:

Predrag: 'From Beograd'.

Stef: 'But many people don't know where Beograd is...'

Predrag: 'It's not my problem if they don't know.'

Stef: 'What about the labels 'Yugoslav' or 'Serb'?'

Predrag: 'To me that doesn't really mean anything. Those are technical data, and for some people you know them, and for others you don't.'

This primary identification with the city was not limited to intellectuals. For example, during the demonstrations I walked down the streets with Ksenija, a Beograd secondary school girl who was very active in an anti-nationalist youth project. Ksenija, her wild hair cut unevenly and dressed in her grandfather's overcoat, could boast the highest rate of Beograd slang words per sentence I have ever come across. Without me asking anything about the issue, she confided to me that she really loved her city. She would never call herself a Serb, she argued, sniffing contemptuously at the very idea, but *Beograđanka*, yes, that was something different.

When later, in a dark and smoky youth club in the heart of the city, I quizzed a group of her friends, Beograd teenagers who were active in international post-Yugoslav youth camps, their answers were overwhelmingly urban-centric. I asked: 'When people abroad ask you where you're from, what do you answer?' One person said 'From Beograd', and the rest, in unison, joined in: 'Yes, from Beograd'. From there on the conversation went as follows:

A: 'It seems to me that ..., well, I think that every *Beograđanin* would have said that they are from Beograd. That is the way it is. Beograd is simply a city on its own with its own rules. [...]. Without regard to where you are from. I don't believe that anybody from Beograd would say that they are from Serbia. I mean, there are some... you know, those new ones, those nationalists, they are fervent nationalists, but... I suppose that everybody would have said that they are from Beograd.'

B: 'I think that in Beograd there has always been mixing. It was the capital of Yugoslavia, and people from all parts came here. [...] There are many mixed marriages, there are many people of different nationalities, so that the majority don't see themselves as Serbs, or don't see themselves as any nationality. They only see themselves as from Beograd.'

A: 'Nationality: *Beograđanin*, you know, it is really like that.'

C: 'Here, it won't go wrong like... it won't become like...'

A: 'That's right.'

D: 'Beograd is...'

C: '...the World. Beograd is the World. That is the best way, the best slogan. It can describe our... our nationality. You know that slogan?'

A: 'It's from the demonstrations. You know, that's also something. Beograd was always the most eventful place—Beograd and Zagreb were the happening places. And I think, like us, people from Zagreb would say that they were *Zagrepci*...'

Stef: 'Are there big differences between Beograd and other places?'

C: [*all laugh in unison*] 'Enormous differences, very very big differences! Yes... yes.'

D: 'Beograd has..., you know, Beograd is a very free city. In Beograd there isn't,... people are not like... people are very social, very open towards all others. In other towns in Serbia that is slightly different. Everyone would greet you with something like, oh [*sceptical*], *Beograđanin*, you know... but here, whoever arrives, everybody accepts them. Like 'oh, come round', you know, you're always welcome, like.'

C: 'It depends I think what you compare to... with the rest of Serbia, or... because I don't know, when I came back from Germany, I felt that everyone was like, rude, how should I say, ... there, people have different ways of relating to each other...'

B: '... but you came just after the war and all...'

C: 'That's got nothing to do with it.'

- B: 'Oh yes it has!'
- C: 'No, it hasn't. We didn't have the ... we never had the habit of being nice to each other in the trolleybus, for instance... You know, some general forms of human interaction with people whom you don't know... you know, here, it is necessary, not only here in Beograd, but everywhere in former Yugoslavia it is necessary to break a barrier in order to get in contact with people at all...'
- E: 'We have very bad education with regard to manners...'
- C: 'Yes'
- E: 'Thanks, please, sorry, .. you'll hear that very rarely here. People will push you and pull you...'
- C: 'But I think that in comparison with other towns, the main thing is then the size of the city.'
- D: 'You know, I go to the town where my brother and sister-in-law live, and they go "Ah! You are from Beograd!'
- C: 'Yes, but Beograd *is* ... it is something like, you now, an urban surrounding. In other places in Serbia you can see tractors driving through the street, and so on... *really!*'
- E: 'You can see that in Beograd as well [*laughs!*]
- F: 'Or a horse, you can see how a horse pulls a tractor... (*laughs!*)'
- C: 'But I think that in all bigger cities, you know, in all sorts of urban milieus, that they differ from smaller places... that's why we from Beograd and Zagreb ...'
- E: 'Yes... we had a meeting in the Netherlands not long ago. And there were people from Vukovar, Osijek, Zagreb and Beograd. And it just happened to be like that: people from Osijek and Vukovar got along very well, and those from Beograd and Zagreb as well. And also, the *Zagrepčani* didn't like the *Vukovarci* very much, they had some conflicts, from before,... It is simply because of... because it is about cities. When you live in a bigger city, you simply, ... well, other things impress you. Conversations are different, people are different, there are different themes... Somehow it's easier to establish contact with similar people... We got along really great with the *Zagrepčani*. It was really a great *ekipa*. I don't know, it was interesting, right from the first day. Simply like that, simply a question of the size of the cities.'
- A: 'Yes I think so too... I think that that is why Beograd... that is why we are all so proud to be from Beograd, because it's the largest city in Serbia. And it is still the centre, however small the thing it is the centre of... [*laughs*], it's still the centre of something.'
- F: 'Even if it was a village, Beograd, it would always be a centre [*laughs*].'
- [...]
- C: 'And again, within Beograd, when you ask someone where they're from, people say for instance: "From Dorčol". So again, people divide themselves into *Dorčolci*, *Zemunci*, I don't know, *Autokomandosi*, etc²⁴. [*laughs*].'
- F: 'Dedinje! Dedinje! [*all laugh*]
- C: 'When the war started you could see graffiti, like, "Banovo brdo republika!", or "Rakovica do Terazije!" [*all laugh*]²⁵, you know, like, every quarter wanted to secede, you know, although it is not so important.'

Later, I had a similar conversation with Darko, a young refugee from Zagreb who was part of the same crowd and invited me over to his place because he could not make it that day. Referring to urban-rural differences, Darko told me:

'There is a lot of truth in that. Like Zagreb, Beograd, Sarajevo, Tuzla... they are more open [...] It's simply not so important one lives better, one lives faster. And nationality is not important. Some completely different things are important. [...] Whereas in villages people are older, not educated, in a sense the roots of modernisation haven't really gotten to those places. They stick to some very deep, old roots.'

²⁴ *Dorčol* is an old quarter of central Beograd. *Zemun*, a separate historical town, is now a suburb. *Autokomando* is simply a widely used name for a certain area near the motorway.

²⁵ *Dedinje* is a residential area which houses many members of the ruling elite, including Milošević. *Banovo brdo* and *Rakovica* are fairly recent workers' suburbs. 'Banovo brdo republika' reflects slogans such as the Albanian nationalist ones from Kosovo ('Kosovo republic!'). 'Rakovica do Terazije' ['Rakovica up to Terazije'] is a parody on other nationalist slogans referring to how far the (greater) motherland should stretch—Terazije is a central street in Beograd.

It must be clear from these examples that the city was often constructed as the self-evident locus of opposition and critical thinking, especially in resistance to what was considered a traditionalist, primitive ideology such as nationalism. Moreover, exclusive identification with the capital city on a domestic basis was often tied up with an attachment to 'European' or 'Western' patterns of meaning. In this way, dissident identities were constructed simultaneously below and above the national level (see the chapter on Balkan orientalism).

4.6. white socks: 'urban peasants' in city discourses

The discursive construct 'city' was thus deterritorialised; everyday narratives detached the meaning of 'the city' from the actual urban locale. As a result, many *Zagrepcani* and *Beogradani* who, as it were, claimed a right of civilisational property to the city, did not necessarily perceive all their fellow-citizens as 'urban'. It was argued that, although the 'newcomers' might *live* in the city, they had actually brought the village with them. Sometimes, this even destabilised certain national stereotypes, as illustrated in this excerpt from an interview with Ivana, herself a Zagreb Serb who kept a low profile:

'There are a lot of radicals amongst the young Serbs here. Especially those from Bosnia. They came here twenty years ago or so to work, and they still, after twenty years... or their children, look exactly the same. They talk with a Bosnian accent, unintelligible... They spit on the streets... You know, they haven't changed one thing in all those years. They have brought the village with them. But you can't do that. If you leave a village and you go to a city... you change! But, my God, they are so primitive, it's really unbelievable. And then they complain that people don't like them because they are Serbs... but that is nonsense. That's not because they are Serbs. It's because they are stupid and primitive!'

The mentality and the way of life of these people, I was assured time and again, was still that of the villages they had left, and therefore, they were at best '*urbaniseljaci*' ['urban peasants']. In that sense, as we have seen, many people referred to certain members of government as 'rural', even though they were highly educated and spent most of their lives in the capital.

In classic structuralist anthropological terms, the 'urban peasants' could be seen as a dangerous category, as a polluting element in the particular urban, post-Yugoslav civilisational order of things (Douglas 1966; Turner 1969:97). As a result of the deterritorialised nature of 'the city' as a discursive construct, they represented a problematic category for the self-proclaimed 'urban' population not just because they lived in the city, but because they *tried to live* the city life. In 'urban' narratives, they were located between the modern and the backward, between the developed and the primitive (see Ferguson 1999:84). Nevertheless, they could only be understood within the context of the urban experience, even if they *signified* a vision of rurality to many people (ibid.:83).

Interestingly, this phenomenon was elaborated into a stinging cultural critique of Serbian society by a local intellectual long before the wars. Konstantinović (1981) argued that his country was characterised by a 'market town philosophy' [*filozofija palanke*] which he located between city and village. The sphere of the *palanka*, he argued, was a continuation of traditionalism and authoritarianism, a siege mentality but with added petit-bourgeois traits. In its extreme version, the author prophesied, this would result in a form of Serbian fascism... (Konstantinović 1981:366). In interviews and in their writings, many intellectuals who engaged in the critique of nationalism in the 1990s referred to this work (see for example *Arkzin* 04/98:56-57).

To the self-proclaimed urban post-Yugoslav, I would argue, the 'urban peasants' represented the spirit of the *palanka*. Recent and less recent 'immigrants', and frontline ruralites in particular, were represented as being 'in the city without being of it' (Epstein quoted in Ferguson 1999:84). It seemed that their perceived status of *aspiring* citizens

made them even more despicable in the eyes of the 'autochthons'. In the case of the frontline ruralites, this was partly to do with the conspicuous consumption which became part of their image in the city. We have seen how a representation arose of the Herzegovinians in Zagreb and a similar one of Montenegrins in Beograd, as politically and economically powerful through mafia-like connections. Those people, so I was repeatedly told, were notoriously lazy, profited from other people's work and so on. Especially in Zagreb, but also to a certain extent in Beograd, this was matched by a stereotypical portrayal of the frontline ruralite as a hopeless 'eternal primitive' (Buden 1996:48). In the documentary film *Geto* this is phrased as follows:

'I notice that even the majority of my new co-citizens, originally from hills and mountains, don't feel well either. Although they have succeeded to live well off the black market and racketeering, they haven't succeeded in becoming citizens.'

Frontline ruralites were portrayed as always trying, but never succeeding, to be civilised and stylish: according to urban narratives they simply lacked the cultural fluency (Berdahl 1999:137). 'Even when wearing an expensive Italian suit', so the self-proclaimed 'urbanites' would say, 'you can pick them out by their white socks'. This stereotype was so strong that the very notion of white socks [*b(ij)ele čarape*] came to convey a whole set of meanings surrounding the frontline ruralites (see Buden 1996:47). In Zagreb urban-centric discourse, the ideal-typical *Hercegovci* were easily recognisable through their style. Yes, they drove large Mercedes, wore expensive clothes and frequented fancy restaurants. But his Armani suit was put into context by the white socks, and her black leather Prada handbag was put in the shade by just that little bit too much make-up. *Hercegovci*, it was argued, ate in expensive restaurants but gave away their identity by ordering...pig on a spit. Even highly modern developments such as new communication technologies were incorporated into this portrayal by categorising them as gimmicks. In that way, the image of a *Hercegovac* was never complete without a mobile phone: they were, it was argued, *always* on their mobile phones—talking, of course, to other *Hercegovci*. In short, they went for style but never made it past kitsch or tackiness.

4.7. citizen's negative self-definition vs. 'the (frontline) ruralite'

In this way, frontline ruralites were made recognisable to the self-proclaimed urban citizen, and their style, or lack of it, stood for their essentialised image as primitive, lazy, patriarchal, rather stupid but cunning, uneducated and uncivilised. Not surprisingly, 'urban peasants' played a major role in jokes and denigrating stories. I would argue that the crucial role of this stereotypical image did not lie so much with the targets of these jokes themselves, but rather with the very 'urbanites' who revelled in them. The Herzegovinian, or for that matter, the generalised 'peasant' in these jokes was mainly a counterpoint in a process of urban negative self-definition. By painting a picture of the 'peasant' in the terms described above, a position was constructed of a self-conscious '*građanin*', an urban, educated, refined citizen of manners and civilisation (Buden 1996:10; van de Port 1994).

If the (frontline) peasant functioned mainly as a counterpoint to the desired self-presentation of the '*građanin*', this should be seen in relation to the dominant nationalist discourses. Surely the urban/rural divide existed before, but a decade of nationalism and war elevated this discursively constructed conflict to new heights. Buden convincingly argues that the *Hercegovac* and the *Zagrepčanin* were products of the same Croatian nationalist logic (1996:48-49). He demonstrates how the same discourse that brought the Herzegovinian to the centres of power and wealth in Zagreb now made him the object of ridicule, and I would argue that a parallel process took place with 'the peasant' in Beograd. Whereas the dominant discourses of nationalism blamed all evil upon national Others and internal collaborators, in a similar move, the

self-proclaimed citizen projected all negative characteristics on one part of his/her own nation. Particularly in post-war Croatia, with most national Others (i.e. Serbs) removed in one way or other, *Hercegovci* were portrayed as the root of all trouble (see Buden 1996:48).

Importantly, these negative stereotypes of (frontline) rural sections of one's own nationality often simply existed alongside a continued demonisation of national Others. Depending on the audience and the context, people relied on diverging narratives of self-definition in which the desired constant was one's own position, not the negative Other. In any case, different forms of village orientalism seemed to be part of an implicit consensus amongst the large majority of city people in both Zagreb and Beograd. A further level of consensual knowledge existed in urban areas, relying on some version of the modernisation dogma. If we add up these two factors and place them in a socio-historical context of late and never full-blooded urbanisation, then perhaps the 'urban peasants' embodied the problematic of the city particularly well. In this sense, the discomfort with the ambiguous status of the 'city' may reflect a deep unease amongst self-proclaimed citizens. In a context of war and accompanying deterioration, it was just one step too many in a process that reminded city people of their fear of 'still being stuck in the mud'. Thus, the hierarchy of the more developed city and the primitive village was part and parcel of many everyday narratives, and it was easily translated into *moral* statements. In short, the village was, had to be, what they were *not*.

4.8. counterdiscourses of the village

The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Zagreb and Beograd, and although I did work intensively in rural areas in Croatia and visited villages in the Serbian countryside, the emphasis here is clearly on urban voices. As a result of this analytic choice I refrain from trying to balance stories, although I am certainly not suggesting that urban narratives of 'the village' were a correct representation of rural life. Elsewhere, I have written about people's positionings with regard to nationalism in a set of villages in Croatia (Jansen 2000b), but my interest in this chapter lies with the role of the discursive construct 'village' in urban discourse and, particularly, in articulations of anti-nationalism and urbanity. However, at this point I would like to draw attention briefly to the existence of rural counterdiscourses (see also Ferguson 1999:110-122). First of all, the representation of a large urban/rural divide was shared by many ruralites, and it could easily be sustained by a lot of factual data and by experiential evidence. As we have seen above, rurality played an important role in nationalist discourses, but the modernisation paradigm was prevalent in the countryside as well. Having said this, I was often struck by the different moral evaluation it received. One strand of rural counterdiscourse both in the villages and amongst 'urban peasants' was constructed around the notion of 'reality'. The village, it was argued, was where one lived life to the limits; it was real, hard and unmediated, in contrast to the comfortable, mediated and distant forms of city life.

To express this representation of rurality as the real thing, one often invoked the metaphor of asphalt. Asphalt signified modernisation and was deployed to that effect by the previous regime, with politicians opening new roads as part of its project for Progress (Drakulić 1996:201-202). However, in the ruralist counterdiscourses it also resonated with a perception of *distance*, of detachment from real life. I would argue that asphalt was a particularly powerful metaphor because it could be seen as mediating the human experience of the land. It is literally situated between one's feet and the mud which constitutes the reality of that land. In this way, villagers would partly explain the

urbanite's lack of knowledge, understanding or concern with reference to his/her artificial life 'on asphalt'²⁶.

4.9. the loss of the city

Many inhabitants of the city, often first generation urbanites themselves, relied on an urban/rural discourse to deal with a sense of loss; they felt that their city had been taken away from them. Davor, for example, was a young *Zagrepčanin*, a DJ who was well-connected on the clubbing scene. We met in a trendy bar in the city centre—he had his hair dyed and was donning fashionable clubwear, but he had no money. Davor told me that Zagreb was a poisoned city. It was dead already, actually. He complained of the lack of any kind of subcultural scene and deplored the rivalry amongst the few people who were trying to do something original. Those 'freaks' [*sic*] were divided, Davor said, as opposed to the masses of people coming in from the village, who stuck together. And that changed the whole city. He didn't blame the newcomers, as he felt that they probably had this big idea about being in Zagreb. However, in reality, he added, they brought their lives with them, and they hung out together all the time. Therefore, Davor bitterly concluded, it was the *Zagrepčani* who were to blame, because they didn't stick together.

Davor's self-criticism was rather unusual because, as we have seen, in Zagreb assertions of urbanity were often accompanied by an urban discourse of 'purgeri'. Although often framed in strongly historical terms, this notion was also present in a more 'modern', even half-subcultural way, as exemplified by the case of the oppositional Zagreb *Radio 101*. This station was keen on representing itself as rebellious and critical, but it often did so by reinforcing stereotypical images of others—and of *Hercegovci*, in particular. When the government attempted to close the station down in 1997, this gave rise to the biggest, and indeed the only massive anti-regime street protest in Croatia during the 1990s. In an unusually critical article on *Radio 101*, student journalist Dalibor Petrović wrote:

'*Radio 101* has become a "fortress" in the face of massive de-citification [*depurgerizacija*] of Zagreb [...]. The question is to what extent the struggle for *101* is a struggle for liberation, and to what extent it is, in fact, a struggle for the right to further keep one's head deep into the sand. This becomes clearest in the famous slogan "You can take everything from us, but not *101!*" [*Možete nam uzeti sve, ali Stojedinicu ne!*], which certainly must have pleased the ruling elite.' (Petrović 1997:9)

Petrović went on to say that the struggle for *Radio 101* provided an excuse for people not to worry about more important issues such as poverty and the creeping revival of fascism in Croatia (see also *Arkzin* 02/98:36-37). Although the independent *B92* station in Beograd, called the 'saviour of the urban spirit of Beograd' in the documentary film *Geto*, was much more explicitly political, it did sometimes rely on a similar defensive urban-centric discourse.

Writing about Serbia, Ramet argues that the 'dominant mood in the countryside is one of resentment' (1996b:81). I would add that feelings of resentment towards the 'newcomers' [*došljaci*] were also widespread in the capitals: they were said to destroy the 'urban spirit' of the city, and accused of 'ruralising' it. In the words of Vujović, 'Beograd is peasantified' [*Beograd je poseljačio*] (1992:62; see also Velikić 1992a:32; 1994:187). For example, one of the thorns in the flesh of Beograd's urbanity was the explosive growth of the number of kiosks on the street, which led to a debate in the independent press. An urban sociologist deplored the 'barbarisation' of parts of the city through the chaotic implantation of hundreds of kiosks (*Vreme* 06/09/97, 25), while an

²⁶ Conversely, the metaphor of 'asphalt' was deployed in urban discourses of rural unease with city life, as in Jergović' comments on a 'son of the village on asphalt' [*seljački sin na asfaltu*] (Jergović 1998:15; see also Kangrga 1997:119-129).

artist stated that the '*kioskizacija*' was 'privatisation in a Balkan way', dragging the city further and further 'away from contemporary civilisation' (Prodanović 1998:13). The discussion wasn't limited to the press either, as people complained in conversations about the 'Istanbulisation' of the city.

Although it seems imperative that we see these issues in relation to the general deterioration of socio-economic standards as well (Zirojević 1997:13), city-centric narratives mainly deplored the cultural aspects of the changes. Even before the wars, this was illustrated in an interview with Velimir Visković, a Croatian literary critic who worked in both Beograd and Zagreb. He argued how the Serbian (then also Yugoslav) capital was a truly cosmopolitan, open and exciting place in the 1970s and the early 1980s (*Nedeljna Borba* 20-21/05/89). However, he added, by the end of the 1980s, Beograd underwent a wave of '*provincijalizacija*'. In the cultural sphere this meant an increasing domination by intellectuals with 'an anachronistic, archaic orientation, based on a quasi-folkloristic, populist concept and so-called autochthonous rural roots' (ibid.).

On a more mundane level, people jokingly spoke about the lack of hygienic habits amongst 'the newcomers'. They would accuse them of keeping animals in their flats and of being unable to use modern toilets. A crucial element in this discourse on the loss of the city was a whole phenomenon centring upon the music style *turbofolk*, which I explore in the chapter on Balkan orientalism. But let me illustrate this discourse with a lengthy quotation from an interview with Ivana, a Serbian girl, born and raised in Zagreb.

Stef: 'What does this term mean to you: *Hercegovci*?'

Ivana: 'They came here in very large numbers during the war, and I don't like them, but not because of the stereotype that exists about them. I don't care about their nationality, but I don't like them purely because they have come into my city and fucked it up. With their bad culture they have destroyed the old spirit of Zagreb. Manners have been lost and some status symbols have changed completely. The elite is not the intelligentsia anymore or a cultured family, but those who have large gold watches. And they have completely changed the way of thinking... For that reason, I don't like them. But I have a friend, one of my best friends, who is a 'full-blooded' [*laughs*] Herzegovinian, and that has nothing to do with it. It is not a reason for me to not like somebody or to not talk to somebody. But in general, I don't like them because they have fucked up my city, and true Zagrebians have been... they are lost. This is not the same city anymore. Now primitivism rules here, and some low culture, and... it's not the same anymore.'

Stef: 'Some people have talked to me about the great differences between cities and villages. What do you think about that?'

Ivana: 'Well, that's not only the case for *Hercegovci*. I know plenty of people in my own community, who came from Bosnia. They are very primitive. They are very dear to me, but I abhor their way of thinking. And they don't have any wish to change a bit... only as much as correcting their behaviour. In the sense that, when you're in the village, that is one way of life, and when you come to the city, then you can't just continue to live as *seljaci*, but you should try to live as a *građanin*, as much as you can. There are plenty of people who do their best, and they try to find the happy medium. For instance, when they go to see their grandparents they're all like "Oh I am a Bosnian", and they enjoy that etc... But when you are in Zagreb you can't just like... scream loudly, break glasses, and so on. And of course there are not only bad things. They have also plenty of good things. But it's as if they have taken only the worst things out of all that, and they now try to force that upon all of us. So... that's not only *Hercegovci*. There are simply a large number of people who have come here from very different environments and they don't want to change... they want to change the others, us.'

'The city is not what it used to be', I was told over and over. A strongly developed but not unusual example of city-centrism, loss and nostalgia was provided by the Beograd documentary film *Geto*:

'Ten years ago, when it all started, nobody understood what was going on. It left us indifferent [...] When things became clear, it was too late. The city was divided. On one side there was them, and on the other us. [...] They have occupied all places, imagined different kinds of enemies and pushed us all into hell. We were numerous enough to oppose them in the beginning and it will never be clear why we collapsed. [...] Beograd has been turned into a concentration camp. Since then, they rule, and we survive.'

The narrator later talks about the enormous flood of outmigration, particularly amongst the young, urban and educated: 'The city that they left doesn't exist anymore, apart from in their memories'. Towards the end of the film, he says 'I remember how I used to love Beograd. And I realise how I wish things would change here, so that it would be my city again. But I know there is no way back.'

5. 'the city' and the narrative break: pain and paradox

In this chapter, I have unravelled a number of patterns in the articulation of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism and discourses on rurality and urbanity. First I sketched a background in which, despite differences and ambiguities, assertions of Serbian and Croatian nationalism were associated with rurality, both in their cultural content and in their political appeal. Given a number of factors, such as the legacy of late and shallow urbanisation in Yugoslavia, diverging educational standards and opposed patterns in the ethnic composition of urban and rural areas, a discourse developed in which the city came to be seen as a place of mixture, whereas the countryside represented purity. We have moved here into the realm of discursive spaces, and the majority of both nationalist and anti-nationalist narratives tended to converge on this dualistic depiction. Their differences lay in the evaluation: rural purity was either seen as backwardness or as authenticity, whereas urban mixture was perceived as either cultural richness or promiscuity. In both cases there seemed to be a marked departure from classic accounts of nationalism, although people in certain professions, those centred upon cultural capital, still played an important role.

Building on these insights I looked at the specific place of frontline ruralites both in nationalist discourses and in dissident representations, most of which resonate with modernisation theories. Particular attention was paid to Zagreb and Beograd discourses of the peasant threat to the city, constructed around notions such as 'invasions', 'primitivism' and 'openness'. Despite the existence of diverging interpretations, I then argued, many anti-nationalist discourses reiterated such views of rurality and urbanity, adding the danger of nationalism to a list of rural diseases. I located these depictions against a background of war, deterioration and a struggle for cultural capital in order to place their sometimes exclusivist tendencies in context.

A concept that I find particularly useful in understanding those discourses of rurality and urbanity is that of a 'narrative break' (see Chapter Five). Both in Zagreb and in Beograd, I encountered many people who felt a widespread sense of 'urban culture lost', of an undesired cultural ruralisation of their city. For those who did not tap into the dominant nationalist discourses, the narrative break caused by the post-Yugoslav wars could be partly understood through the prism of urban/rural difference. In that way, those self-proclaimed urbanites established a partial sense of continuity in their personal narrative of self. When complaining that the city wasn't what it used to be, people simultaneously expressed their feelings that *life* was not what it used to be.

By deploring the pernicious influence of peasants, and ones from the frontline in particular, the *građanin* effectively bewailed the loss of an *ideal*. It was not so important whether their city of self-conscious, educated and civilised urbanites ever really existed (Buden 1996:50). What counted was that, by deriding the ruralite, citizens of Beograd or Zagreb could comment on the painful character of the *present* situation, which was

not civilised, *not* rational, *not* modern, *not* stylish, *not* peaceful. The discursive construct of 'the city' also allowed, as we have seen, for relating one's personal narrative to a larger story, a story of cosmopolitanism, 'Western-ness', 'Europe', and so on. Moreover, discourses of urbanity and feelings of loss and threat, expressed an anxiety to retain some sense of normality in the face of barbarism. This often led to a partial retreat into the private realm (Norris 1999:163; *Novi List* 19/05/98:24-25), and it provided a welcome mechanism to distance oneself from contamination and responsibility. For many in Beograd, and even to some extent in Zagreb, the war was kept at bay, as expressed by a young Beograd man in a feature article on Serbian youth during the Bosnian war:

'In my group of friends, I don't know anyone who's been a volunteer in Bosnia. Those volunteers mainly come from the countryside. Here, we try to ignore the war.'
(*De Morgen* 31/07/95:10)

I would like to conclude this chapter with an insight into the highly ambiguous situation produced by such discourses. In the specific case of anti-nationalist urban narratives, people who preached and practiced a tolerant position towards other nationalities (particularly towards the 'main' national Other: Serbs/Croats) held very 'politically incorrect' views about their 'own' rural and frontline populations. As a result, in their publications, broadcasts, interviews and especially in private conversations, you would never hear a bad word about national Others at all. However, rather extreme culturalist stereotyping, a form of internal orientalism, was reserved for everything 'peasant' and even more for everything to do with frontline ruralites ('super-peasants'). Paradoxically, therefore, many dissidents partially relied on 'ethnic' or 'sub-ethnic' labels (e.g. *Hercegovci*) in order to explain the rise of nationalism and allocate responsibility for the war. Moreover, the discourse of 'autochthons' versus 'newcomers' re-inscribed a normative link between locality and culture, between territory and politics. This is particularly contradictory in relation to the deterritorialisation of urbanity that was so central to many anti-nationalist narratives: the use of the category 'urban peasants' implied that living in the city did not make you a citizen, but apparently living in the city for a long enough period did. In that way, it was possible for the previously mentioned dissident Bogdanović to rely on a primordialist argument in order to defend himself against the accusation that he had no right to talk about Beograd, after having been away for four years:

'After all, I am a born *Beograđanin*; my grandmothers and –fathers were *Beograđani*. I have a right to Beograd, in any case more so than Šešelj'
(*Nedeljna Naša Borba*, 21-22/06/97)

Vojislav Šešelj is the leader of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, advocate of the most extreme forms of Greater-Serbianism and former paramilitary leader in Bosnia and Croatia. Later, he became vice-president of Serbia, where he continued to add to his reputation of a violent extremist, both in parliament and outside of it. Šešelj is a Bosnian Serb. The presence of men like him in positions of power and their continuing popularity remind us that the city-centrism, which characterised certain anti-nationalist discourses was a *reactive* phenomenon. It was often tempered by a wider 'tolerant' and 'civil' attitude and remained far away from the aggressive nationalism and hate speech, which was dominant in the post-Yugoslav context. Crucially, to my knowledge, these dissident discourses never led to 'peasants' being attacked, harassed, raped, or killed; they still presented a non-violent alternative to the war-mongering of the different nationalisms.

[chapter eight] post-Yugoslav (anti)nationalism and Balkan orientalism

'The difference between the Serbian and the Croatian pseudo-elites lies in the style and the sophistication with regard to the political tasks. The Croats will, let's say, wrap a lump of shit in a nice bit of foil, tie it up with a bow and say: "This is a *Sacher-Torte*". The Serbs, on the other hand, will call that lump of shit, "*Sacher-Torte*" without foil and ribbon. And if someone says that it is shit, they will hit him on the head with a club until he admits that it is *Sacher-Torte*. Moral of the story: both of us get shit, and the rest is a question of marketing.'

(Svetislav Basara, writer from Serbia
in *Feral Tribune* 22/03/99:48)

From the analysis in the last chapter, it is clear that the construction of urban/rural dualisms was not a one-dimensional, homogeneous post-Yugoslav effort, nor could it be understood in isolation from other discursive mechanisms. More specifically, the emphasis on a generalised rural Other ('peasant') which I found in Beograd was only partly matched in Zagreb, where urbanity was often formulated simultaneously in opposition to 'peasants', Herzegovinians *and* Serbs. In order to understand this multilayered pattern of negative self-definition, this chapter dissects the post-Yugoslav discursive practices of Balkan orientalism and in this way builds a critical analysis of the cultural constructs of 'Balkan' *and* 'Europe'. The point here is not so much the fact that people essentialise those notions to a certain extent—something anthropologists themselves practice fairly often (Carrier 1995:8)—but rather the way in which these essentialisms function. I analyse how they work, how they constrain practice *and* how they figure in strategic action.

I consider 'Balkan orientalism' as a discursive practice, or rather, as a set of discursive practices that took shape around the notions of 'Balkan' and 'Europe'. Obviously, the tension itself is crucial, and it would be begging the question if I were to try to distil some 'true' meaning out of these concepts. As we shall see, I suggest their power was situated exactly in their inaccessibility, in the impossibility of pinning them down within the vibrant universe of meanings they evoked. Therefore, the relevance of the Balkan orientalist discourse lay in the role it played in different practices, by different people, with different results. Even when using the term 'Balkan orientalism', we have to be aware that this discourse is unstable and unfixed. Still, as a discourse of identification, it produced some sense of fixity for post-Yugoslavs who articulated it into their understanding of themselves and of the world around them. For many, the notions of 'Balkan' and 'Europe' provided discursive material with which they could relate their 'small story' to the 'big story' of war and nationalism. In this sense, it helped to construct some continuity in these people's narratives of self—even if only by paradoxically emphasising discontinuity in the surrounding events. In this study, 'Balkan' and 'Europe' are conceptualised as collectively sanctioned but contested cultural constructs which could be incorporated in this process. It is my argument that many post-Yugoslav narratives of self were shaped partly on the basis of certain compatibilities between people's everyday life experience and possible variations on the Balkan orientalist theme.

Conceiving of Balkan orientalism as a discursive practice also allows us to analyse how it was articulated with a variety of other discourses, for example with ideas of nationalism/cosmopolitanism, tradition/modernity, irrationality/rationality and urbanity/rurality. It is through these articulations with other discourses that people could relate Balkan orientalism to a rich set of practices, ranging from political decision-making to the most mundane everyday life experiences.

Time for generalisations and apologies now. Whereas the urban/rural dualism was

more prominent in Beograd, Balkan orientalism was much more strikingly present in Zagreb. However, it is important to point out that the differential mechanisms of Balkan orientalism in the Croatian/Serbian opposition were also intersected and undermined by various other factors, such as regional differences and processes of stereotyping within the republics. The chapter on representations of urbanity and rurality analyses some examples of the ways in which the logic of Balkan orientalism was replicated on these lower levels. Here I focus on the more overarching discourses that formed a central axis in the constitutive relationship between certain processes of identification in Beograd and Zagreb. Although I attempt to refrain in this study from comparative frameworks which juxtapose Beograd and Zagreb patterns, in the case of discourses of 'Balkan' and 'Europe' such a structure seems mandatory. Therefore, after a general introduction, I look at Balkan orientalism first in Beograd and then in Zagreb. This means I have to disentangle a number of layers from the complex body of these discourses, a process not unlike trying to fish out different vegetables from a cooked-through pot of goulash. Of course, afterwards, it never tastes the same again.

1. 'Balkan' for beginners

1.1. what do we talk about when we talk about 'Balkan'¹?

The idea of losing one British life in this endless mess of foreign viciousness is ridiculous. The whole lot of them, Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovans, commit acts of unspeakable bloodshed, one against the other. The international community's presence there for many years has not made a blind bit of difference... Let's get out of the Balkans.'
(Michael Winner in *News of the World* 24/01/99)

The column from which these lines are taken was written just before the NATO air strikes on the FR Yugoslavia. Of course, it is easy and even cheap to start off a section on the construction of Otherness with a quotation from a British tabloid paper renowned for its jingoism. By presenting caricature versions of wider, less 'outrageous' phenomena, such a quotation allows for an implicit positioning of oneself as somehow more reasonable, tolerant and understanding. My only reason for including this is its blatant cultural absolutism, associating 'the Balkans' with cultural variety, war, destructive violence, innate hatred and backwardness. This is a pattern that recurred in many different portrayals of the post-Yugoslav context, ranging from semi-racist to highly sympathetic representations². In her wide-ranging work on imaginings of the Balkans, Todorova (1994, 1997) demonstrates that this is nothing new; it reflects a historical process of Othering and essentialising in travelogues, academic and journalistic work, diplomacy and literature. Todorova argues that the region came to symbolise the dark Other *within* 'Western' culture: 'With the rediscovery of the East and orientalism as independent semantic values, the Balkans are left in Europe's thrall, anti-civilisation, *alter-ego*, the dark side within' (1994:482).

The wars in the former Yugoslav republics gave a new impetus to the use of the term 'Balkan', which was located at the shaky centre of an approach explaining those wars as the expression of ancient hatreds. We shall see in this chapter that many people in the post-Yugoslav states resented such a depiction of their recent past, sometimes themselves turning to semi-racist language in the process ('You Westerners treat us like African tribes!'). Paradoxically, however, the notion of 'Balkan' also provided material for a counterdiscourse which deflected guilt and responsibility by conveniently denying agency to those who were considered *Balkanici*. But more about this later. For now, if, as Todorova argues, a Balkan Other was created within Europe, albeit on its fringes (not geographical but cultural-historical), then what do we mean when we talk about 'Balkan'? Most people would agree on its being somehow related to South-East

¹ I have chosen to translate both the noun 'Balkan' and the adjective 'Balkanski' with the English 'Balkan'.

² Examples of the latter could be found in the 1999 Channel Four documentary *The Valley*, or in the 1994 film *Before the Rain* by Manchevski; for a critique see the interview with Slavoj Žižek in *Feral Tribune* (25/01/1999:40-42).

Europe, but there is less agreement on where to draw the line. More importantly, a geographical delineation simply doesn't seem to suffice: although many would agree that Macedonia is a Balkan country, who would describe Alexander the Great as a Balkan man? More than anything else, the term seems to refer to a set of real or imagined social practices which hover around primitivism, variety, passion and, crucially, violence. Others have analysed these external discourses on the Balkans (see Todorova 1994, 1997; Norris 1999:5ff), but the focus of this chapter will be on the theme of the Balkans *within* the post-Yugoslav context and on the ways it figures in nationalist and anti-nationalist discourses of identification. What do we talk about, then, when we talk about 'Balkan'?

1.2. cultural geographies of attributing primitivism

One important factor in any understanding of the use of term 'Balkan' in the post-Yugoslav context is the enormous diversity that characterises the region. First of all, former Yugoslavia was located on the boundaries of two empires, the Habsburg double monarchy and the Ottoman empire. As well as being abundantly varied in landscapes, it displayed enormous socio-economic differences between and within republics. The majority of Yugoslavs had a cultural background in one of three major religions (Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox), and even the most widely spoken language (then called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian) existed in two scripts, Latinic and Cyrillic.

This diversity was never one of equality. Many Yugoslavs experienced a civilisational-developmental hierarchy within their country, where one scored lower the further one descended to the South and to the East. As a popular expression said: 'The more Southern, the sadder' ['Što južnije što tužnije']; and even between the two more 'developed' republics, Slovenia and Croatia, many still perceived such a difference. Shortly after my arrival in Croatia from Beograd, Zagreb journalist Velimir heard about me through a friend and was keen to help me start fieldwork there. He took me out for a couple of drinks and described some broad lines of difference between the post-Yugoslav states. Velimir argued that one only had to look at the difference between the roads in Slovenia and Croatia. He said that the Slovenes *cared* about these things, as opposed to the Croats—adding that the roads were probably even worse in Serbia. A young refugee in Beograd who'd grown up as a Zagreb city boy used more prosaic examples. In an interview, he told me about a camp site where he spent a lot of his holidays as a small child.

'There were plenty of Slovenes there. And... you know what... you really *did* notice certain differences. Bloody hell, really! Let's say, the Slovenes were mostly on one side, while on the other side there were mainly others, [laughs] "*Južnjaci*" ["Southerners"]. And, you know, thinking of it, it was really strange. I mean, this was Yugoslavia, and the Slovenes were all on one side... I even remember [laughs] that we would go to the toilet on the Slovenian side, because they were cleaner [laughs out loud, as does everybody present]. So you see, seriously now, it is really the case that out of all these Yugoslav peoples, they were the most cultured. Let's say they were the nearest to the West, with Austria and all. Somewhat colder with regard to character. And a bit more boring. Whereas in the rest of Yugoslavia people were messing about, you know... [laughs]. Actually, I understand that they wanted to secede, you know.'

However, the perceived civilisational gap applied most significantly to differences between more 'advanced' Croatia and Slovenia on the one hand, and the rest of Yugoslavia on the other. Despite widely diverging evaluations of this gap, many people did agree on its existence. Jasmina, a Beograd NGO activist whose previous job had taken her all over the former state and beyond, argued in an interview:

'It always was different in Slovenia and Croatia. Maybe it is the influence of Catholicism, and of being part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. They are more in touch with the West. It was always like that, you know, the Yugoslav conflict was also a conflict between North and South... And now, within this new state, we have similar problems, with Vojvodina being somewhat similar to Slovenia. I call that the Slovenian syndrome. Vojvodina was

also part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, better organised, more rational, more modern. And the South is very different.'

Bakić-Hayden and Hayden rightly point out that this way of representing differences within Yugoslavia attributes a set of essential differences between Yugoslav peoples to the influence of foreign rulers who dominated their countries ages ago (1992:5). Jasmina's point of view was fairly uncontested, but her statement immediately points out the further complexity of North/South divisions in former Yugoslavia. Certain differences were reproduced *within* republics, mainly along urban/rural lines (see also van de Port 1994, 1999:9), just as between them. Moreover, as this chapter will amply illustrate, one could deploy the North/South gap in a strategic way in many different situations. For example, during a human rights seminar in Beograd, one of the (local) participants, a law student, asked for the floor and remarked that there should be a no smoking policy in the seminar room. Angrily, he wondered why it was always so difficult to organise clear working times and breaks in Serbia. With their love for endless smoking and drinking coffee, he argued, the Serbs were really 'a Turkish people'. For your information, his plea was not rewarded—participants were asked to smoke 'as little as possible', which meant they sometimes briefly paused between cigarettes.

1.3. 'Balkan' and 'Europe' in terms of orientalism

<i>Nisu krivci primitivci Što su pokupili mast Korov nikne di god stigne Ma svaka njima čast Krivi smo mi...</i>	The primitives who skimmed the cream Are not to blame Weeds crop up wherever they get to Well, all credit to them We are to blame...
<i>Otkud svi ti paraziti Što su nam zagustili? Nemoj stari moj Krivi smo mi Što smo ih pustili</i>	Whence all those parasites Who muddied the waters for us? Don't say that, old pal We are to blame Because we let them
[...]	[...]
<i>Putuj, Evropo Nemoj više čekati na nas Ne pitaj mnogo Dospješ i ti [na] rđav glas? Putuj, planeto Super smo se družili... Nama je lepo Taman kako smo zaslužili...</i>	Travel, Europe Don't wait any longer for us Don't ask much Will you get a bad name too? Travel, planet It was great to hang out with you We've got it good Exactly what we deserved

Dorđe Balašević - Putuj Evropo (1998:123-124)

What is at stake in these representations of 'Balkan' is not so much a geographical definition but a set of meanings taken on through geographical metaphor. This has implications for our approach to the notion of 'Balkan'. We can only understand the manifold meanings of this cultural construct, and the ways in which it was used in the post-Yugoslav context, when we see it in relation to another, equally polysemic term: 'Europe'. Both notions had an enormous variety of meanings and featured in people's narratives in different ways. However, within this rich field of polysemy, a pattern arose whereby the 'Balkan'/'Europe' interface functioned as a discourse based on two poles, which, despite differing interpretations, almost always took on a thoroughly moral meaning. As in the case of the urban/rural dualism, there was an unstable process which constituted a clearly positive pole ('Europe', of course) and a clearly negative one ('Balkan').

In his seminal work, Edward Said (1978) analysed 'orientalism' as a European discourse which constructed and essentialised an 'Orient', allowing the former to subjugate and manage the latter. Geographical borders and topography, he argued, only entered this exercise in an entirely arbitrary way (1978:54). Orientalism was part of

a general European project to domesticate the threatening Other (ibid.:58-59) and was therefore a *moral* discourse, always constituting 'Europe' as the superior side (ibid.:7). Importantly, Said went to lengths to argue that this process created two positions: 'the Orient' and 'Europe'. It is only in relation to a constructed Other that 'Europe' could engage in building its own identity through negative self-definition (ibid.:3, 7).

The relevance of Said's analysis with regard to the post-Yugoslav context has been pointed out by several authors (Bakić-Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden & Hayden 1995; Todorova 1994, 1997). It is from their work that I borrow the term 'Balkan orientalism'. Working in Said's vein, these authors offer an interesting analysis of orientalist tendencies in scholarly and literary discourses on the Balkans, adding recent political statements to the material. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, I now try to go beyond this and look at the ways in which Balkan orientalism functioned as a discursive practice on the level of everyday lives.

2. Balkan orientalism in Beograd

2.1. Serbian nationalist discourses of 'Balkan'/'Europe'

Within dominant nationalist discourses in Serbia, the concept of 'Balkan' was not very prominent. For most people, it seemed implicitly understood that Serbia was part of the Balkan *geographical* area. However, the meaning of this 'Balkan' aspect of their national identity was disputed and extremely ambiguous. On the one hand, it was related to some sense of cultural pride, particularly related to Orthodox Christianity, and to an image of ingrained rebellion against foreign oppression, resonating with the preservation of Serbian-ness under Turkish rule. On the other hand, however, even amongst those who felt no strong animosity towards the notion of 'Balkan', it had negative connotations of low economic development, laziness, inefficiency, primitivism and backwardness.

A further ambiguity could be found in the tension between this 'Balkan' notion and its opposite pole, 'Europe'. Although many citizens of Serbia would argue, reluctantly or proudly, that they had *something of the 'Balkan' in them, they would still emphasise their European-ness as well*. In fact, the notion of 'Europe' featured much more prominently in the public sphere than the 'Balkan' idea, and certainly when talking in terms of politics many *Beograđani* expressed the desire and the need to move towards a more 'European' Serbia. This term resonated with a better life, more freedom, less corruption, in short: a democratic, well-off and *less* 'Balkan' situation.

However, beyond this vague semantic consensus lurked many contradictions, even if we only look at the party political level. The Milošević regime, while arguing for a re-entry into Europe through the front door, had no reservations about playing the 'Balkan' rebel-card when it seemed to reinforce its domestic legitimacy and regional position (Jansen 2000a:308-309). In some nationalist variations, this was elaborated into a discourse in which Serbs were actually quintessential Europeans, who for centuries had defended Europe against the perceived onslaught of Islam. The low popularity index of the Serbs in most other countries of Europe was, therefore, seen as the result of screaming injustice, the demonisation of a heroic people who time and again stood on the barricades for the Old Continent (see Jansen 2001; 2000a:300). In this view, despite its numerous sacrifices and unspeakable sufferings done in the service of Europe, the Serbian nation received only ingratitude from that self-same Europe³.

Many Serbian nationalist discourses, particularly those in opposition to Slobodan Milošević, did not stop at decrying this situation. Although most people would vehemently attack the perceived anti-Serbian feelings of almost the entire world, they did not see it as entirely unreasonable that despite frenetic knocking on the European door by the Serbian nation that door would remain closed. Oppositional nationalists,

³ See for example Đukić-Dojcinović 2000. A parallel case of paradoxically anti-European pro-European discourses existed amongst the Croatian extreme right. See further.

including some voices from the church, suggested a simple explanation for this: the Serbian nation had fallen prey to the wrong leader, a dictator of the un-European kind, a communist. Milošević, they argued, falsely portrayed himself as a saviour of the nation. He talked about national brotherhood, but oppressed his own people. He was and would always be a communist. And for this reason, he had brought the Serbs to their current predicament: a stigmatised, demonised nation drifting away from its rightful place in Europe. Only without the communists, would Serbia be able to change its course.

2.2. Beograd anti-nationalist articulations of 'Balkan'/'Europe'

In Beograd-based anti-nationalist discursive practice, a small minority phenomenon, the concept of 'Balkan' was much more prominent and almost exclusively used in a negative sense, particularly in the case of more established, well-articulated alternatives. In these dissident narratives of self, people emphasised the 'European' character of their identity and relied on its 'Balkan' counterpart strictly as a cultural background which symbolised a number of deplorable phenomena in the past and the present context. Again, 'Balkan' evoked a whole set of interrelated but sometimes contradictory meanings, functioning as a sort of empty banner, as a discursive knot which featured in a number of practices and wove them together in a complex and inextricable pattern.

In his book 'Occidentalism', Chen Xiaomei (1996) argued that different groups in Chinese society have relied on strategies and practices similar to those of Said's orientalism in order to achieve certain political goals. The author defines occidentalism as 'a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others' (Chen Xiaomei 1996:4-5). Variations on the occidentalist discourse have been developed as tools of both oppression (by the regime) and emancipation (by dissidents). For the Maoist government, the 'Western' Other was an enemy and an example of what shouldn't be; but in dissident occidentalism, the 'West' had become a metaphor for liberation.

'This evocation of the West, as counterpart of indigenous culture, has more than once set in motion a kind of 'dialogic imagination' that in turn has become a dynamic and dialectical force in the making of modern Chinese history.'
(Chen Xiaomei 1996:9)

In his elaboration of this point through a study of occidentalism in literature and popular culture, Chen Xiaomei warns against the danger of ethnocentric political correctness in such circumstances. What might seem consumerist and uncritically compliant to 'Western' ears, he argues, can be politically oppositional in other contexts, where the notion of 'the West' is the antithesis of the dominant discourse. I believe these are important insights when analysing the Serbian case, where the regime waged a relentless crusade against 'domestic traitors and foreign mercenaries'. After a decade of Milošević, pro-'European' discourses provided most of the material for opposition and dissidence.

Parallel to the previously discussed discourses of urbanity and rurality, some of those who advocated liberal-democratic alternatives would thereby include the authoritarian excesses of Tito's communism as 'Balkan' phenomena. This view also existed amongst nationalists who were in opposition to the current 'communist' in charge. However, whereas the nationalist position would argue that Yugoslavia was an essentially anti-Serbian construction, most civic opponents of the regime would judge the former Yugoslav system much less harshly. Although some anti-nationalist representations of the Yugoslav past labelled the former system as 'Balkanski', this view often led a low-profile life in the shadow of the idea that Yugoslavia was, well... on its way to... yes, 'Europe'. NGO activist Jasmina, whom I interviewed in her organisation's office in the centre of Beograd:

'We were so close to Europe... If only they would have been reasonable and would have sat down for a peaceful and rational solution—Yugoslavia could have joined the EU within ten years! But no, they wanted war...'

Despite blaming the very latest Yugoslav leadership, dissident perspectives often emphasised the relative qualities of the former system, that is, in terms of its multicultural rather than ethnic basis. This is hardly surprising, particularly in light of the wars and the nationalisms that tore their former country apart. However, when referring to the *present* state of affairs in the post-Yugoslav context, the notion of 'Balkan' was a key term in those dissident explanations: Milošević's reign was, then, depicted as a morally despicable model of (un)civilisation. Amongst the ingredients that people identified were low education, violence, primitivism, patriarchy, roughness, intolerance and so on. All of these were, of course, negative stereotypes associated by many urban post-Yugoslavs with rurality.

A glimpse of the complex and multiple linkages between rurality and 'Balkan' can be seen in this excerpt from an interview with two teenage NGO activists in Beograd: Darko, a refugee from Zagreb, and Veljko, born and bred *Beogradanin*. Darko had just told me about the enormous differences between city-people and village-people, and he went on to say:

Darko: '... and, it's interesting, you know, usually when I think of Bosnia, I don't think of Sarajevo or Tuzla, but I think of some mountains, where people live who are... who are totally uneducated, and who are backward. Civilisation has not reached them. And it's definitely true that the worst war has been there, in Bosnia, exactly where such people lived.'

Veljko: 'But it would be the same in the South of Serbia, you know... The Southern mentality - those who lived under the Turks are different from the ones who have a Habsburg legacy.'

Darko: 'God forbid what it would be like in Kosovo. I mean – *another* war! When I think of that... I don't mean anything with this, I don't have prejudices towards Albanians or anything, but I really think that people there are incredibly uneducated and there is terrible primitivism there...'

Veljko: 'On both sides!'

[...]

Darko: 'People still live in tribes there, you know.'

Veljko: 'Blood feuds and all.'

Stef: 'Have you been to Kosovo?'

Veljko: 'No I haven't. But my girlfriend is from Kosovo...'

Darko: [*laughs*] 'So she's really primitive!'

Veljko: '... but she is not in touch with them. She knows some Albanians from Kosovo here in Beograd, but ... no, I have never been there. From her stories and even from theirs... pfff. And, yes, Albanians and Serbs there are the same really in those terms.'

Darko: 'I never went there either. I asked an Albanian girl from Priština on a peace camp. She told me it wasn't really the way we think. But then she was from Priština, which is a city of course. She said that they also go out for drinks, they also sit with Serbs and Albanians together and so on. It's not what you think from TV and all. But on the other side, my dad, who was there for work, told me that there were shops where only Albanians bought, and others where only Serbs bought. He said even that at some point, Albanians walked on one side and Serbs on the other side of the street. Imagine! The tension... Anyway, he told me there was terrible primitivism there. That he was in some restaurant and that the waiter came towards him, and he was like, dressed normally, but his shoes were all muddy, you know [*laughs*]. Terrible!'

In this way, anti-nationalist Balkan orientalism was intimately intertwined with the rise of the current regime and with the wars⁴. As we have seen in the analysis of discourses

⁴ A pattern further complicated by the Kosovo crisis and the NATO air strikes, when many people in Serbia expressed incredulence at the 'West's' intervening on behalf of Kosovo Albanians. Incredulence because many of them were Muslims (as opposed to the self-image of 'Christian Serbs'), but also, and I think more importantly,

on urbanity and rurality, many anti-nationalist narratives centred upon an experience of the violence and the intolerance as a relapse into primitivism, as a flight from modernity. Like the label 'peasant', the 'Balkan' notion often served as a blanket term in descriptions and explanations of this process (see van de Port 1994:103ff). In this view, 'Balkan' patterns had never completely been rooted out in Tito's Yugoslavia but had always existed under the surface of a modernising, Europeanising discourse. Thus the horrific violence and what was seen as the blind acceptance of nationalism by majorities in all republics were understood as a step *backwards*: 'Balkan' had struck back, with a vengeance. In an interview, a Beograd artist, who incidentally had an interest in Byzantine art, explained to me:

'In a way this whole situation is very typical for this Balkan region. People are like in a huge pub fight. They fight and fight, they break all the glass and destroy all the furniture. And when everything is destroyed, you have a pile of broken glass. And then they sit on top of it and they start crying: "Oh why did we do this?"'

'Europe', on the other hand, was held up as an ideal and it provided important discursive material for alternative identification amongst *Beogradani*, very often in combination with an outspoken 'urban' sense of self⁵. 'Europe', it was argued, was what was lost in Serbian society during the last decade; it now had to be recovered from under the ruins of the 'Balkan' hell. By frequently invoking their 'European' identity, many urban, dissident citizens of Serbia found a way of securing some sort of continuity in their own biography. The world around them might have gone 'Balkan', but *they* had remained who they were. This would also explain the city-nostalgia mentioned in the previous chapter: there was no end to the stories of what a cool city Beograd was *before*.

In this vein, many civil society organisations in Beograd included the label 'European' in their names and certainly in their programmes and publications. But as we have seen, this was also the case amongst nationalist parties. As in many other postcommunist states, being 'for Europe' was something you had to be—whatever it meant.

3. Balkan orientalism in Zagreb

Other than in Serbia, Balkan orientalism was at the very heart of Croatian nationalist discourses of identity. This doesn't mean that the meaning of the concept was less diffuse and contradictory in Zagreb. Quite on the contrary, 'Balkan' and 'Europe' were amongst the most controversial terms in a broad struggle over the legitimacy of naming, fought on many overlapping levels. This multilayered conflict over definition took place within nationalist discourses, within anti-nationalist discourses and between those two.

3.1. Tuđman and HDZ: fear of 'Balkan'

Croatian nationalism in the 1990s, I would argue, could not be understood without reference to the concept 'Balkan'. As a consequence of its position as the ultimate negative Other, it was central to most variations on the Croatian nationalist theme. This 'Balkan' space was variably filled by different individuals, groups or phenomena. It could be the Ottoman empire, Islam, or Bosniacs; it could be folk music, a sweaty forehead, or *čevapi*; it could be a black moustache, a badly ironed shirt, or Slobodan Milošević. However, by far the most common inhabitants of this space at the heart of Croatian nationalism were *'the Serbs'*.

Croatian nationalist expressions of Balkan orientalism were embedded in a wider

because they were considered 'Balkan peasants', as opposed to the 'European, urban' *Beogradani*, who were bombed by their former allies (for a brief discussion see Jansen 2000a:300ff).

⁵ See Jansen 2001 for a discussion of how this articulation of European-ness and urbanity came about in the 1996-1997 anti-regime protests.

discourse of diverging imperial legacies, conflicting cultural heritages, clashing customs and ideologies and ultimately, incompatible civilisations. In an interview in March 1991, the Croatian president, Tuđman, argued as follows:

'Croats belong to a different culture, a different civilisation from the Serbs. Croats are part of Western Europe, part of the Mediterranean tradition. Long before Shakespeare and Molière, our writers were translated into European languages. The Serbs belong to the East. They are Eastern peoples, like the Turks and Albanians. They belong to the Byzantine culture... Despite similarities in language we cannot be together.'
(Cohen 1995:211)

As we saw in Chapter Four, in order to claim national independence on the basis of irreconcilable cultural differences, Croatian nationalists saw themselves obliged to re-interpret the nature of the former system drastically. Rather than a multinational state based on brotherhood and unity, they argued, Tito's creation was an uneasy and unfeasible attempt to force together a series of clashing cultures in one country. But Croatian nationalism went further: the clash was uneven, since (at least) one of the cultures in question was undemocratic and oppressive. Yugoslavia was then depicted as an imposed regime, a Serbian-dominated conspiracy against the Croatian nation, in which the Serbs and their allies succeeded in forcing tyranny upon the innocent and freedom-loving Croats. As we have seen, they had only been able to do so by employing internal enemies: Croats who were simply not Croatian enough, such as Tito himself. Furthermore, this wasn't just any tyranny, it was '*Balkan*' tyranny. Therefore, it was un-'European', which by definition implies that it had to be un-Croatian.

Following from this self-identification as definitely *not* 'Balkan', there was a far-reaching unwillingness on the part of the Croatian regime to engage in any kind of co-operation process which was perceived as possibly leading to a 'Balkan' collectivity. In 1997, the Croatian president proposed a legal amendment which would constitutionally guarantee that his state would never enter any kind of federation with other South Slavs. Tuđman argued that it was 'necessary not only to express politically, but also to regulate constitutionally, what [was] the resolute and unanimous conclusion of the struggle of the Croatian people for national freedom and state independence, and that is: the Croatian people never again in any kind of South Slav community' (*Novi List* 4/11/97). Note that the same regime was very strongly in favour of joining the European Union.

Within Croatian nationalism the notion of 'Balkan' referred to the dark times of Yugoslav communism, but it also served as a label in other divisions (Christianity vs. 'Balkan' Islam, Catholicism vs. 'Balkan' Orthodoxy, etc.). Obviously this often led to paradoxical situations, for example in the depiction of 'Balkan' Serbs as atheists (Yugoslav communists) and as Orthodox (Byzantine nationalists). As in the case of many other authoritarian regimes, the legitimacy of the HDZ-state was at least partly based on the idea of a *threat*, and, like in Serbia, this threat justified the limitation of freedoms. I would argue that in 1990s Croatia, 'Balkan' functioned as a constant reminder of a range of perceived threats to sovereignty: national Others (primarily Serbs and also Bosniacs) *and* internal enemies.

This resulted in an endless flood of reminders of the 'European' character of the Croatian nation but, even more prominently, in a generalised depiction of 'Balkan' as 'what we *don't* want to be'. That idea was condensed in the poignantly straightforward HDZ electoral slogan 'Tuđman, not Balkan' [*Tuđman, a ne Balkan*']. Few people were as feverish exponents of the thesis that Croatian identity was absolutely removed from 'Balkan' influences as the president himself. He let no opportunity slip to express the need for a permanent fear of anything 'Balkan'. On the occasion of one of the few official visits by a major foreign head of state during the 1990s—and irony has it that it was the Turkish president Demirel—Tuđman argued as follows:

Q: 'Mister president, Croatia is a Balkan country, but also a European country. How does that geopolitical situation influence the foreign policy?'

A: 'First I will correct you. Croatia is not a Balkan country, but a Central-European and a

Mediterranean country. By its civilisational achievements and history it has always belonged to the Western European cultural circle, and as such it has always been an integral part of Western Europe. That is the reason why Croatia wants to develop integrational links with these countries. In relation to the Balkans and South-East Europe, with whom Croatia borders, we wish to have normal good neighbourly relations with the countries in the region and with other countries. However, we emphasise the fact that—even though we agree with and support bilateral relations and, if possible, common trade and similar projects—we are against any attempt to integration within a Balkan or South-East European framework.'

(*Novi List* 22/09/97:9)

In this context, it is possible to understand why in September 1997 most of the regime-minded media in Croatia virtually ignored the presidential elections in Serbia. When the results of the first round became known, they only deserved a minor place in the TV news and in the newspapers, despite their likely impact on the situation in Croatia. In fact, one of the most successful candidates, Vojislav Šešelj, still argued for a Greater Serbia, including large parts of Croatia. Significantly, the Polish elections on the same day provided headline news. This is how far the state media went to prove that Croatia belonged to *former*-communist, pro-'Western', Central Europe and *not* to the Balkans.

3.2. sweaty armpits and bad haircuts: politicising images of 'Balkan'

Let us now briefly look at two examples of politicised 'Balkan' imagery: a film and an electoral poster. The first illustration dates from the beginning of 1999, when the long-expected film *Bogorodica* ['Mother of God'] opened in Zagreb cinemas. This film about the war in Croatia, with an impressive cast and ditto budget, painted a highly dichotomised picture of the conflict, laden with heavy symbolism. Obviously, there was the title itself, but here I would like to address only one aspect of the symbolic structure of the film: its play with 'Balkan' images. Throughout the story there were two clear-cut sides in a village, diametrically opposed to each other. Only at the outset there was a conflict between two Croatian men about a woman. However, in the face of Serbian aggression this was, of course, quickly forgotten, and from then on a *national* dichotomy was central to the film. On the one hand we had the Croats: good-looking, lively, Catholic, industrious, loving people who represented a peculiar mixture of idyllic rurality (working in the sunlit fields together, laughing) and modern urbanity (dress, haircut, drinking Coca-Cola). On the other hand there were the Serbs: loud, sweaty, systematically unshaven, unfashionably dressed and drinking large amounts of *rakija*. At one point, the clear-cut *baddies/goodies* structure was slightly ambiguated by a 'good' Serb: a fat, moustached, sweaty and badly shaven man who displayed warmth, openness and humour. However, soon the audience was reminded that these attractive 'Balkan' features were only seemingly acceptable and that Serbs were really wolves in sheeps' clothing. In fact, this man turned out to be the worst of all Serbs: he raped his (Croatian) former best friend's wife and killed her with her child in a symbolic scene where she represented the Croatian *Bogorodica*.

Balkan images often overlapped with the spectre of communism as well. A poignant illustration was provided by a Young HDZ billboard visible across Croatia during the 1997 electoral campaign (Figure Three). When it became clear that the social-democratic successor party of the communists (SDP) was becoming the greatest oppositional force, the HDZ aimed its campaign directly at depicting these rivals as Greater-Serbianists, murderers, unreconstructed communists, etc. The poster in question showed two former Yugoslav policemen arresting a young man. This was accompanied by a text which questioned the main 1997 SDP slogan: 'Work and respect? Think about it and remember'. Above the arrested man's shoulder one could see a police truncheon. This picture resonated with memories of scenes at football games in the late Yugoslav years, and the message seemed clear: the SDP-'communists', the *komunjare*, were blamed for police arrests and violence in the former state, therefore for communism, and therefore for the chains that kept the Croatian nation enslaved in an authoritarian system.

But there was much more to this poster; I would argue that there was 'Balkan' to it. First of all, the picture was in black and white, apart from the red star on one of the officer's caps. The red star emphasised the communist threat but the colour combination also evoked the perceived backwardness and old-fashionedness which was considered 'typical' for the 'Eastern-European' conditions under which the Croats had been forced to live. Moreover, the man who was being arrested was wearing a chequered shirt over a turtleneck sweater, which symbolised his 'modern' look. His hair was also much fairer than that of the police officers. All this confirmed the message of the poster, showing a *Croat* being arrested by ruthless policemen who were, if not Serbian, at least Serb-controlled.

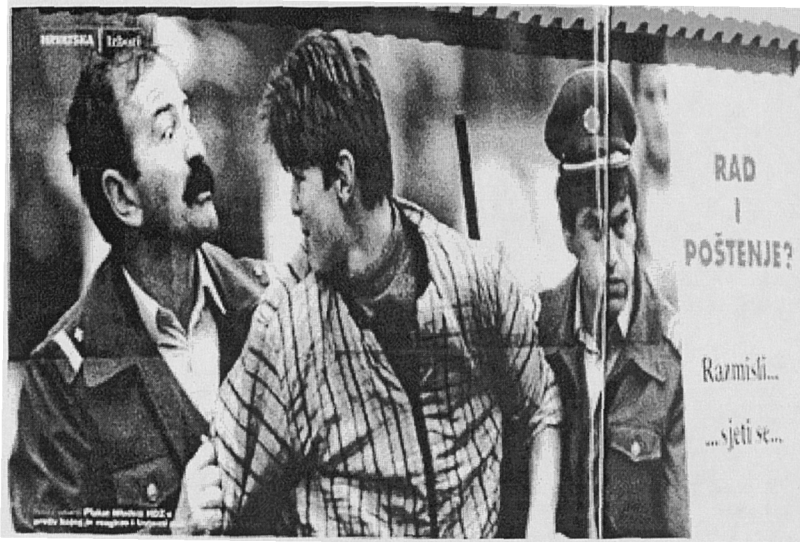


Figure Three (HDZ Mladež Billboard 1997; photograph taken from *Tjednik* 11/04/97)

Furthermore, the officers were not just dressed in Yugoslav police uniforms, but they were also obviously 'Balkan'. None of the two had bothered to button up their shirts, and their uniforms could do with an iron. Both officers sported unsophisticated haircuts. One looked away with a shifty look, appearing unhealthy; he had dark, bushy eyebrows and thick lips. His colleague was not even wearing his cap and his hair, thinning on top, was messy and sweaty. He hadn't shaved very well, and his face was to a large extent covered by a thick dark moustache. He looked at the arrested guy with what I'm afraid I can only describe as a typical arrogant policeman's look. All this meant that he fulfilled the ultimate stereotype of a rural Serb—he simply was 'Balkan'.

This billboard was part of a HDZ campaign to depict the SDP as a communist 'Balkan' threat. It recalled what had been triumphantly asserted immediately after their first electoral victory, when the HDZ journal had said that the coming to power of the party meant

'The inclusion in the states of Central Europe, the region to which it has always belonged, except for the recent past when Balkanisms and forcibly self-proclaimed national representatives have constantly subordinated the Croatian territory to an Asiatic form of government'
(Bakić-Hayden & Hayden 1992:9)

3.3. fighting fire with fire: Balkan orientalism vs. the regime

Although all the above illustrations refer to the Croatian regime, it was literally everywhere in the public domain, and particularly in the media. I would argue that most of those who were critical of the HDZ-regime, and that was a majority of the population by the end of my fieldwork period, also subscribed strongly to the above anti-'Balkan' identification. However, in this process of negative self-definition they added some

more twists to the story. 'Balkan', it would then be argued, meant not only Yugoslavia, Serbian domination and communism, but *also* included the HDZ party state (Matić 1997:11; *Arkzin* 14/03/97:2-3). Oppositional narratives would refer to the authoritarian president, the ongoing corruption, the ceremonial kitsch and, of course, the hard-line *Hercegovci* around the president. Let me illustrate the bizarre paradoxes in the responses to the cramped Balkan orientalism of the regime with two cases.

Firstly, the well-known oppositional columnist Vukov-Čolić (1998:2) argued in favour of determined action against Dinko Šakić, a former camp commander of the Ustaša concentration camp in Jasenovac who had recently been extradited by the Argentinian government. Vukov-Čolić brought up a number of reasons. Clearly, there was justice to be dealt with, but he also argued that making a clear stand against Šakić would undermine existing stereotypes about the fascist traits of Croats and lessen the international pressure on the country. The author's trump card was, yet again, 'Europe': dealing swiftly in the Šakić case would speed up Croatia's much needed entry into Europe. In this sense, he argued, the case presented an ultimate test for the regime to choose between 'Europe' and 'Balkan'. Again, we find a variation on the Balkan orientalist theme: even that most 'European' of crimes—the holocaust—was associated with anti-'European' tendencies, and therefore, with 'Balkan'.

In a second example, oppositional voices pointed out the contradictory nature of Tuđman's Jugo- and Balkan-paranoia in practice. While anxious to prevent Croatia from joining any kind of regional co-operation, the HDZ was negotiating a treaty with its colleagues in the Croatian leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina for 'special relations' (or whatever came closest to the original idea of unification, see *Novi List* 06/11/97). In Lovrić's words: 'If the president considers it necessary to prevent Croatia, even constitutionally, from renewing any "Balkan" links, how can he then simultaneously march bravely into those relations which lead Croatia straight to the Balkan?' (Lovrić 1997a:2).

What is asserted in these oppositional discourses is a variation on the Balkan orientalist theme. Yes, the Serbs were seen as 'Balkan'; yes, Croatia was part of 'Europe', *but* the 'Balkan' policies of HDZ were responsible for keeping Croats from freeing their true 'European' selves. As in Serbia, we have to take into account that almost all political parties and socio-political organisations—regime and opposition—proclaimed to be in favour of 'Europe'.

Negative definition against 'Balkan' stereotypes was a dominant discursive practice in Croatia, carried out through a systematic cleansing of the public sphere of anything perceived as 'Balkan' and through heavy pressure to extend this approach to the private space and to biographies. This was certainly not limited to the domain of party politics and governmental decision-making. 'Balkan' came to be associated with former Yugoslavia, with Serbia or simply with anything which was non-'European', non-'Western', non-modern, non-urban or plainly undesirable. Almost too ethnographically perfect to be true, the central Zagreb cinema 'Balkan' was renamed into 'Europe'—a name change that reflected the much wider face-lift the city had undergone since 1990. Espresso and cappuccino were widely available, whereas the Turkish coffee that most people drank at home became hard to find in public places. *Burek*, *čevapi* and other examples of 'Balkan' food were increasingly pushed off the main streets by burgers and pizzas. They were even officially banned from a city festival during my fieldwork. *Narodnjaci*, the ultimate 'Balkan' songs, were banned from the radio and from record shops, and former Yugoslav TV series and films could not be shown. For months after my arrival from Beograd, some friends of my housemates jokingly referred to me as 'Balkan spy', a reference to a famous Yugoslav film classic made in Beograd.

In an illustration of the omnipresence of the 'Balkan'/'Europe' dualism, Zagreb student Gordan asked me once: 'Stef, what do people in your country think of Croatia? Do they think it belongs to the Balkans or not?' (see Herzfeld 1995:218). His friend interrupted, and probably hit the nail on the head, by saying that people there just don't know anything about it at all. However, Gordan argued back: 'I just asked because here it is such a big issue: everybody wants to be Europe Europe Europe. So I want to know...'.

3.4. Zagreb anti-nationalist discourses of 'Balkan'/'Europe'

Like the nationalist discourses it aimed to subvert, Zagreb anti-nationalism was to a large extent structured around alternative variations of Balkan orientalism. Particularly established dissident narratives incorporated 'Balkan' as Other when articulating alternative forms of identification. Often, in their view, 'Balkan' included Yugoslav communist authoritarianism, but they would also refer to what they considered good elements of the Yugoslav system. As in the case of Beograd anti-nationalism, this alternative interpretation of the past took shape particularly in contrast to the war-mongering, xenophobic and exclusionary present regime. But even when favourably comparing the multiculturalism of the past with the current nationalism, the term 'Balkan' was often used to refer to the darker sides of Yugoslav times: stupidity, primitivism, violence and 'lack of culture'—in short, its 'peasant' character.

As in the case of oppositional nationalists, the scope of 'Balkan' was widened to include the HDZ state, the president, corruption and bribery, hard-line *Hercegovci* and so forth. However, on top of this, as the ultimate expression of 'Balkan', these dissident narratives would name nationalism and xenophobia. Through an articulation with discourses of urbanity and rurality, this was again linked to primitivism, violence, patriarchy and lack of education. Everyday life amongst those who developed anti-nationalist discourses was full of indications of this replication of the regime's Balkan orientalism, adding the extra layer of defining nationalism as 'Balkan'. For example, the urban, trendy, oppositional radio station *Radio 101* thrived on such jokes and puns. Clothing amongst human rights monitors, NGO activists and independent journalists, often reflected the general Zagreb preference for urban chic, and music tastes were decidedly 'Western'.

In this way, many anti-nationalist narratives undermined the dominant nationalism by relying upon a variation on the Balkan orientalist theme that was at the very centre of the discourse they sought to undermine. Obviously, different meanings were evoked through different discursive practices. For example, although 'Balkan' was a very important factor in the explanation of nationalism (and therefore to be avoided) there was much less resistance here to co-operation within a regional, transnational framework, sometimes even referred to as 'Balkan'. However, their work in 'Balkan Committees, in regional branches of international organisations and in groups of former-Yugoslav representatives created networks with individuals from Serbia and Bosnia who were decidedly non-'Balkan'. These people shared their largely pro-'European' stance because 'Europe', again, was the ultimate positive pole—the largely unexplained alternative.

Through a further twist in this carousel of redefinition, dissidents who brought forward anti-nationalist discourses were then charged by the dominant nationalism with the most capital of capital offences in Croatia: *Jugonostalgija* (see Chapter Ten). And, the irony seems never-ending: in the dominant nationalist discourses, Yugoslavia was of course conflated with 'Balkan'.

4. Europa, Europa

4.1. the star of Bethlehem--but who's the baby?

Following Carrier (1995:3) I want to avoid the pitfalls of orientalism's counterpart, and refrain from painting a simplified, essentialised picture of the 'West'. In the post-Yugoslav context people amply referred to '*zapad*' [the 'West'], but a more common term used to evoke images of 'Western-ness' was 'Europe'. '*Eu(v)ropa*', the other pole of the orientalist dualism, was not much debated, as if it was assumed that everyone knew what it was⁶. Usually 'Europe' was associated with descriptions such as rational, 'Western', modern, organised, urban, developed, democratic, educated, peaceful,

⁶ Very recently, however, just before the fall of the Iron Curtain, this was different. See Matvejević 1989.

individualist, civilised, tolerant and so on. People would often refer to what they called 'world standards' or to 'the developed democracies of the West'. However, the term 'Europe' was more implicitly contested and took on different meanings at different moments. As in the case of the notion of 'Balkan', there was a dissociation of culture from geographical place: 'Europe' was a cultural construct evoking a range of desired qualities, the eternal star of Bethlehem leading the way to the barn of the good life.

Of course, there were some associations with the actual geopolitical context. 'Europe' often meant Western Europe, or the EU, which as a place certainly played an important role, since many post-Yugoslavs had lived and worked there as guest workers. This led to numerous tensions and contradictions. 'Europe' was imbued with qualities such as Reason and Organisation, but the actual European governments were perceived as behaving entirely unreasonably towards *their* nation. In both Serbia and Croatia, a strong nationalist discourse of disappointment prevailed: the EU was seen as favouring the national Other, while ignoring the undeniable fact that their nation had historically contributed enormously to that very Europe, and therefore doubtlessly deserved its place in it (see Jansen 2000a:300).

'Europe' could also be used ironically. This was particularly clear in the discursive no-man's-land of humour and derision between Serbia and Croatia. Let me first mention here that most Serbs would admit that Croatia was more 'European' than Serbia, which they would explain with reference to respective histories of foreign domination and to physical distance. However, after this admission, there was merciless mockery precisely of that 'European-ness'. In jokes, *Zagrepci* were depicted as pitiable *Štreberi* ['wannabes'], frenetically aspiring to be more 'European' than Europe. Zagreb was described as a snobbish, provincial hole that never outgrew its overrated petit-bourgeois Habsburg legacy. In Serbia and Bosnia it was (also *before*) a popular sport to poke such fun at Croatia, and particularly at its capital city Zagreb.

An example of the humour that this presumed snobbery evoked could be found in a story that some Beograd friends told me. When, in the late 1980s, the multinational fast food chain *McDonalds* opened its first branch in Yugoslavia, *Zagrepci* were not pleased with the fact that this was in Beograd. In the story as related to me, people from Zagreb thought that it should be in their city, and they argued so along the lines of Balkan orientalism: 'Zagreb is much more "European" and, therefore, has the right to *McDonalds* before "Balkan" Beograd'. Soon after, the motorway sign in the Croatian capital had been updated in the vein of the pre-existing mockery of Zagreb's cramped 'European-ness': instead of 'Beograd X km', it now read 'McDonalds X km'. I didn't see the sign, and if it was there, I don't know how it was received by *Zagrepci*. What is important to my argument here is the way in which this story linked in with Balkan orientalism. Moreover, it points to a paradoxical element in the use of the term 'Europe': *McDonalds*, obviously, is not a European firm. It should be clear by now that neither was 'Europe' in post-Yugoslav Balkan orientalism. 'Europe' was always something else. In dissident, anti-nationalist discourses, 'Europe' was a central notion. Although its meanings were contested, there was a broad consensus on its status as a metaphor for a political and civilisational ideal. In the words of the singer Balašević:

'Today I have the feeling that there are many people who think like me, who want to bring this country back where it came from and where it wished to belong: Europe. I was born in, and live in, Novi Sad, a city on the Danube, which also crosses Vienna and Budapest—I want to belong to that Central Europe, where my ancestors and my family belonged, and nobody can pull me over to the other side. [...] Novi Sad [is] on the other side of the border between the Ottoman and the Habsburg empire. I have five hundred years on my side.'

(*Globus* 15/01/93:21)

Further on, Balašević reinforced this feeling of forced alination from 'Europe' when he argued that 'It frightens me that we haven't been able to come to an agreement like people in Europe, like the Czechs and the Slovaks.' Oppositional discourses frequently evoked the 'European' example of peaceful co-existence and, particularly, the supranational structure of the European Union.

4.2. teaching Europe European-ness: how 'European' can you get?

At this point I would like to briefly throw a light on the debate about 'Europe' amongst two groups of people in 1990s Croatia. In an exercise of extreme simplification, we could say that, with regard to the issue of 'Europe', there were two main streams of nationalist intellectuals in Croatia. One group consisted of explicitly 'Western'- or 'European'-oriented individuals, who saw the successful creation of a national Croatian state as a completed task. It was now a question of transforming the country into a liberal democracy. The others were so-called 'nation-building' [*državotvorni*] conservatives, explicit right-wingers of the moral majority (Salecl 1994a:20-37), who argued along strongly nationalist lines. Both groups consisted of intellectuals who occupied some parts of the public forum. However, importantly, the second group was much more influential in the 1990s because these people were often very near to the centres of power (and usually HDZ-members).

Interestingly, both groups attached a very important meaning to 'Europe', and both emphasised Croatia's 'European-ness' in the face of the un-Croatian 'Balkan'. Both felt that Croatia was misunderstood in the international community and wrongly blamed for the sins of 'Balkan' Others. However, whereas the 'liberal-democrat nationalists' argued that one should convince the EU of Croatia's non-Balkan identity through the further development of a Western European type of democracy, the 'conservatives' referred much more frequently to moral issues, to Christianity, and to Catholicism in particular. Representatives of Croatia's hard right believed that their nation had no lessons whatsoever to learn from the 'West' and framed the post-Yugoslav conflict in a general civilisation vs. barbarism discourse.

We have seen before how many post-Yugoslavs, in different ways, saw themselves as somewhat imperfect 'Europeans' (see Herzfeld 1995:219), but with the Croatian conservative right we have a case of a drastic reversal of such a discourse. Particularly after the wars, when the 'West' was seen as having failed to help its supposedly natural ally, Croatia, they felt that more decisive action should be taken. Croatia, they argued, didn't need the EU, but the EU needed its most 'European' nation (Buden 1996:184-185). There were lessons to be learned from the Croatian example of heroic liberation, moral purity, national pride, piety etc. Croats had been sacrificing themselves for 'Europe' long enough now, and the time had come to take credit for this. As Željko Stipanović argued in 1998: 'Again, the Croatian nation has shed its blood, fighting not only for its own freedom, but for democracy in the whole of Europe' (*Feral Tribune* 14/09/98:6). Others claimed that democracy had actually existed in Croatia before it was introduced in Western Europe (Lovrić 1998). Croatia, it was then argued, was 'Europe' in its pure version—'Europe' as it should be—and therefore, far beyond the civilisational realm of the current EU, with its decadence, secularisation, rock and roll, drugs and, of course, multi-cultural promiscuity. 'Croatia is on the whole much more European than many other Western European countries, with their multicultural Ali-Baba's and the smell of *šiš kebab*' (Sunić 1998:47).

5. semi-inversions: Balkan orientalist counterdiscourses

*Kunem vam se, rahmetom mi dedinim
Iako se u tu svirku ne razumijem baš
Da nikad niko nije znao 'armoniku svirat
Kao mali Ibro, Ibro Dirka naš*

I swear to you by my buried grandad
Although I don't know that much about such tunes
That nobody ever knew how to play accordion
Like little Ibro, our Ibro Dirka

*Kada počme dernek i kad on zasvira
Ne bi stigo reći ni bismillah
Već bi lupo glavom i lomio bi čaše
Već bi te Ibro bacio u sevdah*

When the party starts and he plays
You wouldn't manage to say "In God's name!"
Already heads would bang and glasses shatter
Already, Ibro would have thrown you into *sevdah*

*Al' ubrzo za Ibru čuše ljudi sa estrade
I počeše njuškati po našoj mahali*

But soon showbiz people heard about Ibro
And they started prying our neighbourhood

*Svaki lbri piće plaća
Svaki deset prsta lbrih hvati*

And everyone of them paid lbro drinks
And everyone of them praised lbro's ten fingers

*lbro poče pričati o parama, o slavi
Mi ga odgovarasma lbro ne budali
Ti si nešto drugo
Ti 'armonikom lječiš bol
Na estradi sve je lažno
Na estradi sve je fol*

lbro started talking about money and about fame
We tried to dissuade him "lbro don't be stupid
You are something different
You heal pain with your accordion
In showbusiness everything is false
In showbusiness everything is fake"

Zabranjeno Pušenje – lbro Dirka
(from the album *Dok čekaš sahad sa šejtanom* © 1985)

So far, this discussion has focused on the ways in which Balkan orientalism enabled people with different values and opinions, from different perspectives, in different contexts, both in Beograd and in Zagreb, to articulate discursive practices of identification. A constant phenomenon up to this point has been that 'Balkan' was thereby posited as a negative Other, and 'Europe', on the other hand, always evoked the positive pole of the same discourse. Obviously, the meanings of these notions were continually contested and re-evaluated through conflicting practices, but there was no inversion of the final moral evaluation. Were there no alternative views? Were there no instances whereby people engaged in what Herzfeld calls 'practical orientalism', oscillating between what is 'wrong' but familiar, and what is 'right' but uneasy (1995:220; 1996:96)?

Yes, there were. In this section I explore such cases whereby people evoked Balkan orientalism in alternative ways. I also look at the possibility of the 'Balkan' theme to be articulated into more or less subversive attempts to destabilise the discourse that held up 'Europe' as its ideal. However much 'Balkan' evoked disapproval and rejection in favour of 'moving towards Europe', there were strong indications that it also constituted an ambiguous undercurrent in the different post-Yugoslav states (Bakić-Hayden & Hayden 1992:13; van de Port 1994, 1996, 1999).

5.1. 'Balkan' as *passe-partout*

A first, semi-inverted, everyday deployment of the 'Balkan' theme was its widespread use as a short-cut answer. In many arguments the 'Balkan' factor figured as a *passe-partout*, a master-key, fitting many different and potentially hazardous doors. Crucially, it was used to *close* these doors rather than to open them and be vulnerable to whatever was behind them. 'Balkan' as *passe-partout* was much less prominent in Zagreb, since 'Balkan' was primarily used to refer to Serbs, but it was certainly present in Croatia as well. A very basic example occurred when a journalist asked a number of politicians what the average monthly salary was in Croatia. One HDZ official dismissed the question by saying: 'That is a Balkan question. Nowhere in the cultured world would people wonder how much they earn and what the average salary is.' (*Slobodna Dalmacija* 11/07/98).

However, more frequently in everyday life, 'Balkan' could be thrown into a conversation in order to exclude foreigners from the discussion and, particularly, from making a judgement about events in the post-Yugoslav states (see van de Port 1999). Through claiming a distinct identity from 'Europe', 'normal' standards would be automatically suspended, and therefore, no further explanations were deemed necessary: 'It's a Balkan thing, you wouldn't understand'. Similarly, this argument would be used to actually explain certain events or behaviour without referring to individual responsibility ('after all, we are all *Balkanci*'). This was particularly common in relation to irrationality and work attitudes, and it also allowed one to account for events without analysing them. 'It's always been like this here,' people would say, 'that's the way our people are'. This conveyed widespread cynicism about the wars and about the whole post-Yugoslav situation. Repeatedly people rewrote history sweepingly and told me that Serbs and Croats have *always* been fighting each other, thereby consolidating the notion of the Balkans as the powder keg of Europe.

In this way, the 'Balkan' element helped to dispel questions of guilt and responsibility. This process caused many anxieties within anti-nationalist narratives, as illustrated by the following rant by Dubravka, a Beograd artist whom I interviewed in the theatre where she worked.

'All that Balkan stuff... I think that's nonsense. People have to find *some* kind of explanation... to understand things. Of course, some things *are* related to the Balkans: the intermingledness, many states in one space, a geopolitical situation... Certainly these are real factors, but nothing can be explained all the way by that. You see, I think that it is some sort of avoidance strategy, some escape. When I tell you I am from the Balkans, that immediately supposes some kind of attitude. It frees me from some other responsibilities. And at the same time, it reinforces a global explanation as well. I mean... it is not Byzantium here in Beograd. Not all Serbs are Orthodox. Not all Croats are Catholics. Cyrillic is not a sign of something—nor is Catholicism. Everything is so interconnected... [...] But the permanent emphasis on the East/West, maybe that is a Cold War position. Maybe it is created through politics... There are many elements on one side which are in a way also from the other side... And that space called Balkan... it won't help a lot in explaining things. [...] The two main actors in the recent horror are two political parties, SPS and HDZ. And they are primarily responsible. Now everyone wants to explain this war with reference to some ethnic, religious, I don't know which other reasons... But that war is really..., how can I say, those kinds of explanation are used by people to liberate themselves from responsibility. But let me tell you one thing: if everything here is so primitive, that doesn't account for what happened in Srebrenica!'

However, for most people the situation was less clear-cut. The tension between a 'European' identity and a 'Balkan' self-image had already been prevalent in former Yugoslavia. Self-stereotyping was common, and Balkan orientalism reflected a combination of what Herzfeld refers to as 'embarrassment and rueful self-recognition', expressed not just in individual terms, but also as a 'collective representation of intimacy' (Herzfeld 1996:6). As such, I would follow Herzfeld (1996:28) in saying that

'National embarrassment can become the ironic basis of intimacy and affection, a fellowship of the flawed, within the private space of the national culture.'

On the one hand, most citizens of Yugoslavia had been extremely keen to point out the differences between them, as a modern country, and the Eastern bloc. However, simultaneously, there had been a perception that Yugoslavia did not really belong to 'Europe' (see Herzfeld 1996: 89-108). A popular former Yugoslav joke illustrated this:

Tito, Nixon and Brezhnev sit in a plane. They decide to bet who can recognise his country by sticking his arm out of the window. The American president goes first, of course, and says: 'We are now above the US. I can feel it: the air is clean, the atmosphere is healthy, the smell of freedom'. After a while it's Brezhnev's turn: 'This must be the Soviet Union. Clean air, healthy atmosphere, no oppression, everybody equal'. Tito patiently awaits his turn, briefly sticks his arm out of the window, and immediately sits back again. 'Gentlemen', says the Marshall, 'we are now flying above Yugoslavia'. Nixon and Brezhnev ask: 'How do you know?'. Says Tito: 'Because my watch has gone'.

The common thread in this field of opposing patterns of identification seemed to be located precisely in the ambiguity, in the omnipresent tensions between them. On the way home from a party, Nataša, a Beograd academic, explained her preference for a certain film director in those terms. She contrasted his work with that of Sarajevan Emir Kusturica, well-known for films such as 'Underground' and 'Time of the Gypsies', whom she accused of portraying Yugoslavs as stupid, as wild Gypsies. Kusturica, she argued, always gave Western European audiences what they wanted: wild and crazy Balkan people. Interestingly, less than an hour before, I had witnessed the same Nataša singing, dancing and enjoying herself on a party. The live music consisted of folk songs from all over former Yugoslavia, including many Gypsy tunes, and while this was not the case here, it was often Gypsies who performed these songs on such occasions. I was informed by many different Serbs that their nation, as opposed to

many Western European ones, was not racist at all. Time and again, this slightly destabilising statement—certainly in a context of nationalist atrocities—was justified with reference to the place of Gypsies in their society. Nowhere were the *Cigani* as welcome, it was argued, and nowhere were they considered such a constitutive part of a country as in Serbia.

5.2. Balkan orientalist counterdiscourses in Beograd

In Beograd, Balkan orientalist counterdiscourses were obviously present, and became increasingly so during the NATO air strikes in 1999. Elsewhere I have analysed the differential deployments of these counterdiscourses, evoking an image of victimised and rebellious Serbian underdogs (Jansen 2000a). 'Balkan' then referred to a tradition of defiance of all outside domination. This idea was cherished by all forms of Serbian nationalism and constituted a central element in nationalist identification amongst many layers of Serbian society. International sanctions against the FR Yugoslavia and the widely held conviction that the whole world was against the Serbs only contributed to this self-perception as defiantly 'Balkan'. In my experience, no words conveyed this so well as the comment I heard from many people in Serbia, applying a saying widely used throughout most of the former Yugoslav region to the so-called international community: 'We fuck their international mother' [*Jebemo im majku međunarodnu*]. Seeking a way out through such a reaction expressed both their current relative powerlessness and the defiance of any imposed authority that was presumably characteristic of Serbs. And what could be more 'Balkan' than that?

This was also reflected in the different attitudes of Serbian and Croatian nationalists towards the horrific violence in the war. In Serbian nationalist discourses, violence, blood and warriorism were often glorified⁷ (Velikić 1992:18). For example, referring to a popular Yugoslav image of Serbs as lazy *Balkanci*, Milošević addressed a crowd in 1991 as follows: 'If we don't know how to work, at least we know how to fight' (Silber & Little 1995:129). Some rebellious satisfaction was taken from this self-image, although it was simultaneously argued that Serbs could boast of a history of civilisation which put any other nation to shame. This was illustrated by the storyline that Serbs already ate with forks and knives when the rest of Europe still used their hands. In Croatia, the situation was different: nationalists there fiercely denied the involvement of Croats in any kind of 'barbaric' violence. Violence belonged to the Balkans, it was argued, an attitude embedded in a strongly moralistic pro-European civilisational discourse.

Again, even in Serbia, this 'Balkan' self-designation was strongly ambiguous: while celebrating it in certain contexts, more often people seemed to resent it, at least in the presence of a foreigner such as myself. Just after my arrival, many people, themselves Serbs, saw it as their duty to inform me of the pitiable mentality of 'the Serbs'. Commenting on the socio-economic disaster scenario that Serbia was following, Stevo, a Beograd student and a 'friend of the house' I shared, cynically remarked during one of our numerous coffee sessions that Serbs were very different from Croats and Slovenes. With a self-deprecating laugh he looked me in the eye and said: 'We are very Turkish, my friend. One hundred percent Turkish!'

The 'Turkishness' of the Serbs was also often referred to when explaining their alleged, and often self-proclaimed, lazy work attitudes. 'You can't make Germans out of Turks', I would be told (see Magid 1991:337). However, only a couple of days after Stevo's remark, I was reminded of its ambiguous status. I was visiting a church in central Beograd and a man in his twenties, a complete stranger who'd noticed I was a foreigner, stormed up to me. Aggressively, he ordered me to have a good look around so I would realise that 'the Serbs had *culture*', and that they were not such barbarians 'as claimed on CNN'.

The interesting thing is that these two statements could easily have come from the same person. Later, well into my fieldwork, I discovered that there was a certain story

⁷ Norris explains how this image of 'positive militarism' and 'desperate heroism' also existed in 19th century Western Balkan orientalist representations of Serbia (1999 23-34).

amongst many *Beograđani*, and certainly not only in anti-nationalist narratives, which was reserved for certain contexts and which strongly opposed the modernisation discourse of urbanity/civilisation/education (van de Port 1996, 1999). This undercurrent was usually deployed in a mocking way, relativising other discourses, but it seemed to serve as an important additional way of understanding and ordering the situation. This discourse described the Serbian context as some sort of *jungle*, as a dangerous, chaotic, violent, unpredictable land populated by wild folk. Stories in this vein often cropped up when people talked about certain public issues, such as city transport, but also sometimes in relation to certain traditions. For example, many people chuckled that, although the Serbs currently proclaimed their Orthodox piety, they were actually libertarian, even anti-authoritarian believers. After a concert by the Slovenian collective *Laibach*, Đorđe, himself a singer in a rock band, was very pleased with the speech their spokesman had given. It had been full of love, Đorđe stated, and it showed that they had really understood the Serbs. The point of the speech, he argued, was the same as what the great spiritual leader Vladika Nikola had said: while the Germans could perhaps do without God, because they had discipline, the Serbs could not. They needed God, and they had thought they did not... However, more frequently, I was told that, unlike the Croats and their Catholicism, Serbs had a mind of their own. They didn't walk in line, not even in the case of their own national religion. Even Kosovo bishop Artemije, himself, argued that 'There is no nation in the world which knows less about its faith than the Serbs' (*Republika* 01-31/08/97:2).

Seldom in Beograd have I seen people laugh as hard as when they self-deprecatingly indulged in 'Balkan' narratives. Goran, for example, told me that, when there were important football matches, the buses, trolleys and trams worked on a different schedule because all the drivers wanted to see the game. As a result, during half-time, they raced from one terminal to another, in order to get a seat in front of the next TV set for the second half. Elsewhere I have elaborated on the role of self-deprecating humour in Serbian processes of identification, particularly in the outbursts of resistance in 1996-1997 and 1999 (Jansen 2000a; 2001).

Self-identification of 'the Serbs' as wild, passionate, irrational, irresponsible, slightly dangerous, not very serious, also implied that they often considered themselves warm, loving, hospitable and *thus* likeable. In this way, these counterdiscourses constructed a Serbian 'Balkan' identity as somehow less artificial, more authentic, more real than 'European-ness' and, crucially, more real than Croatian-ness. In the early days of the post-Yugoslav conflict, that attitude had set them apart even more from the Slovenes, who were considered the ultimate 'European' post-Yugoslavs: hardworking, tight with money, organised, boring. All this, of course, as opposed to stereotypical Serbian self-perception as lazy (translated into positive terms: 'cunning'), prone to spend ('share'), unorganised ('nonchalant'), and exciting (parties and fights). With regard to the latter factor, a joke circulated which said: 'Put two Serbs in a room and you'll have three opinions'. Also, on several occasions when I had willingly or unwillingly demonstrated my irrationality, I was approvingly told that 'Balkan' had taken hold of me.

Nevertheless, despite this partial reliance on images of 'Balkan' in a wide variety of discursive practices of identification in Serbia, I found very few instances whereby 'Balkan' themes were used as a *positive* subversive tool in anti-nationalist narratives. In fact, counterdiscourses of 'Balkan' were largely left out of attempts to destabilise the present regime and Serbian nationalism. This could be partly explained as a result of two interrelated factors: firstly, it would potentially contradict the centrality of a pro-'European' discourse within critiques of nationalism and war; and secondly, 'Balkan' was only a limited source of ammunition, as it simply wasn't such a sensitive issue for Serbian nationalism at all.

5.3. Balkan orientalist counterdiscourses in Zagreb

We have seen how, in Zagreb, dominant nationalist discursive practice engaged in a systematic cleansing of the public space of anything perceived as 'Balkan'. It was also considered desirable to carry out a similar purge of the private sphere. Most

oppositional discourses functioned along similar Balkan orientalist lines, and there were few signs that a strong equivalent of the Balkan counterdiscourses in Serbia existed. However, some 'Balkan' things simply proved irresistible for many *Zagrepci*, and in this sense I did find a web of ambiguous undercurrents in Zagreb. Many people in Croatia, I believe, including many of those identifying along the lines of the dominant nationalist discourse, *missed* 'Balkan' to a certain extent. This could be partly explained with reference to what I would call the forbidden-fruit-effect: the more extreme the regime's anti-'Balkan' tirades, the greater the temptation.

These 'Balkan' patterns were rarely prominent. In public, people would sip their espressos and loudly proclaim their 'European' preferences, but in their own kitchens, most stuck to their Turkish coffee. Foods considered 'Balkan', such as *burek* and *čevapi*, were still widely consumed, and Yugoslav and recent Serbian records and videotapes circulated under the counters of otherwise 'nationally correct' shops. Although some of those products, especially some Serbian films, carried messages which were explicitly subversive of the Croatian nationalist *doxa*, we should not necessarily read all those practices as signs of resistance. Often, it was simply a matter of continuity: people got on with their lives and, particularly on the everyday level, they continued doing things the way they had done them *before* anyway.

'Balkanisms' that slipped through the nets of 'Europeanisation' emerged particularly frequently in pop culture. A poignant example was provided by the most popular song and same-named album during my fieldwork period: Darko Rundek's *Apokalipso*. Rundek was an icon of the 1980s YU-rock scene, a period which for some people, particularly those in their late twenties and early thirties, represented the 'golden years' (see the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*). I attended a gig by him in March 1998. The audience consisted mainly of this generation, with most people singing along to all the songs—both old and recent ones. Rundek, an explicit critic of nationalism, interspersed his songs with cynical, black humour and presented the crowd with his subtly subversive messages. His single *Apokalipso*, a best-selling record at the time, incorporated undeniably 'Balkan' elements, which was extremely unusual in the Zagreb context. 'Balkan' life was evoked both musically, through rhythms, wild violins and trumpets, and textually, through tickling people's 'Balkan' imagination with references to Gypsies, sweat, alcohol and noise.

When asked for his nationality, another Croatian YU-rock star, Branimir Džoni Stulić proclaimed that 'it [was] better to be the first *Balkanac* than to be the last Yugoslav' (*Arkzin* 06-93:36). His old band was called *Azra*, a Bosnian girl's name and the title of one of the most famous Bosnian *sevdalinke* (folksongs of love, sorrow and longing). One of *Azra*'s greatest 1980s hits was called ... *Balkan*, in which Džoni sang: 'We are Gypsy people' [*Mi smo ljudi Cigani*!]. This was the more remarkable, since the singer could boast serious street credibility built on a rebellious political image and a rock'n'roll all-inclusive lifestyle. The song's chorus went:

*Balkane Balkane Balkane moj
Budi mi silan, i dobro mi stoji*

[Balkan, Balkan, my Balkan]
[Be powerful to me, and suit me well]

In 1998, I attended a punk festival near the Istrian town of Pula, an alternative May Day celebration. The scene was not unlike any other small music festival: improvised barbecues everywhere, children playing, juggling, loud music and plenty of alcohol. Unusually, one of the bands had come from Serbia, and a Zagreb punk approvingly noted that they even used trumpets. In Croatia, he complained, they always tried to be more European and ended up falling in between: not in Europe and not in the Balkans. Croats always ended up with a sanitised version. Always too neat. Never the real thing. Serbian bands, he said, just used these things to their advantage and they succeeded so much better in getting the feel, the energy. The next day I met the same man again, and he described his night in lyrical terms. There had been drumming everywhere. Booze had been abundant and people had danced all night, freaking out. The noise had never stopped, he said, now *that* had really been 'Balkan'!

In an interview I asked Ivana, a Serbian girl from Zagreb, what the notion of 'Balkan'

meant to her. She first laughed, looking at me as if there was a catch in my question, and then she said:

'For me Balkan is... it's one great piss-take [*'zajebancija'*]. When I think of Balkan, I think of good food, and a *lot* of it. I think of a lot of drinking, dancing like mad and so on. That, for me, is Balkan. It is great fun [*'super zabava'*]. One great joke. It's fabulous.'

In some cases, precisely because of the regime's paranoia with regard to non-'European' elements in the country, those evocations of 'Balkan' were deployed in explicitly subversive ways. This was a marginal phenomenon, which existed on the alternative fringes of Croatian society, such as for example in the publication *Arkzin* (see also Buden 1996:21, 46-51, 148).

5.4. 'Balkan' and bimbo's: the turbofolk factor(y)

5.4.1. *narodnjaci* and the post-Yugoslav roller coaster

To the sheer horror of some, and to the excitement of others, newly-composed folk music [*'novokomponovana narodna muzika'*] became one of *the* defining factors of the 1990s post-Yugoslav popular culture scene. This controversial phenomenon, otherwise known as *narodnjaci* or, in its faster varieties, *turbofolk*, revolved around a musical style. However, it also constituted a whole universe of meanings which were intimately related to the rise of nationalism and the wars and concentrated particularly in Serbia. Turbofolk was heavily synthesised pop music, based on vaguely 'oriental' rhythms (see Vidić-Rasmussen 1995; Dragišević-Šešić 1994). Its stars [*'folk zvezde'*] were more often than not, scarcely dressed, long-legged, heavily made up young women, and the lyrics, limited as they were, mainly spoke about love lost and won. Just before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, this music had been extremely popular in the different republics and had constituted a cultural and commercial phenomenon on a federal level (Ugrešić 1995;175-179).

However, during the wars, many *narodnjaci* addressed political themes ranging from patriotism to national pride, plain hatred and violence. Although a nationally reformulated version was developed in Croatia (Gall 1998c:51), turbofolk was much more outspoken and powerful in Serbia. Folk circuses travelled around with nationalist leaders and paramilitary warlords and accompanied them to the top of Serbian society. Their incredibly popular music took over virtually the whole music industry, and *folk zvezde* figured as a celebrity elite in Serbian society (*De Volkskrant* 19/11/94:7). The most famous was a young woman called Ceca, who married paramilitary commander and mafioso Arkan.

If turbofolk filled up venues, frontpages and record shelves all over Serbia—and more covertly in other post-Yugoslav states—it also figured as *the* phenomenon that many people loved to hate. The oppositional radio station *B92* explicitly prided itself on never ever playing one single *narodnjak* in its whole existence (*Feral Tribune* 29/04/98:38-39; *Novi List* 08/11/97). Even before I knew what turbofolk was, several people drew my attention to the fact that it did *not* figure in the otherwise very musical demonstrations against Milošević in 1996-1997. As I have written elsewhere, the sound track to this wave of dissent was a curious mixture of rock, techno and ... 'Balkan' brass Gypsy music (Jansen 2001).

Also in everyday life, many *Beogradani* used every opportunity to distance themselves from turbofolk as far as possible. This was particularly the case amongst urban, opposition-minded people, who subscribed to non- or anti-nationalist ideas. Turbofolk was so linked up with the developments of 1990s Serbia that for many critics it provided a condensed version of 'all this shit'. No day went by without someone deploring the popularity of turbofolk. People complained that its stars shamelessly cashed in millions while the rest of Serbia was on the brink of starvation, that they were not musicians but business people exploiting a fashion for profit, that producers had jumped on the bandwagon and pushed other music out of the market, and so on. More importantly, *Beogradani* expressed their horror at its symbolism, its disgusting lyrics,

its brainless tunes and its sexist images. In short, I would argue that turbofolk was an extremely unwelcome reminder of 'Balkan' primitivism in the field of popular music, which was considered 'modern' and 'Western' by many. This was expressed in a song '*Narodnjaci*' by the well-known oppositional chansonnier Đorđe Balašević, which deplored the rise of turbofolk (1998:100):

*'Rapidno stasa hibridna klasa
na pola puta selo-grad'*

'A hybrid class rapidly coming of age
halfway between the city and the village'

Balašević later stated in an interview:

'What does me in, fatally, is when I see kids from asphalt, urban kids who were born in a metropolis, sing *narodnjaci* and turn to that primitive, oriental music which I abhorred all those years.'

(*Globus* 15/01/93:21)

The turbofolk phenomenon, and particularly the role it played in anti-nationalist and other critical narratives, brings us back to previously mentioned patterns of (dis)continuity and loss. People would complain that due to their country's isolation they had been unable to follow good music from abroad for many years now. They argued that although in the 1980s YU-rock had been as good as any 'Western' music, now musical taste in Serbia was going down the ditch. They assured me that ten years ago nobody would be caught dead near this so-called music, but that it had become ultra-popular as part of the war-mongering policies of the regime.

The meaning of turbofolk in terms of loss and discontinuity became particularly clear in a conversation with Tatjana, who had left for Western Europe with her husband and children just before the war—and never returned. Tatjana was from a Croatian Beograd family, and her husband from a Serbian one, but they both thought of themselves primarily as Yugoslavs. She was a highly educated professional, but had been unable to find a job at her level even a decade after emigrating. Tatjana was the first person who told me about turbofolk, and every time I met her afterwards, she expressed her aversion of *narodnjaci* and everything they stood for. To her, turbofolk and the *kafanska kultura* she associated it with, provided a painful metaphor for things gone wrong, both in her biography and on a larger level.

As a self-consciously urban, well-educated, well-travelled, ambitious, relatively well-off, 'cultured' woman, she felt spat out by the country where she had lived all her life. Yugoslavia disappeared and Milošević's Serbia could no longer function as a home to her. Her old world abruptly came to an end, and turbofolk was the icon of the new Serbia. It was xenophobic and violent, but also cheap, kitsch, loud, tasteless, vulgar—nothing like her home as she wanted to remember it. Most importantly, it was blaring out of speakers everywhere, and you could not possibly escape it. It was like an infection, Tatjana said, sweeping through the country, all the way to its smallest corners.

5.4.2. the strange life of narodnjaci in Zagreb

In the 1990s, travelling from Beograd to Zagreb was an interesting exercise in cultural geography. In many ways it constituted a journey from an imagined 'Balkan' to an imagined 'Europe'. In the buzzing, chaotic bus station of the Serbian capital packed with Gypsy musicians looking for work, food stalls and a whole series of other kiosks, two sounds were hard to escape. First of all, moneychangers approached travellers whispering 'devize, devize', and secondly, competing tape sellers turned up the volume of their stereos—almost always selling turbofolk. Once you'd boarded an old, dilapidated bus⁸ (if there was one), you could bet your money that the driver would tune

⁸ Ironically, this often led people to jokingly evoke a former Yugoslav film classic *Ko to tamo peva?*, in which a group of people travel to Beograd in an old wreck of a bus. On numerous occasions in the 1990s I heard people refer to buses as '*Krstić*', the name of the transport firm in the film.

in on a station that would play non-stop *narodnjaci*. At the border crossing, differences became clear straight away: a basic shed on the Serbian side, a newly painted blue construction on the Croatian one. New, seemingly freshly ironed Croatian flags contrasted with ragged Yugoslav ones (and even more with hardly recognisable, faded UN flags). The Serbian bus dropped you off in no-man's-land, and there would be a Croatian one waiting for you. Now, as if this was all done on purpose, in my experience, the coaches serving the line from the border to Zagreb were always the most modern and comfortable ones in the whole of Croatia: no engine noises, air-conditioned, clean, with a driver wearing a suit. And, to come back to the point of music, *never ever* any turbofolk but usually some (dare I say, more German-Austrian sounding?) domestic musical products of similar imagination and sophistication.

It won't come as a surprise that the Croatian nationalist discourse not only deemed turbofolk entirely unacceptable, but also fought it as a virus far more dangerous than HIV. Although before the disintegration of Yugoslavia *narodnjaci* were popular amongst a wide audience all over the former state, the new regime of independent Croatia waged a campaign to ban them from the media and from what was called 'Croatian culture' in general. Musical qualities (or the lack of them) were not the major issue here, since they were replaced by musical products of an equivalent sort. The reason for the fear of turbofolk was the idea that it 'belong[ed] exclusively to the Serbian (un)cultural identity. Serbs, and not Croats, worship *narodnjaci*, which [was] another proof of their primitivism, their culturally less worthy national character, their Balkanism, etc.' (Buden 1997b:48). So, while turbofolk was sold in street markets and under the counter of record shops and quite a number of people kept a selection of tapes in a drawer, the public attitude in Zagreb was one of aversion.

However, the situation was changing during my stay, as illustrated in 1998 when Lepa Brena, one of the first turbofolk stars, a Bosnian woman who'd since moved to Beograd, visited Zagreb for the first time since the break-up of Yugoslavia. Whereas official reactions by the regime and by the nationalist cultural elite were predictably negative (Gall 1998c:51), others started interpreting it differently. A very unusual but interesting voice came from Boris Buden, a cultural critic who'd moved to Vienna (of all places) and who explicitly welcomed the return of *narodnjaci*. He described their re-emergence in the Croatian context as a liberation of 'cultural vitality, dynamism, expressive inventiveness, spontaneous eroticisation of the ideologically subliminal, cultural anti-elitism, democratic elements, libertarian passion' (Buden 1997b:49). While it seems hard to imagine someone like Buden himself as a great fan, his point obviously needs to be contextualised politically. *Nardnjaci* had returned through the backdoor, from the underground, from the fringes of an attempt to create a discrete national Croatian culture. Buden went further, and optimistically argued that this meant a possible reclaiming of 'Balkan' in a liberating way:

'The Balkan inn, liberated from the pressure of the elitist hypocrisy and self-pitying culture-pessimistic outrage is shown here in its best light—as a positively charged metaphor which suggests emancipation, and, even in the midst of Balkans, the female one. Against this background of lively cultural identification which fully establishes the continuity with the past and a connection with the future the ideologically motivated project of a forceful division of national cultures comes as pitiful and base.'
(Buden 1997b:50)

5.4.3. 'Balkan' in Zagreb: from demon to exotic?

Throughout this study, I have argued that Croatian nationalism engaged in the construction of a discrete national culture through the demonisation of its national Other. Its Serbian counterpart embarked on a similar campaign but, due to its different nature, in a far less outspoken and strongly ambiguous manner—particularly with regard to the Yugoslav legacy. As we have seen, during and immediately after the war in Croatia, both regime policies and many everyday narratives rested upon the banning of everything perceived Serbian. Serbs and 'Serbian culture' were demonised, as were

most phenomena deemed 'Yugoslav', because they were seen as Serbian-imposed. From the hybrid Yugoslav configuration, everything not purely Croatian needed to be surgically removed like a cancer.

This phenomenon has been amply analysed and commented upon by others (see for example Drakulić 1993a; Slapšak 1993; Ugrešić 1993, 1995), but in this section I would like to throw a critical light on a related pattern. Interestingly, the process of cultural discretisation and demonisation of national Others opened a range of other possibilities. This happened as follows. First, all evidence of hybridity and non-discreteness needed to be removed; the absolute difference between Croats and national Others needed to be sufficiently proven and materially established through ethnic cleansing and a range of other policies. Once it was widely accepted as dogma that Serbs (including the hundreds of thousands who'd lived in Croatia all their lives) and Croats (including those who'd lived, for example, in Serbia) were essentially different from each other and constituted two discrete nations, the first signs of a new development emerged. I would refer to this process slowly and timidly arising in certain sectors of Croatian society during my stay with the term 'exoticisation'.

I am certainly not suggesting that the dominant attitude towards 'Serbian culture' and its presumed representatives had changed substantially since the war, but I do believe that there were small signs of beginning patterns of exoticisation. For example, in 1998, a large state-sponsored 'Music and Dance Festival of the Ethnic Minorities in Croatia' was organised in Zagreb. The performing groups included Serbs, who displayed a taste of *their* folklore in the presence of high HDZ representatives. Likewise, Ivana, a Serbian *Zagrepečanka*, told me in an interview that it became increasingly common for people to walk into the Serbian Orthodox church in the city centre. They had a look around 'as if it were a tourist attraction'. She also informed me:

'It seems that for some, listening to Serbian rock bands has become a fashion in Zagreb. Only so they can be *different* from the rest, you know. When something is forbidden, it is always more attractive. I have been to parties where nothing but Serbian bands were played. Officially you can't buy them in the shops, but under the counter, you know... It's funny but I often get the tapes from Croatian friends, who got them before me!'

Still, non-Croatian former Yugoslav or recent Serbian pop music seemed to remain absent from the airwaves. Concerts in Croatia by Serbian bands were exceptional and largely confined to the region of Istria—and even they caused major debates. But the music industry found its way around this problem; and a small Slovenian town right on the Croatian border unexpectedly became a Mecca for fans, as many gigs by Serbian bands were organised there. Whereas some years before it would have been unthinkable in Zagreb to see posters advertising those concerts, it was now becoming quite common and tickets could be bought from private agencies in town. There was a vehement reaction against this by the Young HDZ, but it seemed to have little effect. The acceptability of 'Serbian culture' in other spheres was still channelled through the nationalist prism of discreteness. I have mentioned before how in 1998 the first Serbian film to be officially distributed in independent Croatia was released with Croatian subtitles⁹, as if to say 'we can watch their film, but it has to be made clear that it's theirs!'. This confirmed a general trend whereby exoticised Serbian popular cultural phenomena were slowly seeping through, whereas anything which could remind people of the existence of a hybrid Yugoslav past was still prohibited (see Gall 1998d:51; Jergović 1999:51).

Hence, I would argue that, precisely because of the blurred hybrid nature of certain domains of the Yugoslav cultural space, radical policies of discretisation were needed to exorcise the Other out of the Croatian self. Of course, I do not wish to deny the enormous role of the war and the pattern of events that it set in motion through sheer performativity. However, I believe that the extreme nature of Croatian nationalist

⁹ See the section on language to understand the dimensions of absurdity we are talking about here. Most people who were older than, say, 20 in 1998 had watched films from Beograd since their childhood—and nobody had ever needed subtitles (by the way, Zagreb actors sometimes played major roles in them).

exorcism should at least be partly understood in relation to the relative absence of self-evident boundaries between 'them' and 'us' (and Serbian nationalism dealt with this in its own, entirely contradictory way). Constructing a bounded national culture was never going to be straightforward if nobody knew what exactly was 'ours' and what was 'theirs'. Therefore, demonisation had to precede exorcism, but it also opened the possibility of a slow, minor process of exoticisation. This did not mean a step back from the discretisation programme but rather a *further* step in constructing different cultures and establishing the boundaries between them¹⁰. In this sense, these are semi-subversions of Balkan orientalism. Not only are they partial and temporary, but most importantly, for most people 'Balkan' does not lose its negative connotations in the process. Rather, they are consolidated and exoticised.

5.4.4. 'Balkan' and the aesthetics of distancing in Beograd

I have argued before that, for a variety of reasons, the notion of 'Balkan' was rarely taken up in an explicitly subversive manner as an anti-nationalist source. 'Europe' was the label for the desirable. Flirting with anything 'Balkan' usually did not find a place in anti-nationalist narratives, as it was simply considered incompatible with a critical and civic attitude. There were some people who incorporated 'Balkan' in a more positive way in their anti-nationalist discourses: they praised its variety, its intercultural mixture, its colourful images. In some cases this was an accurate expression of their lives, straddling the ambiguities of 'Balkan' and 'Europe'. A love/hate relationship seemed to emerge which hovered between the warmth, passion and intensity of 'Balkan', and the rationality, organisation and peace of 'Europe' (as illustrated by van de Port 1996, 1999). However, unlike what the latter's analysis seems to suggest, I hope to have made clear that I do not see this as a typical Serbian thing. Rather than being part of the essential character of 'the Serbs', I would argue that the tension between 'Balkan' and 'Europe' functioned variably in discursive practice and sometimes in obviously strategic and reflexive ways.

Of course, such tensions exist on a much wider human scale, and it is certainly not my intention to argue that they can only emerge as a 'Balkan'/'Europe' modality. What I want to get at here is something else: it struck me that the few people who were involved in anti-nationalist dissidence and who would explicitly *name* 'Balkan' in positive ways premised this understanding on a clear sense of distance. More often than not, those people would be well-travelled, urban intellectuals and almost none of them actually *lived* that 'Balkan' dimension. Rather, they would strategically weave 'Balkan' orientalist counterdiscourses into a critique of nationalism and thereby reclaim some of its power, without being tainted by its negativity.

It is understandable, I would argue, that this position was more frequently occupied by exiled post-Yugoslavs and foreigners (Ugrešić 1995:166-196; Rasza 1997a, 1997b). To a certain extent, it was easy for them (should I say *us!*?) to incorporate positive 'Balkan' elements; there was no danger of being implicated in the process. Irony, while it is not strictly limited to those in dominant positions (Rapport 1999), still often emerges as a luxury of those who can distance themselves at will.

An illustration of this tension was provided in the Summer of 1997, when I decided to go to the Guča festival. This was a yearly event, bringing together the best trumpet bands from all over Serbia for three days of ... well, 'Balkan'. Guča was famous for its loud and wild brass music, generously sprinkled with greasy food and loads of alcohol. It was also a yearly outburst of Serbian nationalist euphoria and provided an insight into some of the excesses of the war economy, with politicians, war profiteers and mafiosi (find the differences) conspicuously spending a fortune on drink and music. Not much for a thesis on anti-nationalism, then, but there was something else: it was also, reputedly, great fun. An extract from my field notes situates my plan to attend this event within an urban-civic context.

¹⁰ It is therefore not a coincidence, I believe, that signs of this process of exoticisation were most outspoken in Slovenia. See the chapter on *Jugonostalgija*.

When I tell them that I'm going to the festival in Guča, some people react very negatively—as I expected. But the vehemence of their reactions is shocking. Snežana called to invite me for a party during the weekend. I explained to her that I couldn't make it because I was going to Guča. Her voice shrieked as she reacted: 'No...! You are not going to that festival, are you? That's such a terrible event!'. And later: 'Well... anyway... have a nice time there, although I am sure that won't be the case....' Aleksandar reacted with similar disbelief. 'Guča? Really? Are you serious?' I told him I thought it sounded like great fun. 'Well I suppose it must be interesting when you're a foreigner', he answered sceptically, 'and of course, it is a great case for an anthropologist. It's pretty exotic. I must say it's a step I wouldn't make easily....'

Last night before Guča! Had a drink with Aleksandar, Nataša, Tanja and Marko. Repeatedly, they brought up the topic of my going to the festival. Everybody laughed, shaking their heads in disbelief. Tanja said that Šešelj will be satisfied with my going there and calls me the only true Serb in the company. Again, it was emphasised that I am an anthropologist [whereas usually I was referred to as a sociologist]. No matter how often I explained that I am going for fun—*not* for professional reasons at all—Aleksandar argued that anthropology has become a matter of personal interest for me. Whatever, I do want to go. I can't wait.

Everything I had heard about Guča was true, and more. Anyway, the possibility for foreigners or other relative outsiders to dip into 'Balkan' phenomena without being contaminated was something that came up on other occasions as well. On a visit to Novi Sad, I went out for drinks with a bunch of young people that I knew from a Summer School. Ceca, a young woman who worked in a local NGO, told the group that she knew a foreign girl who wanted to carry out an anthropological study of a village in Vojvodina. 'Can you imagine?' she exclaimed as the whole party burst out laughing. Even after she had told this anthropologist about the actual situation in those villages ('There's *nothing* there!'), Ceca said, the girl had still wanted to do it. This story led to general hilarity and a new round of drinks.

On a number of occasions, I noticed how an interesting pattern arose whereby self-proclaimed urbanites who cherished their modern 'European-ness' would allow 'Balkan' phenomena to enter their everyday lives. This was rather unusual in these circles, and a process of filtering was crucial to it. After having been othered into a distant, exotic 'Balkan' category, certain things would then be packaged as 'Western' and re-imported, as it were (a peculiar case of Herzfeld's 'practical occidentalism' (1995:222)). In this way, some people who were very much part of an urban cultural elite did actually listen to certain kinds of music which were undoubtedly considered 'Balkan', such as Macedonian folk songs or Gypsy tunes. However, most albums of this kind that made it into their living rooms were produced and distributed by West European or North American 'world music' labels. This resulted in a paradoxical situation whereby people would scorn certain types of music from their own backyard until it was taken up by, say, Peter Gabriel, brought out on a major label in Western Europe or North America and re-imported through the front door.

A rather extreme example was provided by Dora, a Beograd woman who, like her husband, was an artist and a self-proclaimed urban 'European'. Dora had lived in a Western European city for many years and was enthusiastic about the multiculturalism there. On my arrival, she complimented me on my 'ethnic' shirt, which she could immediately place as made in Guatemala (although she didn't know it was from a reject shop in Antwerpen because some buttons were missing). Her large record collection contained quite a lot of 'world music' and, although many of the albums could be bought for about £1.50 in pirate CD stalls in Beograd, she had carefully left the price tags on—in West European currencies. Let me spell out the paradox: Dora had some albums on her CD-shelf with music she would despise if she heard it at a wedding in Southern Serbia, a non-existing risk, because she would never go there. The point is not that these albums were there, but that they had, via a West European or North American record label, become an expression of her very 'Europeaness'!

6. Balkan orientalism, familiarity and strangeness

6.1. the stranger within oneself

In line with Said's understanding of orientalism, it is clear that we are dealing here with the construction of a 'Balkan' other which allows for negative self-definition. Two positions were constructed and essentialised through Balkan orientalism, which, like in Said's work, should be seen as a thoroughly moral discourse. However, the situation becomes more complicated if we take into account the fact that Balkan orientalist discourse was enunciated from a position which did *not* equal the real, existing 'Europe'. Topographically, the Balkans are part of Europe, and every post-Yugoslav I met saw her/himself very much as a 'European', even those who also thought of themselves as *Balkanici*. Therefore, in the case of post-Yugoslav Balkan orientalism 'Europe' and 'Balkan' were inextricably linked and spilled over into each other (see Herzfeld 1985; 1995:220).

Hence, while at times vigorously constructing themselves as different from 'Balkan', many post-Yugoslavs felt to a certain, variable extent part of this Other (Kristeva 1988:11, 150-151, 268). Perhaps Balkan orientalism sometimes took on such a vehement, outspoken character, because the Other was somewhat more 'within', because it could *not* be taken for granted that one was not 'Balkan'. This would also partly explain why this discourse was most strongly developed in Croatia, and only partly so in Serbia, mainly as part of anti-nationalism. An illustration could be found in the Croatian reactions against the South-East European Co-operation Initiative (SECI) in 1997. SECI was an American-sponsored programme for economic co-operation, involving billions of investment dollars in a number of states. The HDZ-regime flatly refused to join the initiative since it would mean a throwback to 'Balkan'. Note that apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldavia, SECI also comprised Hungary and Slovenia. Apparently, in those two countries, which constituted exemplary Central-European states for many Croats, the fear of 'Balkan' was less of an issue. The most interesting thing was that many of those who argued in favour of joining SECI did so along equally Balkan orientalist justifications: Croatia should join ASAP, in order to re-integrate into Europe. As one commentator stated, 'its only alternatives are: isolation and Balkan' (Jakovljević 1997).

If the 'Balkan' Other was located partly within, this can also help us to understand why 'Europe' was always constructed at least partly outside oneself. Both in Zagreb and in Beograd I came across situations whereby 'Europe' was simultaneously located inside and outside. An example came from Stevo, our Beograd friend-of-the-house who had called the Serbs a Turkish people. He later accused the 'West' and, therefore presumably, me (willy-nilly the nearest representative of all things 'Western') of imposing 'Balkan' stereotypes upon the Serbs and ignoring the obvious truth that they were part of 'Europe'. A moment later, however, he told me he was going to buy a certain book the next time he went 'in Europe'.

Not only was 'Europe' constructed partly within and partly outside, but it was also often 'purified'. An idealised image arose, clearly distinct from the real existing Europe, and especially from the European Union. This relentless pro-'European' discourse did not necessarily entail an idealisation of concrete European states, which were often seen as unfair and unreasonable—*unreasonable!* How un-'European'! Clearly real existing Europe didn't live up to its image. Again, this links in with the previously mentioned superiority that many post-Yugoslavs felt towards the citizens of ex-Warsaw Pact states. 'We can't be fooled into adoring "the West" by advertisements,' so the story went, 'because, unlike them, we know and have always known what the real Europe is like'.

However, in Balkan orientalism, by equating 'Europe' with a number of desirable societal qualities and particularly individual characteristics, it was detached from its planetary location and entered the world of metaphor. 'Europe' then became that

dimension of one's self, of one's country, of one's culture, which was mainly characterised by its difference from 'Balkan'.

6.2. 'Balkan' and 'Europe' on both sides of normality

I am not a psycho-analyst, and I certainly don't want to make any claims concerning, say, *the* post-Yugoslav mentality¹¹. What I wish to do here is to relativise some of the insights of this chapter. Unlike what one might conclude from the above, most people in Serbia and Croatia did not feel uneasy with, let alone burdened by, the 'Balkan'/'Europe' dualism. In most cases it was something they were aware of, a part of the place and the times they lived in, a more or less unimportant element in their biography. Let me place this into context by referring to two unusual patterns.

First of all, I would like to mention the case of the ultra-nationalists, those who had opted *against* 'Europe'. These people glorified militarism, war heroism and traditionalism, all within the framework of a national culture. It was usually the Serbian national culture because, as we have seen, extreme nationalists in Croatia tended to construct a position for themselves as more 'European' than Europe. But Vojislav Šešelj, for example, former paramilitary leader and then a member of the Serbian coalition government, made his electoral success on the basis of celebrations of irrationality and rebellious Otherness¹². He regularly renewed his Greater Serbian pledges ('Serbia and Germany will border each other again'); he indulged in war-mongering of the worst kind ('We'll scoop out the Croats' eyes with rusty forks'); and he derided the West ('They don't let me in in Den Haag, because I would take the Tribunal to pieces') (*Nedeljni Telegraf* 24/07/96). Mattijs van de Port developed this point in his provocative work on 'obstinate otherness' (1996; 1999). 'In order to get attention for the Serbian cause,' he argues, 'they had to embody the *idée reçue* about Serbs as unpolished savages. To be recognised as European, they had to play the role of barbarian' (1996:35). This allowed people like Šešelj to simultaneously add a touch of superiority: 'The rude Balkan-barbarian exposes the European as a degenerated and debilitated weakling' (van de Port 1996:38; see also 1994:308-316). Clearly, these examples represented exactly the worst excesses of 'Balkan' for many other people, and particularly for those developing anti-nationalist alternatives.

A second unusual pattern existed amongst individuals in the post-Yugoslav states who engaged explicitly in anti-nationalism without replicating the 'Balkan'/'Europe' moral dualism. Rather, they recognised the tensions *within* 'Europe', through association with an array of subcultures of resistance, such as youth subcultures, the Green movement, pacifism, and feminism—undercurrents of West European modernity. Through their alternative attitude, these people rejected the constitutive dualism of 'Europe'/'Balkan' as equivalent to 'good'/'bad'. More specifically, they questioned the automatic equation of 'rationalism' as 'good'. In their experience, some aspects of 'irrationality', and hence of 'Balkan', were quite all right (music, ecstasy, emotionality, warmth, ...). So, while accepting, to a certain extent, the association of 'Europe' with 'rational' and 'Balkan' with 'irrational', this didn't take the form of a moral judgement in favour of 'Europe'. Critical of modern ideas of Progress and Reason, they questioned both the post-Yugoslav 'Europe' and the real existing Europe. Interestingly, they did so pretty much along the same lines as their subcultural colleagues in other European countries, with whom they were frequently in touch.

I gave these two examples in order to destabilise what might have been an overly fixed picture until now. However, while explicitly politicised and prominently featured in everyday conversations, the 'Europe'/'Balkan' theme also pervaded many silent

¹¹ Nor *the* Balkan mentality, as proposed by Kitromilides in his historical study of a common Balkan mentality amongst Orthodox-Christians in the European part of the Ottoman empire (1996).

¹² Similar, but with a more direct sense of Balkan counterdiscourse, was Arkan's interview on BK TV with regard to his possible extradition to the Den Haag Tribunal. Asked whether he ever used violence in Bosnia, the paramilitary leader who was generally held responsible for the worst excesses of ethnic cleansing argued he only ever smacked his own soldiers, because 'It's tough to pull a Serb into line' (*Republika* 16-30/06/97:2 - see Jansen 2000a:306).

aspects of post-Yugoslav life. Many people seemed to maintain a sort of unfinished love/hate relationship with 'Balkan'. While wishing to cherish the 'good sides' (here, people referred to hospitality, warmth, partying, music) and seeing this as part of themselves, they abhorred the hatred, the violence, the machismo and so on (see Herzfeld 1995:220; Žižek 1990:55-56). Let us look at two long quotations from interviews:

Ivana: 'Before, 'Balkan' was a geographical notion, but now it got some more, like, a cultural meaning. In Croatia everybody is very keen on denying that they belong to the Balkans. For me it is actually something very positive. And I don't think we should be ashamed of that. I like the Balkan type of culture very much; that laidbackness, that special temperament, a certain warmth between people, hospitality. For me it is an incredibly beautiful experience to go to, let's say Serbia, and to sleep at the place of some completely unknown people. And nobody asks any questions. A certain openness you know. That is not something to be ashamed of... For me that is purely a... a mentality.'

Tamara: '[laughs] Well, I don't know, there are a lot of people here who say we are not *Balkanici*. But when I look at it, judging by the behaviour, and particularly by the behaviour of the last couple of years, then I think we are! [laughs] No, when I hear 'Balkan' as an idea—for me that is some kind of meeting point of civilisations. I think... you know it is here that Greek civilisation started and Macedonian... And somehow they are all messed up... and a bit strange. Clever but full of emotions or something like that. I mean, I have nothing against 'Balkan' at all. For me it's nothing ugly, nothing bad. For me it's something rich, in terms of civilisation. But then of course, the behaviour... that is such an outburst of emotions and warriorism and... I don't know. It doesn't mean anything bad to me when somebody says I am a *Balkanica*. I think it is a rich thing, a rich area with a rich history. So it doesn't bother me.'

The first quotation is from Ivana, a Serbian *Zagrepečanka*, who at other times tended to blame ruralites for destroying her city. It is probably not a coincidence that the second one is from Tamara, also a Serbian Zagreb girl. Being Serbian in Zagreb made it rather likely that one would come up against the tensions of 'Balkan'/'Europe'. Tamara often switched back and forth between affirming the violence 'typical' of *Balkanici* and celebrating 'Balkan' as a boiling point of civilisation and history. This was a phenomenon that emerged frequently: people had made the tension exemplified by the 'Europe'/'Balkan' dualism their own.

In this way, my discussion of Balkan orientalism resonates with Herzfeld's study of Greek 'cultural intimacy', which he defines as:

'The recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the basis of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation.'

(Herzfeld 1996:3)

Certain aspects of 'Balkan' were then taken up and cherished amongst insiders as familiar and affectionate, whereas they were vehemently rejected in the presence of outsiders. Following Herzfeld I would argue that, although this reflects collective self-mockery rather than cultural alienation and it might be seen as ironic resistance, it is always limited in its empowerment and does not really challenge the subordinate position from which it is enunciated (1996:53-54, 157).

Finally, let me place this in a larger context. Like everything else in this study, it would be impossible to understand Balkan orientalism outside of the post-Yugoslav situation of war, nationalism, chaos and poverty. Of course, the tension between, say, rationality and irrationality is not an exclusively post-Yugoslav issue, and a case might be made that most people have to deal with it in their lives. What I have attempted to analyse in this chapter is the way in which many post-Yugoslavs relied partly on the discursive dualism between 'Balkan' and 'Europe' in order to position themselves in this question.

This is not to say that this demand for positioning is a necessary, let alone universal phenomenon—in most situations people can just get on with their lives. Despite what I was told by many of their inhabitants, the situation in the post-Yugoslav states in the late 1990s cannot be explained simply with reference to 'Balkan'. So, there must be other reasons why the tension became so important in these countries. I would argue that in order to cope, precisely in order to get on with their lives, many post-Yugoslavs felt they had to position themselves with regard to these themes that dominated much of the political scene.

We have seen how in a situation like the post-Yugoslav one, where war, postcommunist chaos, and rampant nationalism set the parameters, many people felt they did not have much choice. (Re)positioning had become something you had to do. Add to this the extent to which Balkan orientalism was articulated with national identification, and it is clear that this was an issue which many people in Beograd and Zagreb could not fail to take on. While in many other cases people might have simply ignored the 'Balkan' and 'Europe' themes altogether, in this particular time and place it became a question that featured centrally.

[chapter nine]

sister identities: (anti-)nationalism and feminism

their lives ran in circles so small
they thought they'd seen it all
so they couldn't make a place for
a girl who saw the ocean

*Michelle Shocked – Memories of East Texas*¹

what will you do when the war is over, tender comrade
when we lay down our weary guns
when we return home to our wives and families
and look into the eyes of our sons
what will you say of the bond we had, tender comrade
will you say that we were brave
as the shells fell all around us
or that we wept and cried for our mothers
and cursed our fathers
for forgetting that metal men are brothers

*Billy Bragg – Tender Comrade*²

In this chapter I analyse the role of feminist discourses in the post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist critique through an exploration of the meaning of feminism in women's narratives of self and of society. After briefly explaining the ways in which nationalism articulated with reasserted patriarchal gender discourses, I argue that this pattern was mirrored by the articulation of a range of alternative, anti-nationalist discourses with feminism. The interlocking of feminism and anti-nationalism is then located in relation to the framework of narratives of continuity. For a number of women, and NGO-activists in particular, feminism provided a source of discursive material for the construction of a sense of continuity in coping with the narrative break of nationalism and war. For these women activists, I argue, feminism represented a frame of reference through which to understand the meaning of the events (Žižek & Salecl 1991:28). Discourses of women's rights and women's emancipation partly structured the organisation of 'safe spaces' and by way of activism, particularly with victims/survivors of violence, a focus on care of self and of others also allowed the maintenance of 'normality' in biographies. Moreover, feminist networks provided a vehicle for continuity of contacts throughout the Yugoslav space and, as a result of feminism's appeal as a global strategy, beyond that.

Not only did feminism function as an important discourse for articulation with post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism, women in general also constituted a large majority amongst activists in anti-nationalist initiatives, amongst whom feminists were prominent. In the light of these observations it might seem odd, and ethnographically dishonest, to devote only a brief chapter to this issue. 'Should it not be a general theme throughout?', one might ask. In fact, some of my closest friends in both Zagreb and Beograd were self-proclaimed feminists who worked in women's organisations. The reason why I do not devote more attention to feminism is two-fold. First of all, I prefer to focus on the role of feminist discourses only with regard to their articulation with anti-nationalism, which is the central theme of this study. Secondly, the positions and the roles of women in the post-Yugoslav context, and of feminists in particular, have already been described and analysed in a plethora of publications, in Serbian/Croatian and other

¹ Michelle Shocked, from the album *Short Sharp Shocked* © 1988 Mercury Records.

² Billy Bragg, from the album *Workers' Playtime* © 1988 Go! Discs.

languages³. Much of this was written by local feminist activists themselves and provides fascinating examples of combined activism and academic endeavour. This chapter is, therefore, restricted to a small set of specific feminist issues related to anti-nationalism and narrative.

1. (post)communism and gender relations

Many scholars, usually from within the field of gender or women's studies, have looked at the changes in gender relations that took place in East and Central Europe since the fall of the real socialist regimes⁴. Most of these studies argue that, despite general improvements in civil and political freedom, there were strong differences in the ways that women and men were affected by the process that is often called 'transition to democracy'. To put it bluntly: women generally got the worst deal. On the one hand, as a result of crisis-ridden periods of economic restructuring, aimed more or less at the introduction of a neoliberal market system, they lost certain acquired socio-economic rights in comparison with the previous situation. On the other hand, a widespread reassertion of moral conservatism changed patterns of expectations, gender roles and ideological definitions of women's place in society.

In the post-Yugoslav context this was no different. The previous Titoist ideology had pledged full equality between men and women. In a region characterised by strongly patriarchal patterns (albeit with large internal differences), the Yugoslav regime had favoured secular and modernised gender relations, leading to marked changes in a number of domains of society⁵. Women entered work outside the domestic sphere, they were represented in the Party through quota and they played an active role in other public domains. The contribution of women in the Partisan movement was emphasised, and in many schools both boys and girls took 'defence' classes, in which they received basic military instruction. On the level of reproductive rights, abortion, for example, was legal and available to all. However, despite these policies directed towards gender equality, Yugoslav feminists pointed out how many layers of society were still permeated by machismo and patriarchal relations (Ugrešić 1995:149-165; Ramet 1991:197-211). Moreover, in many cases the level of rhetoric was not transcended, and quota gave rise to the proliferation of 'token-women' without real power. Still, it was clear that in a number of social practices traditional gender roles were being questioned.

In the early 1990s, the move towards a multi-party system and some form of market economy and their socio-economic and moral-political consequences resulted in rather abrupt changes in gender relations. In the post-Yugoslav context, specifically, a related phenomenon had the strongest resonance in terms of gender issues: the rise of the different nationalisms as *the* legitimate discourses of identification. This was true for all the post-Yugoslav republics, and it seemed to be one of the fields where the differences between the new states were only causing minor variations on a theme.

2. post-Yugoslav nationalisms and gender

In the post-Yugoslav states, the so-called postcommunist 'transition' took shape through the prism of competing nationalist discourses. In many ways, the radical changes in what was politically thinkable, through nationalism's *coup*, represented a reassertion of a morally conservative concept of community. Pre-existing and, as post-Yugoslav feminists would point out, surviving patriarchal value patterns were reformulated in a framework of overarching concern with the nation as an exclusive,

³ The literature referred to throughout this chapter is only a small sample of what is available.

⁴ See for example Bridger *et al* 1996; Einhorn 1993; Edmondson 1992; Funk and Müller 1993; Rai *et al* 1992; Renne (ed) 1997; Salecl 1994a.

⁵ See Milić 1994; Drakulić 1987; for a detailed historical analysis of the 'woman's question' in Serbia, see Božinović 1996.

organic community. In order to propagate a return to traditionalist gender roles, influential public figures drew on nationalism and on one of its major 'partners', if not symptoms—a (re)discovered religiosity (Drakulić 1993b; Iveković 1993a; Radić 1996; Sofos 1996:77-80). In effect, a discourse of the 'moral majority' came to the forefront (Salecl 1992; 1994a:24).

This had a series of effects in the public sphere, whereby the numbers of women-politicians fell dramatically after the end of Yugoslavia⁶ (Milić 1993:117-118). Moreover, politicians and clergymen formulated proposals for 'demographic renewal', sanctifying women's role as child-bearers and mothers. This process varied across republics. In Croatia it was mainly a question of politicians and church leaders arguing for a more general revival of Catholic morality in national terms. This reflected Croatian nationalism's self-identification as devoutly Catholic and morally impeccable, and was only sometimes explicitly formulated in direct relation to national Others (usually Bosniacs). In Serbia, although Christian and specifically Orthodox doctrine did play a role, the focus seemed to be on more strictly national issues, to such an extent that most of the demographic concerns of the Serbian moral right were formulated in direct opposition to alleged threats of high Albanian fertility in Kosovo⁷.

In this situation, many women found themselves caught 'in-between'. They faced the contradiction that arose when a moral majority perspective argued for women to take up their place near the hearth, while economic hardship forced them into a central position in the daily struggle for survival (see Einhorn 1995:7). At the time of my fieldwork, the latter seemed to be much more crucial in most women's lives than the former. Although there certainly were indications of a reassertion of patriarchal values and of moral-religious conservatism, all of which have been documented amply and attacked systematically by local feminist activists⁸, the effect of these traditionalist discourses on everyday lives were limited. Nationalist calls for an active 'demographic renewal', arguing amongst other things for reproduction incentives and a ban on abortion, had few consequences in terms of actual policies and even fewer with regard to women's attitudes. If patterns of behaviour did change at all, it was more likely to be in the opposite direction. The introduction of a sort of 'wild capitalism' forced a number of women to engage in survival strategies such as street vending or even pornography and prostitution.

3. age of extremes: gender roles in times of nationalist war

3.1. gendered violence and nationalist war

The so-called transition to democracy and the rise of nationalism in the post-Yugoslav states soon took the form of a series of ferocious wars, which in turn strongly conditioned discourses on gender roles. War, in general, was considered men's business, and men were expected to temporarily leave their role as breadwinners in order to become soldiers for the national cause. Hundreds of thousands of men were mobilised and/or pressurised to join the military efforts as national warriors, and to engage in what was depicted on all sides as the defence of women and children (Mostov 2000; Sofos, 1996:73). In a cultural climate where men lacking physical strength and bravery were considered 'feminine' (Čolović 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Sofos 1996:76; Mostov 2000:93-95), some joined the ranks enthusiastically as volunteers and many others could not or would not resist mobilisation. Still others escaped military

⁶ In Serbia for example the female share fell from 23.5% in 1986 to 1.6% in 1991, in Croatia from 15.0% to 1.5%, in Macedonia from 17.2% to 4.1%, in Montenegro from 11.5% to 3.2%. Only Slovenia had more than 10% women in parliament, and even in this republic their share was halved (from 24.0% to 11.2%) (Cohen 1995:166).

⁷ It is not within the confines of this study to elaborate on these issues. Others have written extensively about the articulation of traditionalist gender images and post-Yugoslav nationalisms: see for example Davidović 1995; *Feminist Review* 1993:39; Jones 1994; Korač 1993, 1996:136ff; Milić 1993:112-115, 1994:121-168; Mostov, 1995:211-212, 2000; Salecl 1992, 1994a:24-30.

⁸ See for example Davidović 1995:135-136; *Feminističke sveske* 1995:27-76; Kesić 1995; B.a.b.e. 1995, 1996.

service by emigrating or by going into hiding—or they deserted from the front (Žene u crnom 1994b).

Women played a minor role in the army, but they were mobilised in different ways and expected to take up the role of (national) carers as mothers and/or wives. This reflected the reassertion of traditionalist roles in a patriarchal system: the carers were always in a supportive position, they were never agents in their own right. Ideally, they represented the admiring wife and the caring, fertile mother, weeping but keeping the house in order for the returning warriors (Davidović 1995; Mostov 2000:93ff). Crucially, building on the reassertion of moral conservatism, if the family metonymically represented the nation, women also became carers for that nation and the locus of its reproduction. Another important element in women's *national* significance became their status as powerful symbols of the nation's suffering. This again reinforced their dependent status, which could partly explain why images of peasant women fleeing on tractors were widely published, whereas you would hardly ever come across a picture of a professional, urban woman who had been affected by the war.

Although women did not participate actively in most of the military operations, it is clear that they were amongst the hardest hit victims of the wars⁹: not only were they targeted like men in ethnic cleansing campaigns, but they also constituted a large majority amongst post-Yugoslav refugees. Women were also victimised by widespread abuse, particularly rape, both as an instrument of war and through increased violence in the domestic sphere (Davidović 1995:138; *Feminističke sveske* 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). It is not my intention here to present an overview of female suffering in the post-Yugoslav wars, but I briefly go into the widely publicised case of rape as an instrument of war.

3.2. war rape and nationalism

Rape became a central issue in discussions of the post-Yugoslav conflict for a number of reasons: firstly, the sheer scale of sexual violence in these wars; secondly, its symbolic use in nationalist discourses; and thirdly, its prominence in a host of local and international controversies, including those between women's organisations. There was clear evidence of widespread rape in Croatia, and particularly in Bosnia, including cases of individual rape, rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing, rape in forcibly organised brothels for soldiers, and rape in concentration camps. The numbers were always extremely unreliable because of the sensitivity of the matter. They could be underestimated because of a reluctance to report on the women's part; or they could be overestimated as a result of the nationalist regimes' practice of playing up numbers in order to win moral support. However, it is certain that rape was widespread both by individual men on their own initiative and by gangs of men as part of organised violence with complicity from military commanders (Salecl 1994a; Sofos 1996:81-83). There were cases of men being raped as well, but here I will focus on the much more frequent phenomenon of rape of women by one or more men¹⁰.

A comprehensive publication on the use of rape as a war instrument in Bosnia was edited by Stiglmeier (1994), although I would hasten to add that this book should be seen in its context. It was written in 1992-1993, when Serbian forces were overwhelmingly stronger than their opponents in Bosnia. Later the balance changed, as did the strategies of violence by the other armies. This resulted in frequent reports of war rapes by the other sides as well. However, foreign observers seem to concur on the contention that, relatively, Serbian soldiers were the most numerous amongst the perpetrators, and Bosniac girls/women the most frequent victims. Importantly, sexual violence in the post-Yugoslav conflict became a pivotal factor in legal terms, with rape being treated as a war crime for the first time.

⁹ See for example Belić & Kesić 1993; Centar za žene žrtve rata 1994; Davidović 1995:144; Nikolić-Ristanović *et al* 1995.

¹⁰ For more discussion of rape as an instrument of war: Centar za žene žrtve rata 1994:123-124; Davidović 1995:141-143; Gutman 1993:68-76; Mostov 1995:213-215; Nikolić-Ristanović 1996:359-364; Knežević 1995a. See also Seifert 1996.

The articulation of sexual violence and nationalism that hit the front pages of global media during the Bosnian war did not arise out of the blue. Even before the break-up of Yugoslavia, Milošević's rise to power, built mainly on the Kosovo issue, included a moral panic about the alleged rape of Serbian women by Albanians. In a heated climate of allegations and hate speech, it was even proposed to establish different legal procedures for intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic rape (Sofos 1996). With the outbreak of war in Croatia, and particularly in Bosnia, it became clear that rape was used shamelessly by the different nationalist regimes. On the one hand its perpetration had become an instrument of war on the ground, and on the other hand reports of victimisation functioned as a crucial weapon in order to foster public support at home and abroad. Mostov (1995, 2000) argued that in post-Yugoslav nationalisms women represented symbolic markers of the boundary of the nation, which had to be defended by men, just as they were obliged to defend its territorial boundaries. Thus, losing the sexuality of 'your' women to the enemy through rape was like losing on the battlefield, because these women symbolised the innocence, the vulnerability, the reproduction, the continuity and, thus, the very life of the nation (Seifert 1994:57-66; Sofos 1996). Sexually abusing a woman of the opposing nation was meant to humiliate the *men* of the other side as much as the woman herself, and it stood for colonising the Other's territory by breaking the sacred boundary of their community.

In this context, we can see that impregnation was sometimes an explicit goal. Not only was it a traumatic experience for the woman and an intrusion into the enemy's terrain, but it also had extended effects in time if the baby was born. In some rape camps women were impregnated and held in the camp until it was too late for abortion. These women were told they were going to give birth to a baby of the enemy, and in some cases, buses with women seven months pregnant were sent over the frontline to their 'own' side, carrying messages on the sides about the babies that would be born. Women were objectified as birth givers, as passers-on of male genetic material.

Once handed over to their respective 'sides', rape victims were abused once again, this time by their own regimes exposing them in order to prove that the national enemies were monsters attacking innocent victims. Public outcry followed, further consolidating the widespread belief on all sides that the wars were purely defensive operations in which men had to protect their wives and children. A poignant illustration of this abuse for propaganda reasons was the fact that rape victims represented in the Croatian media were almost always Bosniac women, even though there were, of course, Croatian survivors as well. This underlined at once the bestiality of the Serbs and the chastity of Croatian women—it was *other* women who were raped (Mostov 1995:215).

Official, state-supported women's organisations played a very important role in this abuse of rape as a political instrument by publicising the issue in their own country and abroad in order to foster support for what was considered their nation's legitimate struggle. In such discourses, the rape issue was taken up exclusively in national terms: sexual violence in the war was seen only through the perspective of a threat to the nation. The suffering of women rape-survivors was then represented as a miniature version of the national suffering and the danger of 'extinction'. Rape had become such a sensitive and politically powerful issue that all regimes involved relentlessly tried to use its victims to their advantage.

3.3. the outskirts of gender patterns in war

Rape was a very important issue in the post-Yugoslav wars, but it was certainly not the only way in which gender affected the situation. Here, I would like to draw attention to some of the less self-evident ways in which gender relations affected one's situation during and after the war. It should be noted that on a local level the first victims of nationalist conflict were often nationally 'mixed' individuals and households.

Take this case from a war-torn area in Croatia, which I have elaborated upon elsewhere (Jansen 2000b). Bosnian-born Serb, Zoran, moved to a nationally mixed village in Croatia as a teacher in the 1970s and married a local Croatian woman, Vesna. 'Brotherhood and Unity in Bed', as he put it. In many ways Zoran fulfilled a

bridging function, and despite being a Serb and a Party member, he was a popular figure in this Croatian-dominated village. In 1991, before the fighting in the village started, Vesna, Zoran and their two children were the first ones to be informed that they should leave. They were about to move into a newly built house, but they decided to flee and ended up in a Serbian-controlled part of Bosnia. This is a crucial point: why, as a mixed couple, did they choose to go to that 'side'? Zoran explained that they were facing a dilemma but opted for the Serbian side because they thought that as a man he would be more capable of defending her from his own people than she would be to protect him from hers.

This is a painful but significant indication of how nationalist conflicts urged unexpected linkages between gender and nationality. In the immediate post-war period, patterns of return to the ethnically cleansed areas in Croatia reconfirmed this: very few Serbs returned to places where they would constitute a national minority, and elderly women were over-represented amongst those who did. While the Tuđman regime was reluctant to allow any return at all, this pattern was also the consequence of the play of gender: men might have been actively fighting their new-old neighbours and were, therefore, unlikely to return. As a result, many elderly Serbian women returned on their own since they were less likely to be seen as a threat to the new Croatian order. However, this position exposed them to frequent abuse: verbal and other harassment, and even rape, were frequent.

3.4. anti-nationalist responses to war rape

Non-regime women's organisations engaging in the development of anti-nationalist alternatives found themselves in an extremely difficult position with regard to gendered violence, and particularly to war rapes. Obviously, they were aware of the existence of these crimes, and they knew that they were in many cases part of systematic campaigns. In fact, they often knew this better than anyone else because many of them worked with survivors who managed to escape. Although they aimed for discretion with the women in question, focusing on psycho-social care and humanitarian aid, they also wanted to raise protest on the issue without placing themselves on the same line as the nationalist regimes. From an anti-nationalist perspective, however, they didn't want to close their eyes to the violence perpetrated by soldiers of their 'own' armies, and they certainly didn't want to allow their regime to abuse the suffering of war rape victims as propaganda material for stepping up their own war efforts (Knežević 1995b; Kesić 1993:43-45).

In this way, an alternative representation of women who had been raped was developed: in line with wider feminist discourse, they were then represented not just as victims, but also as resisters and survivors. This did not mean stripping them of their victimhood, but rather than portraying them as a symbol of the suffering of the nation they were seen as victims of *nationalist war*. Rape survivors stood as symbols of the cruelty of war, of extreme nationalist projects, of the policies of ethnic cleansing carried out by the national Other, but also by their own people. This affected many different individual women, it was argued, regardless of nationality.

However, in addition, especially in explicitly feminist circles, rape survivors were represented as a collective category, albeit not a national one: they were identified as *women*. In this way, drawing upon and reformulating feminist discourses, women activists in Beograd and Zagreb built up a dissident understanding of war rapes. They questioned the nationalist tendency to see rape as a relevant issue only when perpetrated by a national Other¹¹, and they argued that rape should be seen as a gender issue, as violence against *women*. Of course, this was argued to different degrees and was a contested topic between women's organisations in different post-Yugoslav republics. Some feminists took the argument to its extreme by suggesting that war rapes should actually be seen exclusively as gender issues, as violence by

¹¹ This reflects a wider myth about rape: the stereotype of the rapist as an outside threat, originating per definition outside the woman's private circle.

men against women. They would argue that also in peace there are plenty of instances of rape, and they would point to the fact that intra-national, domestic rape and abuse increased enormously during these wars (Mlađenović et al 1993; Mlađenović & Protić 1995:177-181). Others were more reluctant and they would argue that rape should be seen as a gender *and* a national issue, because those acts of sexual violence by men against women were systematically directed at particular women because of their nationality.

4. what about feminism?

Post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses left little place for women in roles other than those of mother, wife, caretaker, breeder and victim—all in the service of the family, the nationalist metonymy for the nation. The official Titoist line, as we have seen, had been at least rhetorically emancipatory, but its long-term impact was limited. There had been, however, a small feminist scene since the late 1970s, growing from local or republican initiatives into an all-Yugoslav phenomenon (for a brief, general discussion of feminism in Yugoslavia see Ramet 1991:197-211; see also Božinović 1996; Davidović 1995:136). Marginal as feminist action may have been before, the end of Yugoslavia meant a further blow: in the urge to do away with everything considered communist, and therefore old-fashioned and wrong, many labelled feminism or anything to do with women's rights as a thing of the past.

In the mid-1990s, in both Serbia and Croatia, the large majority of reactions to feminist initiatives ranged from vehement disapproval to ridicule. My flatmate, Vesna, worked in a Beograd centre for women survivors of abuse (both war and domestic violence). A self-proclaimed anti-communist who felt no loyalty whatsoever to the former Yugoslavia, she said that she knew that the situation was far from perfect in the 'West', but that in Serbia women's rights were simply not taken seriously. They were ridiculed, Vesna argued, and all 'progressive' ideas were now seen as communist—women's rights amongst them. When I asked her whether she thought it had been better for women before, she replied curtly: 'Of course it was better, much better.'

The equation of communism and women's rights was common amongst men and women, and both in public discourse and in everyday life. In Serbia, this was reinforced by the political activity of Mira Marković, wife of Milošević and leader of the Yugoslav Left (JUL), a party in the Serbian ruling coalition. Marković called herself a feminist and her party, widely seen as an interest coalition of mafiosi, represented a 'progressive' line on women's issues—if only strictly rhetorically (Davidović 1995:147). Through unreconstructed leftist discourse far removed from the actual practice of JUL, Marković claimed continuity with the Titoist tradition of emancipation, exemplified in large state-run women's organisations. This led to a situation whereby in Serbia there were two competing International Women's Day celebrations in the 1990s. On 8 March 1997, for example, the official one by the regime-minded successor organisation of the Titoist women's alliance spoke out severely against the anti-Milošević demonstrations; whereas an alternative celebration brought together a wide range of oppositional feminists.

In Zagreb, divisions existed as well, but they took a different form. Due to the strongly anti-communist stance of the HDZ regime, the Croatian successor of the communist women's organisation, often still referred to by its old name Anti-Fascist Women's Front (AFŽ), was strongly oppositional. Related to the reformed communists of the SDP, it publicly emphasised the importance of women in the anti-fascist struggle and therefore distanced itself from the anti-communist regime. Some other Croatian women's organisations positioned themselves completely in line with the dominant nationalism and confirmed the traditionalist 'moral majority' perspective. It must be clear, therefore, that post-Yugoslav women's alliances were certainly not oppositional per definition (Knežević 1995b). To the disappointment of many dissident feminists, it turned out that

the world of women's organisations was not unaffected by the impact of nationalism on wider society¹².

Rather than analysing these national divisions, I now mention one particularly poignant illustration of the interlocking mechanisms they set in motion. In late 1991, with war raging in Croatia, a group of mothers staged a protest in Sarajevo against the war and the conscription of their sons into the Yugoslav army¹³. One should note that, before, parties would be held when a boy went off to do his military service, and it was often seen as a reason for joy and pride. This time, however, there was war on the horizon, and reason to worry. Soon after the Sarajevo demonstration, the mothers travelled to Beograd, the Yugoslav capital, in order to hold a common protest with women from Serbia and Croatia. They were prevented from entering the city, and the joint demonstration did not materialise. Propaganda campaigns by the respective regimes quickly spread a different message wherein mothers were proudly and joyfully sending their sons off to the front in order to defend their nations. Less than a week after the failed common demonstration, the 'mother's movements', as they became known, were transformed into symbols of national unity and incorporated into the war-mongering policies of the regimes.

Despite these divisions, there was a tendency to articulate a critique of patriarchy with a critique of nationalism. This anti-nationalist feminist discourse relied on continuity with former Yugoslav women's rights initiatives as well as on newly developed activities. In what follows, I focus on this interrelation between feminism and anti-nationalism.

5. anti-nationalism, gender and feminism

5.1. protest and misogyny

As a starting point, we have to note that women constituted the backbone of the critique of nationalism in both Serbia and Croatia. They formed a majority, in terms of bodies, in most alternative anti-war and anti-nationalist movements. Of course, many men were mobilised into the army and, apart from the risk of being sent to the front, there was enormous pressure on them to be exemplary 'national warriors' in all spheres of life. However, by the same patriarchal token, women were also subject to strong pressures: they should be good caretakers and reproducers of the nation. Nevertheless, they were much more active in oppositional activity than men. I do not know why this was the case, and I don't see this as the right place to discuss the impact of femininity or whether women are simply more peaceful, caring or critical than men¹⁴. Rather than going into the *why*, I would like to explore the *how*, because it wasn't just the case that women constituted a majority in terms of bodies, but there was also a strong input of ideas which argued along lines of gender identity and solidarity. For example, in a reaction to the proposed traditionalist demographic renewal programmes, a Beograd feminist wrote:

'It disturbs them that the birth rate in Kosovo is significantly higher than in Serbia proper. They want to sustain the *status-quo* or maybe they wish to awaken "patriotism" in Serbian women and entice them to show Albanian women that they can give birth to more children than them. They know very well what they would do with those extra children: off to war, or what did you think!' (Četković 1993:135)

¹² See Duhaček 1993:136; Kasić 1997; Knežević, 1995a, 1995b:4-5; Korač 1996:140ff; Mladenović et al 1993:217.

¹³ See Davidović 1995:136-137; Drakulić 1993b:128-129; Nikolić-Ristanović 1996:359-364; Salecl 1993:215; Ugrešić 1995:158-159.

¹⁴ For some starting points on this discussion, specifically relating to the post-Yugoslav case, see for example: Iveković 1995b, 1997; Jarić 1994; Papandreou 1997; Spasić 1997; Žene u crnom 1994a, 1996, 1997.

The reaction by the nationalist elite was predictable, as illustrated by these words of a church leader on the occasion of women protesting against the demand of the Orthodox church to ban abortion:

'They are enemies of the Serbian people. Who pays them to dress up in these special black uniforms? What is their goal in propagating, precisely in Beograd, that Serbian mothers should kill their unborn children? These protesting women are not Orthodox Serbian women, they don't have anything to do with the essence of the Serbian people.'
(*Politika* 27/03/93)

It should be noted that these controversies took place in an embargoed state during full-scale armed conflicts in nearby Bosnia and Croatia. In the latter country, not long before, a witch hunt had been opened on five women intellectuals who were known for their public criticism of the nationalist regime¹⁵. When the weekly *Globus* published an anonymous attack on them under the title 'Croatian feminists rape Croatia' (*Globus* 11/12/92), again nationalism and misogyny went hand in hand. The women in question were rudely reprimanded for being out of place, nationally, politically and personally (Kesić 1997).

Apart from these virulent attacks combining the venom of nationalist and sexist discourses, women's anti-nationalism also attracted a wide range of milder criticism. Even when representing certain initiatives in a positive light, there was often a tendency to play down their 'feminist' character. For example, when the Zagreb Centre for Women War Victims received the Muhammed Ali Prize 'World Healing Honour', the headline of an article in an oppositional newspaper referred to it simply as 'Centre for War Victims' (*Novi List* 11/10/97). Maybe this wasn't even the result of a conscious decision by the editors, but knowing that this Centre only worked with women and proliferated itself very much as a feminist organisation, they appeared at least negligent.

5.2. divided loyalties: woman and/or national?

Through their engagement in dissident initiatives with people who, regardless of nationality, were victimised by the nationalist war and/or wanted to make a stance against it, women activists also positioned themselves in relation to the dominant nationalism. As we have seen, these women might have had many different reasons to wish to do so, and in many cases they did not see their gender identity as a defining factor. In this sense, many women active in these initiatives didn't conceive of the situation as one in which their female gender and their national identity were pitted against each other. However, others, and in the case of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist activism this was a rather large portion, considered their identity as a woman an important feature¹⁶. In a climate of homogenisation and accusations of betrayal, these people often felt that they were being forced to choose between female or national solidarity, and they had decided that the former was the more important one. However, it wasn't always that straightforward, as illustrated in an interview with Monika, a Zagreb-based feminist, who argued as follows:

'Before, what was important for the whole development of feminism in Yugoslavia were the links between activists, women-intellectuals in Zagreb, Beograd and Ljubljana, already from the end of the 1970s. That was very important. We emphasised our common directions, our common theoretical perspectives, we had meetings [...]. However, at the beginning of the war, something very interesting happened. And that was exactly *because* women who engaged in feminism felt unease with nationalism. In fact, most were some sort of Marxist feminists and nationalism was simply not an issue [...]. Supposedly, we were *a priori* internationalists and therefore *a priori* anti-nationalists. This led to unease, problems, confusion. So it seems to me that we never had an occasion for a discussion on what nationalism is, what national identity is. We all considered

¹⁵ Elsewhere, I have elaborated on this case', particularly in terms of narrative constructions of 'home' (Jansen 1998).

¹⁶ See the brief discussion on embodied resistance by *Women in Black* in Chapter Two.

ourselves, supposedly, anti-nationalists, unconditionally, without thinking about it. [...] With the war, suddenly there was a problem. A question arose, in my view a false question, which asked: am I a feminist or am I a Croat? [...] At that time, Croatia was represented as a victim—as a state and as a nation. So women who dealt with violence against women started from the position: if we, as women and as feminists, *a priori* identify with victims, what do we do when Croatia is a symbolic victim? Our normal, as in "normal" [*gestures*], position would be to identify with Croatia as a victim. So it came to complete confusion, particularly with the war rapes and all...'

In this climate of polarisation, a split occurred in the women's movement, especially in Croatia where after all the violence was taking place. Some decided to focus on issues to do with Croatia as a state and as a nation, while others emphasised the dangers of violence and xenophobia on all sides. For the latter group, their gender identity was often an important source for alternative engagement. They would focus on women as a target group, which was not the case amongst their male colleagues. For those women, feminist discourses functioned as a reservoir from which to draw material for the construction of alternative, non-violent, non-nationalist patterns of identification. It should be clear that, as I have emphasised throughout this study, this was often primarily a response to the spectre of nationalism.

6. feminism and the narrative break

6.1. feminism and its situated meanings

The question I would like to ask here is: would it be correct to label the women I refer to in this chapter, 'feminists'? In my search for an answer, I found that the logical thing to do was to ask *them*. And it must be said, the answers varied. Some certainly did see themselves as feminists, whereas others were reluctant to do so, amongst other reasons because of the 'communist' discrediting of the term. My Beograd flatmate Vesna argued that many of her friends looked at her funny and often asked her why she was working in a feminist organisation. Laughingly, she told me that they'd say things like: 'You are my friend and apart from that you are normal. So why do you want to be a feminist?'

One thing should be clear here. It was amongst a number of self-proclaimed feminists that I came across the most radical critique of war, nationalism and militarism; and it was there that questions of guilt and responsibility were taken on with less scruples than anywhere else (see for example Mlađenović 1993; Centar za žene žrtve rata 1996). For example, a significant moment in the post-Yugoslav peace movement was the occasion on which a lesbian activist and a radical feminist from Beograd addressed a war-time conference in Serbian-besieged Sarajevo. Unlike many others, she openly talked about what was being done from the hills around them, and she did not attempt to escape the uncomfortable fact that it was being done in her name.

However, as we have seen, many other women activists, who might or might not explicitly locate themselves within feminist discourse, also considered their identity as a woman an important issue in their work and in their lives in general. Feminist discourses of identity and solidarity then functioned as reservoirs for the positioning of self in a tumultuous situation (Andrić-Ružić 1997:25-27). I would argue that it is not so important in this context what feminism 'really' is, obviously its meanings varied. Because of these variations it could serve as raw material for narratives of self for different women. In this way, 'feminist activism', in whatever form, provided a number of elements which could be articulated into a more or less continuous story of self. This need for some sense of continuity was a common feature in many women's narratives, as it was in the wider phenomenon of anti-nationalism.

This is certainly not to say that there was a privileged form of narrating continuity, let alone one and the same construction of continuity for all. Of course, women were active in different ways: they engaged in work with refugees and/or rape victims; in educational work; in counselling; and in raising public awareness through campaigns or

dialogue projects. Others worked in independent media or in creative-artistic projects. Like their male colleagues, many of those activists were motivated by a sense of care, often accompanied by feelings of anger and indignation and sometimes by explicitly political perspectives.

6.2. narratives of continuity I: care of self and others

Frequently, NGO-activists told me that they had started to work in an organisation primarily out of a 'need to do something' (see also Kasić 1994:13; Žene u crnom 1994a, 1995, 1997). Sabina, a young Zagreb activist, told me in an interview:

'I became an activist by complete coincidence, I reckon. You know, I knew what was happening through television and newspapers, and it all seemed very far away. But when I saw that first hand, I felt a need to help those people. I didn't think about what they were or who they were. I felt obliged, I felt it as a duty—and I feel obliged to continue that work. I love those people, and they love me. And in a weird way, it is a wonderful experience. I don't know, it gives me great fulfilment. I feel that I do something useful, at least in a small way. I try to work on a small part of all that [*'svega toga'*]—as much as I can.'

Sabina and many others like her had only become active in a women's organisation, or indeed in any kind of social initiative, because of the war in Croatia. This was a common narrative: a sort of alarm had gone off when the violence erupted, giving rise to a need to do something. Although this was the case for men as well, it seemed to be more common amongst women. Again, this highlights the reactive nature of the whole process, something which came home to me when many of these women told me they were not even really interested in gender issues before the war.

Vesna told me that previously she would never have called herself a feminist. In the early 1990s she had become interested in the legal side of issues of violence, domestic and non-domestic. Also, it had been hard to find employment in her field (engineering), and she had worked in a women's shelter on a semi-voluntary basis. During my fieldwork, Vesna juggled two jobs. In addition to her full-time position as an engineer in a state firm, she became increasingly active in the women's centre. In this way, her interest in feminist issues grew, and she is now a self-employed NGO-activist with special expertise in women's groups. Her motivation was strongly gendered: the only reason why she had the energy to do this, she said, was because it was really important to her *as a woman*. For other kinds of NGO work, Vesna argued, she simply didn't have the energy, as it was hard enough to survive.

In contrast to Vesna, who came from a rather traditional Serbian, outspoken anti-communist family, Martina was a Beograd academic with a strongly pro-Yugoslav background. She said that, like many other women, she had become a feminist by coincidence. Before, she hadn't been very much into women's issues, but it had become important with nationalism and the war. It was something they could hold on to, Martina said. *Something we could hold on to*. For many, the very need to engage in acts of solidarity was embedded in a wider need for continuity (Andrić-Ružić 1997:7). The narrative break represented by the war and rampant nationalism was partly overcome precisely by tackling it head on. In that sense, continuity as a 'normal, caring individual' was reconstructed. Throughout this process, feminism and one's identity as woman *became* important for them.

However, unlike for Martina, for others feminism was an important part of strongly developed, concrete lines of continuity with the pre-1991 situation. A whole series of prominent women who had been active in alternative women's groups during the former regime functioned as midwives to the anti-war movement. Not all of these pioneers would call themselves feminists, but it was striking that many had a personal history of engagement in the previous feminist movement. In the words of a Zagreb core-activist:

'I remember the summer of 1991. The heat and the oppressive feeling of anxiety. I also remember having this need to do something, a need that felt like a pain in my stomach.'

The space we worked in, we breathed in, the space we had been building for years, began to dissolve, shrink, and disappear. During that humid summer it became completely clear to me that all we had built by way of Green Movements and Women's Groups was sinking from day to day. In 1991 we talked about war with disbelief. The word war still had the taste of something that could not possibly happen. Even if a lot of blood had already been shed [...]. Everything indicated that it would be a bloody war, but somehow, we could not believe that it was going to happen to us. Us of all people. Like with cancer. Why us, why now?

[...]

It was important for us to remain steadfast in protecting our values, in spite of pressures. [...] It is important to preserve and to explore this different path and to save this life experience of refusing violence [...]. It was important to promote human rights in times of irrationality, because the idea that human rights were universal and indivisible must always be promoted. [...] There were both women and men among us. There were, however, more women. Maybe it was easier for us to choose non-violence. As the eternal "other", we can better understand that problems cannot be solved with violence. We are constantly beginning something, like endless housework. It is as if the routine of repeating the ritual of cleaning is our direction. We are constantly glueing together pieces of broken cups. We are eternally creating things from nothing, sometimes dinner, sometimes a painting, and sometimes relationships and threads of communication within a local community.'

(Teršelič 1997:19-21)

In dissident initiatives, often favouring a feminist framework, women found each other in order to bridge the sudden narrative break between *before* and *after* which had overcome them. This break, i.e. the wars and nationalism, was represented not only as something that could have been prevented, as man-made, but also as made *by men*. If the discontinuity was masculine/patriarchal, then strategies of continuity could be constructed as feminine/feminist. Such self-positioning allowed for the individual reconstruction of biographies and for a sense of solidarity, often including an emphasis on bonds between women. By linking up their feelings, ideas and actions with women around them, they engaged in a re-assertion of their own biography, which might not have been possible otherwise.

6.3. narratives of continuity II: Yugoslav legacies and global strategies

Interestingly, the bonds between women activists often involved linkages which transcended the frontlines between the post-Yugoslav states. More than most other dissidents, women's organisations went to lengths in order to maintain networks of solidarity on a pan-Yugoslav scale. Contacts were frequent and intensive, and many personal friendships between feminists from different republics existed. At an academic-activist gathering in Ljubljana, middle-aged Beograd feminist, Đurđa, used her own example to clarify some of these issues. She said she had come to realise that she and many of her friends didn't have a motherland anymore, and that they would never have one again. Travelling all the way through Hungary to Ljubljana, a city that she had visited so often before, had been like tracing her life story, Đurđa told us. She had come to meet people who were feminists and pacifists, and she believed that their feminism was immune to nationalism. On occasions like this, she argued, they created a space to develop their identity as women.

Although a pan-Yugoslav network of feminist solidarity was prominent in the critique of nationalism, not everybody felt comfortable with the overlapping of anti-nationalism and identification along Yugoslav lines. In reaction to discourses of 'Former Sisters Unite' (see *Feminističke sveske* 1994; 1996:7-35; 1997:15-106), many feminists from Zagreb felt that their colleagues from Beograd had it wrong. Relentlessly emphasising their pan-Yugoslav sense of belonging, they argued, resulted in an idealised image of Yugoslavia, replicating some of the vices of nationalist identification (Knežević 1995b:5-6; s.d.). Monika, a Zagreb feminist who had always identified as a Yugoslav before, expressed it like this in an interview:

'All other identifications became unacceptable. They caused unease. And *Jugoslavenstvo* had become some empty thing but very powerful and manipulative, which allowed you to hide from questions. Saying you were a Yugoslav, in those circles, meant you were *a priori* against war, against violence, against... you know. It became manipulative and superior, falsely superior...'

Despite divisions over the status of Yugoslav identification, a tight network of women's groups spanned the post-Yugoslav states. However, again it must be said that continuity wasn't always that straightforward. Some contacts were maintained and intensified from before the break-up of the former state, but many others only originated after the start of the wars. In other words, for many feminist activists, particularly younger ones, the creation of tight borders between the post-Yugoslav states had the paradoxical effect of creating strong bonds between women of different republics who did not previously know each other. This sometimes led people to ironically appreciate that it was only thanks to the war that had they made so many friends in the 'enemy' republic.

Again, continuity was not necessarily the maintenance of pre-existing networks of friends and colleagues, but could also mean the creation of new ones. It allowed the activists to engage with like-minded people and, as I was told so many times, 'to stay normal'. For example, in an interview with a Beograd feminist, I asked whether she had much contact with people in other post-Yugoslav republics. Her answer was immediate and without a shred of doubt:

'Of course! Of course! God, I don't know what I would do without them. I even think I have more contact now than before. I would go mad without them! It's the only way to stay normal.'

For many women, gender identity and solidarity played a crucial role in these networks. This was not only visible through the prominence of feminist discourse, but also by the tangible presence of non-Yugoslav feminists. Feminism was then constructed as a global discursive strategy, as became clear in this excerpt from an interview with Vera, a long-standing Zagreb feminist:

'From the beginning of the war, a new world has opened for me. And it is amazing to see how quickly I have actually forgotten about the things I felt I belonged to before. Now I feel I am really part of an international women's movement. Some sort of [*laughs*] "Feminist International". That is actually my only sense of belonging now: the civil and women's scene in Croatia and on a global level.'

Reflecting this global approach, carrying banners with slogans like 'Albanian women are our sisters', many Women in Black demonstrations would also refer to other, non-Yugoslav issues. For example, they expressed support for Argentinian mothers of the 'desaparecidos' and for women in the Israel/Palestine conflict.

7. autobiography and safe spaces

One feature of the feminist critique of nationalism in the post-Yugoslav states was its enormous output of written work. I have argued before that the 1990s could be seen as a period of intensified narrativity for many people in Serbia and Croatia. Narrative provided one possible means, an important one, to engage in the reconstruction of one's biography. Positioning themselves as feminists, many women engaged in speaking and writing about the interrelation of public and private issues in their lives, and whole libraries could be filled with the publications that came out of this. Through autobiographical statements, feminists rewrote both the official versions of the wars, and the role of women under the nationalist regimes, whereby agency was recovered from under the ashes of victimisation (Jansen 1998a).

In order to do so, they created 'safe spaces' where they were protected from war and nationalism. In the words of a Zagreb activist again:

'By promoting the values of non-violence and the protection of human rights, we were building and expanding our civil space. A space in which we could breathe and work. A space in which we could be ourselves and where we could create new relationships and projects and live our lives defying the violent demands of the state. The energy of many activists often goes into the mere preservation of space, and not into the widening of circles, because the efforts of resistance are so great that sometimes we do not have the strength to create and can keep a small light, just enough to keep it for some other, better times.'

(Teršelić 1997:21)

Those spaces, which could be permanent (for example campaigning offices) or temporary (for example on Summer meetings), were remarkably different from 'wider society'. Here, the struggle against nationalism and war had brought people from different nationalities together rather than divided them. Feelings of anxiety or fear because of nationality were irrelevant or approached in a different way. Ironically, in these circles, those present could temporarily let go of their sensitivity to issues of hatred and discrimination, precisely because they were safe spaces. In the public sphere it was considered so utterly normal to make exclusionist statements about national Others, that activists would go to great lengths attempting to refrain from this. But in those specific contexts it was *okay*; you could make a painful joke because you *knew* that it wasn't meant offensively by anyone.

To some extent the creation of such safe spaces resulted in a certain ghettoisation of the feminist movement (and of anti-nationalist initiatives in general). We are talking here about a very small group of people, united in their critical stance towards the nationalisms that were considered common sense in their countries. However, it was a bizarre kind of ghettoisation, ranging well across borders and connecting people from all over the post-Yugoslav area and beyond. This relative separation from the rest of society was regretted because of the lack of effectiveness, but it was also seen as necessary. There was a need for such spaces where 'you could be who you were' and where the pressure was off for a while. Again, this allowed people to reconstruct their biographies and to position themselves in the face of the narrative break they had been confronted with by the wars.

I know that I have lost so many things
I cannot count them,
and I know that, in fact,
those things are now what is mine.

Jorge Luis Borges

it's so hard to dance that way
when it's cold and there's no music
well your old hometown is so far away
but, inside your head there's a record
playing, a song called,
hold on, hold on
you got to hold on

Tom Waits – Hold On¹

Throughout this study I have explored the ways in which people deployed post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practices in order to position themselves in relation to the changes they experienced during the 1990s. In particular, I have uncovered patterns in the ways in which individuals established a non-dominant sense of continuity within their biographies in order to cope with what was experienced as a defining narrative break. In a situation of heightened narrativity, this entailed a close look at the contested discursive strategies of remembering and forgetting.

In this chapter, I analyse the mechanisms that structured narratives of self in relation to memories of former Yugoslavia, particularly with regard to remembered Yugoslav identification, the sense of a common Yugoslav 'home', and the role therein of popular culture and everyday life memories. In relation to the critical reinterpretation of the changing significance of national identities, this results in a re-appraisal of the controversial notion of *Jugonostalgija*: first questioning its conventionally assumed political nature; then re-inscribing it with the possibility of another personal-political meaning.

1. (anti-)nationalism and the politics of remembering and forgetting

If nationalism's rise to dominance in Croatia and Serbia could be represented as a narrative break for most citizens, the evaluation of this break varied widely from person to person. I have argued above how anti-nationalist practice was often articulated with a general discourse of loss. Even when not directly affected by violence, many people in the capitals felt they had lost out on the changes not only economically (through the loss of jobs, income, material goods) and socially (through the loss of networks of social influence, relations, friends), but also emotionally. It is this last aspect I wish to turn to now, the sense of mourning that characterised much post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism. Many people experienced the 1990s as a decade of loss: loss of security, hope, beliefs, ideals and, in some cases, homeland.

By far the most common form of dealing with these losses was through a near-complete withdrawal into the private sphere and a fierce resistance to its being tainted

¹ Tom Waits, from the album *Mule Variations* © 1999 Anti/Epitaph.

by 'politics'. Numerous people—young and old, highly educated and not, male and female—emphasised time and again that they 'never watched the news nor read any newspapers'². This was especially the case in Serbia, where even after the wars propaganda and a siege rhetoric reached such improbable proportions that almost no one could take the regime messages seriously anymore. The withdrawal from the public realm was often rationalised by recourse to the language of health and illness: people said they were 'trying to keep healthy'; they saw society as having been 'infested'; and they 'did not wish to be contaminated'. Of course, excluding 'politics' and all things 'national' from the private sphere was a practice only partially accessible to a limited number of people, clearly more feasible for those in the capitals than for those, say, in ethnically cleansed areas.

A small minority of people in Beograd and Zagreb engaged in organised counter-initiatives such as NGO's, independent media or solidarity campaigns. In this way, some of the losses were directly compensated for by new jobs (usually funded from abroad), networks, travel opportunities and, importantly, new friendships with people who had, in their view, 'remained normal'. Some of these people resisted any sense of national identification at all while others articulated alternative forms within the national canon, infusing it with individualism, urbanity, feminism, European-ness, cultural capital and so on. In this way, there was a repositioning in relation to a shift in the dominant discourse: old issues required changing attitudes and new issues required new responses.

Memory played a crucial role here. We have seen how the dominant nationalisms put forward a two-fold approach with regard to narratives of the past. On the one hand they relied to varying extents on amnesia in relation to the Yugoslav era—albeit, in the Serbian case, in an extremely ambiguous way. On the other hand they articulated selective rememberings of the Yugoslav and pre-Yugoslav past, presented as suppressed memories, in a discourse of resistance. This shift seemed to pose few problems for many members of the former *nomenklatura*, who had converted to nationalism almost overnight, or even for many 'little people'. In the words of writer and critic Dubravka Ugrešić:

'*Konvertitstvo* ['being a convert', 'converting'] is not an ideological program, but a program for survival—that's why it is so natural [...]. Nobody remembers anything [...]. People say, shocked, 'Oh but he changed!'. Someone changing position elicits positive reactions: sin, confession, sin, confession. Because only idiots [*budale*] don't change. Making an error is human. In that way, on the level of everyday life, small substitutions take place for what's missing on the collective plan: catharsis. We did everything; we destroyed communism; we created a state; we got rid of the Serbs; 'our boys' are in power; we are free in our own land [*svoj na svome*]'—but catharsis is missing...'
(*Feral Tribune* 05/10/98:38-39)

This attitude, for Ugrešić, is a licence to escape responsibility and it feeds political infantilisation because, in the end, the 'father' is always to blame, never the 'little people' (ibid.:39).

'The (wo)man in the street', I would argue, responded to official amnesia and re-interpretation in a variety of ways. Some people embraced the nationalist discourses enthusiastically and engaged in the rewriting of their own biographies in relation to the Yugoslav past. Others explicitly refused to relinquish what they saw as their legitimate narrative of the past. A large middle ground of reluctant acceptance emerged: these people went with the flow, tried to pick up some gains along the way, but expressed private doubt and scepticism. Their criticism was not usually overt, but they did articulate certain elements of anti-nationalist discourse, particularly those related to socio-economic issues. I found this pattern amongst many people in their forties and fifties: they had lived all their lives in Yugoslavia, grew up in it, were schooled in it, built a career in it. Many jumped on the bandwagon of nationalism but felt ambivalent about

² For a discussion of a similar pattern in a very different context, see Hazan 1980.

it, and kept looking back over their shoulder, as jumping meant reinforcing the narrative break in their biographies.

2. blaming nostalgia: regimes and anti-nationalist *altérité*

How then did post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discursive practice articulate narratives of the past? I have demonstrated that, although anti-nationalism argued for change at the level of society, individual narratives tended to converge upon the opposite pole of continuity. This was mainly due to the conditioning influence of its counterpoints, Serbian and Croatian nationalism. With nationalism almost monopolising the discursive material concerning change and renewal, dissident discursive practice turned to mundane memories of personal experience and everyday practice in order to develop resistance strategies. Such an attitude reflected the general critique of collectivist discourses in post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism (Dević 1997) and reinstated the possibility of linear patterns of narration and personal responsibility counteracting what was seen as nationalist conformism.

Stepping out of this conformism could be enacted in many different, minute ways, and it is certainly not my intention to list them here. We have seen how certain issues, declared undesirable by the new nationalist regimes, were still cherished as one's own. Others began to be proclaimed one's own precisely as a result of having been demonised. This resulted in an uncomfortable situation for anti-nationalist discursive practice: intuitively, dissident memory was bound to recover positive rememberings of Yugoslav times, but few people were willing to defend the authoritarian policies of the former *regime*. It is in this context that I introduce the controversial notion of *Jugonostalgija*.

Etymologically, nostalgia derives from the Greek words *nostos* ['return'] and *algos* ['pain']. However, in both Serbia and Croatia, the term was used very frequently in conjunction with the prefix '*Jugo-*', virtually always as an insult. Deploying the term *Jugonostalgija* had become a shortcut for nationalist discourse to denounce dissident ideas and practices alike, regardless of whether or not they actually referred to Titoist times in any nostalgic way. Labelling someone a *Jugonostalgičar(ka)* was a dominant strategy that precluded any debate, for it discredited whatever argument might have followed to the point of irrelevance. For example, the *Zamir* ['For Peace'] electronic network, which formed a crucial link between anti-nationalist initiatives in different republics during the wars, was regularly attacked on this basis. The Croatian regime paper *Vjesnik* deplored its existence and denounced it as project of *Jugonostalgičari* aiming for the recreation of the common state. *Vjesnik* expressed particular concern about the fact that most of *Zamir's* activists were foreign-funded youngsters, rather than 'Partisan fossils' from whom such nonsense was to be expected (*Arkzin* 14/04/97:2).

For obvious reasons, the term *Jugonostalgija* was more frequently used in Croatia, where a less ambiguous official amnesia reigned than in Serbia, at least rhetorically. In fact, *Jugonostalgičar(ka)* was one of the favourite collective labels thrown by Croatian nationalism at anyone dissenting, since it acted as a cover-all for 'officer's kids', 'the red bourgeoisie', 'mixed marriages' and 'leftists'. It is ironic that Franjo Tuđman should have been a main proponent of the practice of denouncing people as *Jugonostalgičari(ke)*. He himself had been a high ranking officer in the WWII Partisan Army, the director of a communist historical institute and the president of one of the greatest symbols of Yugoslavness, the army-run football club *Partizan Beograd*. His children were clearly 'officer's kids' and he had several grandchildren born of a mixed marriage...

In any case, following the logic of so many instances of terminological power struggles, the label *Jugonostalgija* was quickly appropriated by those targeted. Always clouded in polysemy and never adding up to a structured counterdiscourse, *Jugonostalgija* was invested with some semantics of resistance. Most often it was used reflexively in an ironic way. In what follows, I attempt to disentangle some layers of the term's meaning and its subversive relevance as part of anti-nationalist discursive practice. Throughout

this analysis it will become clear that *Jugonostalgija* was not a monolithic notion but that it consisted of patterns of strategic remembering deployed in many different ways.

3. disentangling Yugoslav identity and some of its discontents

3.1. Yugoslav identity, the census and ambiguity

Although one might assume that one of the most straightforward ways to approach the issue of *Jugonostalgija* would be through an analysis of people's ongoing adherence to a Yugoslav identity, this seems to complicate matters even further. I have argued in Chapter Three that the notion of a Yugoslav identity was complex and that it could not be placed on the same level as strictly national labels. A major problem for any retrospective analysis is that the information about the label of a Yugoslav identity relies mainly on strictly declarative data such as census records. Organised every ten years, the censuses allowed people to opt for the category 'Yugoslav, nationally undetermined' (rather than, for example, 'Croatian' or 'Serbian'). This was a contradictory Titoist attempt to allow for ambiguity while at the same time wanting to contain it in a neatly demarcated box. Only a minority of citizens chose to declare themselves in this way, but nevertheless, it accounted for more than a million people in 1981. It was generally assumed that certain social groups were overrepresented in this category—for example, Party officials, professional soldiers, certain cultural and academic professionals, children of 'mixed' marriages and members of their families (Schöpflin 1993:186-187)—but Yugoslav identification was certainly not restricted to them (Drakulić 1993a:238).

In any case, I would argue that statistical records of those who declared themselves as 'Yugoslavs' hold very little information about people's actual experiences. Firstly, in line with the argument in Chapter Six, this label could mean a variety of things. What was a mere administrative answer to an official question for one person could hold a sense of territorial belonging for another. Moreover, the Yugoslav label could imply an ideological stance or perhaps represent nothing more than a joke for others. Of course, it could also evoke a combination of two or more of these possibilities. Secondly, because the Titoist regime did not intend 'Yugoslav identity' to supersede national identities such as 'Serbian' or 'Croatian', people saw these categories not necessarily as exclusive, even if they were only allowed to tick one option. From the narratives gathered during my fieldwork it appears that many people who had *not* officially declared their primary identification as 'Yugoslav' in the census had not therefore rejected it. Many had felt that Yugoslavness *also* formed part of their everyday lives, like Croatian-ness or Serbian-ness, and a whole range of other positionings in relation to discourses of belonging.

We have seen how after the end of Titoist Yugoslavia the notion of a Yugoslav identity became even more complex, since the Milošević regime articulated a discourse that conflated Serbian nationalism and Yugoslavism. While the precise nature of the resulting hybrid was never spelled out, this did not prevent the Beograd regime and its satellites from forcing a campaign of radical disambiguation on those who were supposed to belong to their own constituency (weeding out 'bad' Serbs) and, of course, on national Others (ethnic cleansing). With the new, shrunken federation called 'Yugoslavia' and with Milošević claiming full successor rights to the former state, the notion of 'Yugoslavness' featured in many struggles between regime discourse and certain anti-nationalist forms of dissidence. A large number of *Beograđani*, including many who were critical of nationalism, maintained that they had *always been* Yugoslavs in the former state and that they continued to be so after its break-up. The Croatian situation was very different. The whole notion of Yugoslavness was completely marginalised in Zagreb, although we shall see later that it did sometimes play a different role on a submerged level within everyday lives.

3.2. salvaging Yugoslav identity in Beograd

In an attempt to disentangle the ways in which notions of a Yugoslav identity were articulated with anti-nationalism, let us first consider some self-proclaimed Yugoslav *Beogradani*. Our point of entry is a set of narratives taken from interviews with prominent Beograd dissidents.

Rajko was a middle-aged social scientist with an impressive range of critical publications behind his name. Although he had recently focused increasingly on his academic work, which was also strongly anti-nationalist, he had been one of the first dissident intellectuals to go public in the early 1990s. Throughout the war years he had become a key person in the contacts between Beograd dissidents and their Western colleagues. Sharp, well-dressed and witty, Rajko received me in the flat he shared with his West-European partner and thousands of books. The place was communist-style on the outside and cultural elite-style on the inside. During the interview I asked him how he introduced himself to foreigners when abroad. He replied:

'I am part of an endangered species. I am ... a Yugoslav, from Yugoslavia. But, you know, I always have to explain more than that. Because I don't mean the present Yugoslavia: My Yugoslav identity simply refers to my biography. I ..., you know, I grew up in that country.'

Jasmina, who knew Rajko from anti-nationalist initiatives, was slightly younger than him. For more than a decade she had worked for the Yugoslav administration in Western Europe. Chic and equally witty and well-dressed, she was the main figure of a Beograd human rights organisation, known for her biting pen. Jasmina was extremely well-versed in dissidence and had the reputation of being a ferocious critic of nationalism, even to the extent that she was disliked by some of her colleague-activists for being negative and elitist. I met her in the professionally equipped offices of her organisation and asked her the same question. As a person who was often publicly accused of *Jugonostalgija*, she laughed at first and then answered:

'Well... well, that is... well, for me, I always say I am from Beograd. I am from Beograd, from Serbia. Because I don't perceive this to be Yugoslavia; it's just a working title for ... I don't know for what... for Greater Serbia, or ... Milošević is just using it for political reasons, he is playing a game with the name. That's because he is trying to avoid responsibility, because he blames all the others for secession. But it is really unrealistic: we are living in Serbia, and it is a... I myself sort of grew up as a Yugoslav. I worked in Yugoslav institutions, and I really felt like a Yugoslav. I still feel like that but I don't say it because it can be misjudged. Because when you're from Beograd, it can always be equated with, you know, some hegemonic Serbs, or unitaristic Serbs, or... you know, it always means Greater Serbia. So I need to explain my emotions relating to what I really feel by being a Yugoslav. So I don't say it, I just say I am a citizen of ... eh... Serbia, or "this country", or whatever. It is... eh... I don't deny it, I don't think that people who feel Serb, Croat or anything else, that there is something wrong about it. It's only... it just happened that I grew up as a Yugoslav [*laughs*]. This is eh... this is my identity, I really felt that the whole country was the country in which I... which I belonged to and where I came from.'

Yet another evocation of the same Yugoslavness came from Veljko, again a social scientist. Amongst other things, Veljko was the organiser of a series of academic conferences on issues of nationalism and its alternatives. He was an outspoken critical intellectual. I interviewed him in his office, while his visiting daughter, who studied abroad, hung about in the room. So, how did Veljko introduce himself to foreigners when abroad?

'Listen, I always declared as a Yugoslav. I always wrote down "Yugoslav", and still today, that is what I write. I *am* a Yugoslav. And I have no intention of distancing myself from

that, although I know very well that the state in which I live now is not the state that generations of people in the Balkans have dreamed about. However,... seventy years existence of a common state has left some traces as well. Maybe I feel a little bit now like a man, like... as if I were born in Vienna, lived my life in Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian empire and then lived to see 1918. Probably they felt something similar to what I feel now, or you know, probably, I feel the way they felt. I fall into that circle of so-called *Jugonostalgijčari*, whom all ideologues of these new ex-Yugoslav states regard with great suspicion as dinosaurs. But, you know, I think dinosaurs are not such terribly unsympathetic animals and I have nothing against being one.'

As I have argued throughout this study, declarative acts of identification are not always per definition the most relevant aspects of people's experience of self. Perhaps people do not automatically engage with issues of national and other categorical identification at all in their everyday lives. They might do so only when they see the context in which they find themselves as one that demands such positioning. Of course, the situation in the post-Yugoslav states was characterised by an almost undeniable pressure to define oneself in national terms. If the violence and repression were directed precisely at disambiguating social patterns in the region, it was to be expected that a large amount of dissident energy was invested in a struggle to retain some ambiguity. Or, to put it in Laclau and Mouffe's terms (1985): a struggle was waged to preserve certain elements in their quality as elements in order to prevent their being articulated into nationalist discourses of oppression as moments. Previous chapters have explored some mechanisms of people's mundane attempts to preserve ambiguity, and I come back to this issue later in this chapter.

However, the three narratives above indicate that by refusing to leave Yugoslavness in the hands of the regime, these Beograd dissidents attempted to salvage what they perceived as their legitimate sense of belonging in a rather categorical way. In response to the official versions of past and present, they articulated the notion of a Yugoslav identity into a counterdiscourse. In an interesting twist to the story, these outspoken critics of the regime's nationalism seemed to be aware of the fact that they recreated certain discursive elements which figured prominently in the nationalism they opposed. Again, this has to do with everyday experience. On one evening in Beograd, my flatmate Goran and I talked about his memories of life in former Yugoslavia. After a brief silence, he suddenly turned to me and told me that, now that he thought about it, maybe he was a *Jugonostalgijčar*. Apologetically, he added that he had simply grown up 'in that country'. It had been part of everyday experience and one didn't really think about it in those days. When I remarked that a large majority of people engaging in Beograd NGO's were middle-aged, Goran's partner Vesna, herself a young activist, said that this was not so surprising. Most of these people, she argued, had grown up when Yugoslavia was looking pretty promising—when it had 'really existed'. In that time they had considered it their country and for them, Vesna said, it had been a self-evident way of life. When that country disappeared, they had suddenly found themselves left with nothing. This was one of the reasons, she thought, why middle-aged people were more involved in NGO's. As Veljko, one of the three Beograd intellectuals above, declared:

'It was when I was a kid at school, asked to say what I was, that I realised that I am in fact a Yugoslav, and that all these other designations—that I am a Bosnian, that I am a Serb—that these things had no meaning to me whatsoever. And from then on I wrote systematically that I was a Yugoslav. It's interesting that most of my colleagues and friends did the same. That was the way it was felt. And when you look at the war of today, it is said that there was genocide. Depending on the propaganda, some will say genocide against the Serbs, some will say against the Croats, some will say against the Muslims. And in all that there is some truth. However, there exists a big genocide nobody talks about: the one against the Yugoslavs. In Yugoslavia, there were 1.6 million Yugoslavs. Today there is not one statistic which accounts for a single one of them. That means that one took away the right to identity from 1.6 million people in the Balkans. That's about the

same number as there are Slovenes. Imagine how it would have been if all Slovenes were stripped of their identity... [...] This was done to all Yugoslavs, you know, to people in mixed marriages, to children from these marriages and so on. They are completely... they are condemned to be people without identity. And that is our... a part of our tragedy, which of course at this moment, in relation to the scale of material damage, the number of human victims, dead, wounded, displaced, refugees, is not paid much attention to. But it will remain a part of the tragedy and the tragic consequences of this war.'

And, indeed, when scanning the narratives of Beograd 'Yugoslavs', I found it striking how often they argued that their Yugoslavness was something 'simply there', something beyond their control, something, well... essential. The same pattern arose in other interviews, for example with Dubravka.

'Where am I from? That is certainly a very complicated question; that question touches upon remembering and opens a whole series of new questions. I say I am from Beograd, and then I explain that that is in Yugoslavia. And because my biography is what it is, I cannot deny that I am a Yugoslav. [...] All people here who are over ten years old were born in Yugoslavia. Nowadays, that country doesn't exist anymore, definitively. And probably it won't anymore... it won't exist anymore. Of course, there are people who have memories and people who don't have them. [...] But that question is an emotional question as well of course. I mean I will *never* be able to say "I am *not* a Yugoslav" and I am not afraid of... that they may say that I am a *Jugonostalgija*. But that is not *Jugonostalgija*, that is a way in which a person has lived for most of her life. I mean I cannot just cease to attach value to something... something which is a constitutive idea of your biography. [...] But it is completely legitimate that I feel that way. You understand?' (Dubravka, a leading dissident artist – interviewed in her theatre)

A similar comment came from Martina, a feminist and a critical intellectual. Previously, she and her family had lived on the cultural-intellectual circuit spanning Beograd and Zagreb. While she had settled in Beograd with the children, their father, a dissident of Dalmatian Croatian background, permanently lived in Zagreb. Over coffee in one of the city's more trendy jazz bars, Martina argued:

'I suppose what I am living now is a post-Yugoslav identity. That is my only identity; I have nothing else. [...] But that does make you wonder about the future... Our children are really fucked up. What will happen to them? Now they are small and they don't really know what's going on. But when they start asking... I don't know what I'll do. The problem is that I know I cannot take it myself. I cannot cope with it.'

Such narratives suggest that Yugoslav identity was something that could not be avoided even if one wanted to. These people argued that they *were* Yugoslavs, and that they *needed* this identity. Yugoslavness, they implied, was a crucial orientation point in their lives, for it related to the context in which they had become who they were. Despite the confusion surrounding the notion during and after the wars those people attempted to retain it as fixed point to cling onto in their personal narratives. Clearly, such a discursive mechanism reflected certain patterns central to nationalist discourses of identification and was often in conflict with the wider anti-nationalist emphasis on individual freedom, voluntarism and responsibility³. Ironically, while these dissident stories of Yugoslavness encapsulated an opposition to the horrors brought about by nationalist essentialisms, they actually articulated a number of elements into moments of a counterdiscourse of essential identification, not unlike those nationalisms. In this sense, it is debatable whether all those people had felt so strongly about their Yugoslav identity *before*. Parallel to what I have argued about the 'simply there' status of national identification in many pre-war everyday lives (Chapter Six), I am not so sure whether Yugoslavness had played such a prominent role. My doubt extends to those

³ We come back to this point later, when discussing the retrospective conflation of 'Yugoslavness' and 'Westernness' in many anti-nationalist narratives.

who, when petitioned in the state census, declared their Yugoslav identity as the primary one. The narratives above indicate that for some people, because of its controversial position, the significance of the Yugoslav label had increased during the last decade, in a similar way to that in which national labels had for others. Particularly at the outset of the wars, this embracing of Yugoslav identification was prevalent amongst Beograd dissidents and figured prominently in people's self-positioning relating to the reigning nationalism. In the chapter on feminism, we have seen how this sometimes led to irritation amongst dissidents in other republics, who felt that the label 'Yugoslav' evaded critical reflection by placing the individual in question on the moral high ground. Those critics pointed out how, as a result of its own essentialism, the assertion of Yugoslavness took on meanings that were not far removed from nationalism, and therefore, had become 'Yugoslav nationalism'.

Although such a tendency was certainly present in some circles, qualification is needed here. We should not forget that those 'Yugoslav' individuals were often rather lone and outspoken critics of xenophobia and nationalism. They were marginalised by the new regimes as traitors, fifth columnists and things much worse—particularly if they were women. Moreover, since many were aware of the contradiction inherent in their position, they were quick to deny its implications by disassociating Yugoslavness from notions of ethnicity. In an interview in her office, Jasmina, the prominent human rights activist, spelled it out for me:

'I lived too long in that country to change my identity now. There were many people in Yugoslavia who felt Serbian or something but they were citizens of Yugoslavia. Well, in a way, I... I felt like a Yugoslav national. But... you also have to distinguish that, you know, there is a difference in the meaning of a being a national, in a... in France or the US, where they're citizens of the nationality of France or of the US, whereas in this country you are *ethnically* identified with a nation, nation equals ethnicity. [...] So it is not the same: it's ethnic here.'

In this sense, the continuation of Yugoslav identification could be seen as an exercise in 'strategic essentialism', in the way that it has been put forward, for example, by feminists and Afro-American activists—perhaps most poignantly by feminist post-colonial critics such as Spivak (1993:3-6).

3.3. strategies and labels of identification

The self-proclaimed *Jugonostalgicari* described in the previous section were certainly not the only people whose personal narratives of the past contained references to the notion of Yugoslavness. However, many people approached this issue in different ways. For example, for some, the rise of the respective nationalisms and the outbreak of war had destroyed the relevance of their identification as Yugoslavs. In an interview on a terrace opposite his flat, dissident writer and leading critic Slavko told me about the current anti-Yugoslav climate and said:

'Of course there was something like a Yugoslav identity. And plenty of people attached a strong meaning to that identity. But it was never really clear what it meant to people. [...] At this moment I think it doesn't stand a chance. Maybe in ten or fifteen years; but now, no way. You know, there is a name for people who like the idea of Yugoslav identity: *Jugonostalgicari*. That is what they call people who feel a kind of belonging to that idea. Me, too, in some way. But it doesn't mean anything anymore.'

Others used the term 'Yugoslav' in a strategic way, in opposition to the Milošević regime, while at other points employing the label 'Serbian' for similar reasons. When, in an interview in her office, I asked Maja, a well-known human rights activist, how she introduced herself to foreigners, she said:

'At some point I used to say "I am from Serbia", and now I have come to say "from Yugoslavia". But... well... when Yugoslavia fell, I felt, let's say a kind of pain because it fell, because everyone was leaving that Yugoslavia, it disintegrated. Anyway, only this regime attempts to keep that name now, so I thought "I can't speak the same as this regime". So I said "I am from Beograd, from Serbia". However, since last year, eh, what's left, Serbia and Montenegro, they represent some, some very different Yugoslavia. [...] Now, this "our" Yugoslavia, which is in fact Serbia and Montenegro, is nothing like the one that existed. But maybe it is not bad that some trace remains, that there will remain some people who call themselves Yugoslavs. For me personally... I like the fact that it is called Yugoslavia, because... because the word Yugoslavia means that it is *not* Serbia, that it is *not* a Serbian state, that it is *not* a country of one people, that... that..., you know, there is no Yugoslav nation. And that... that is closer to sort of my expectation that others, for example Kosovo Albanians will accept Yugoslavia. They will never accept Serbia, meaning, the country Serbia [...], Serbia of the Serbian people. But Yugoslavia doesn't have anything like that in its name; it doesn't have anything Serbian in its name.'

However, later Maja explained that:

'The first time I called myself a Serb, when somebody asked me, was in 1992, when the war was on. It seemed to me that it was important, that the world knew, because it was all seen under the sweep of nationality, also by the regime; ... so I thought it was important that the world knew that Serbian-ness [*srpstvo*] is not something homogenous. That there are differences within it. Before that, I never defined myself in terms of national identity, because I always thought it was my private matter. What was it called again? "Undetermined". That's what I said.'

On some occasions, such strategic deployment of identification labels was taken to other levels, such as in the narrative of the eccentric middle-aged NGO activist Žarana. I just walked in for a quick visit to the NGO where she worked, but she pinned me down on a chair and lectured me for about an hour. Her argument would have caused fury amongst most of her colleagues and certainly amongst those favouring more Serbian or Croatian nationalist solutions.

'The biggest mistake in Yugoslavia was that there was no attempt to create a Yugoslav national identity. The Americans did it—and that was a very, very smart move. I saw these pictures of Americans carrying flags and wearing even trousers with the colours of the flag. Now, of course, we couldn't do that. I mean... if we wore trousers with our flag we would be fascists or so. But in the United States it is possible—and it could have been the same here. [...] If they had only tried. They could have said "Okay, your *origin* is Serbian or Croatian or whatever, but *now* you are a Yugoslav", like the Americans! [...] If I were Tito—Tito was a totalitarian, wasn't he?—well if I were a totalitarian, then I would do what is expected from totalitarians: I would put them all in jail and I would say, "now you all shut up about this nation and that nation [*pulls faces*], and about who had the biggest empire in some ancient history, and about all these things". And I would say, "if you want to be a Serb or a Croat or whatever, you can be that in your bedroom, but not out of it. As soon as you come out, you're a Yugoslav. Because it will destroy the whole society..." That's what I would do.'

However, that is not what Tito did, despite the allegations now made against him by nationalists of different colours. His influence did, however, play a different role in some forms of anti-nationalism—something we will turn to later.

In Zagreb, although to a much lesser extent, some dissident narratives were constructed around similar strategic deployments of 'Yugoslav' and 'Croatian'. However, the label 'Yugoslav' was much more thoroughly discredited in Croatia. After all, more than a third of the republic had seceded and been ethnically cleansed with the support of, and partly by, the 'Yugoslav' army. In the late 1990s, almost nobody with a Croatian background ever declared a 'Yugoslav' identity, and the few people who I heard explicitly do so in public were returning from life in exile. In contrast, amongst

people with a Serbian or a nationally mixed background in Croatia, particularly middle-aged people, the notion of a Yugoslav identity was fairly common. It is often forgotten and conveniently ignored by the nationalist regimes that this had been the case before the wars as well, with a large majority of Croatian citizens with a Serbian background voting for the reformed Communist Party, not for the Greater Serbianists in the first elections (Thompson 1992:129).

On the whole, it seemed to me that people with more or less unambiguous Croatian backgrounds were very unlikely to assert their Yugoslav identity, even their former one, as something 'self-evident'—as opposed to some of the Beograd narratives cited above. Those who *did* recall how they used to think of themselves primarily as Yugoslavs often gave a more explicitly ideological reason. This is understandable given the divergent relations between Yugoslavism on the one hand, and Serbian and Croatian nationalism on the other. In the next section I turn to such explicitly ideological identifications with Yugoslavism. Later I demonstrate that more mundane memories and recollections of Yugoslavness were not only present in Zagreb, but also used in the articulation of anti-nationalist discourses—albeit in more submerged ways than in Beograd. In fact, given the political constellation of 1990s Croatia, I would argue that they provided more radical material for dissidence than in Serbia.

3.4. anti-fascism, ideology and the Yugoslav state

One of the frequent allegations levelled at self-proclaimed *Jugonostalgicari*, and generally against critics who continued to feel any sense of belonging to the notion of Yugoslavness, was that they were simply disenfranchised members of the former *red bourgeoisie*. This was true for some, but in fact, many of the prominent activists against the current nationalist regimes had been harassed, sacked or even jailed for dissident activity under communism. They were keen to point this out, and by clearing the label 'Yugoslav' from stains of collaboration and accommodation with Titoist authoritarianism, they reinforced both their position as critical outsiders and the status of Yugoslavness as the possible core of a counterdiscourse. This is illustrated in this excerpt from the interview with Veljko, a Beograd academic and long-standing dissident:

'You know, when they ask me what I am I answer that I am a Palestinian. And you'll say, why a Palestinian in Europe? Because they took away the state from me in which I lived. Eh, that was a state with a regime that I didn't agree with [before he had told me how he was sacked from university for criticism of the regime, *sj*]. I absolutely do not yearn for that regime, [...] but that state could have been a decent one. The fact that this wasn't the case is due to the authoritarianism of both the first and the second Yugoslav regimes. [...] I know a lot of people in all the new states of ex-Yugoslavia who didn't at all agree with the war. Many of them are Yugoslavs and maybe we didn't do enough to prevent the war, but the question is whether we *could* do something to prevent it. But we know that we haven't done anything that would provoke war or make it worse, and that we haven't in any way taken part in the war propaganda or the war looting. At least *that* I know we haven't done. It's not very much but it's also not little.'

Of course there were people whose attachment to Yugoslav identity could be explained partly with reference to their previous status of privileged citizens. When we look at those who engaged in the development of anti-nationalist alternatives, it is true that many, though certainly not all, prominent figures came from families that had been somehow privileged under the former regime. Interestingly, however, this was also the case for many nationalist leaders, including high government officials: it seemed that many of those who had belonged to the *red bourgeoisie* under the former regime, had quickly acquired the cultural fluency to retain such positions in the new nationalist order. My ethnographic material indicates that engagement in official institutions was simply the way for ambitious individuals to get ahead in the former Yugoslav system. In this engagement, ideological leanings were important for some, but only secondary for

others, as illustrated by a set of life histories collected in Beograd during the last decade of Yugoslavia (Magid 1991). Of course, dissidence existed in those days as well; but it was limited, as was the possibility for any political action outside the realm of the Party.

For a small and predominantly elderly minority, continuing adherence to an *ideological* notion of Yugoslavness provided a nexus around which to construct an anti-nationalist position. Of course, it could be argued that all the previous narratives in this chapter contain such an element, but here I want to look briefly at those people whose engagement with anti-nationalism was embedded in explicit rememberings of anti-fascism. As we have seen, Titoist anti-fascism had been the touchstone of political legitimacy in the former system to the extent that it functioned as an object of taboo. It was precisely in the context shaped by this taboo that nationalist political programs were considered not only undesirable, but also dangerous. After the wars, reference to Titoist anti-fascism was very prominent in Bosnia, but in my fieldwork it was mostly limited to elderly people, such as Branislav in Chapter Six. In order to illuminate the danger of nationalism, he used terms resonant with Titoism. In this way, writer Slavenka Drakulić recounts how only after the end of Titoism did she feel closer to her father, a Yugoslav communist who was now confronted with the 'futility of his life frittered away by history' (1993a:73).

Again, in the late 1990s, this was much more common amongst people with Serbian backgrounds, both in Beograd and in Zagreb, than amongst those with Croatian backgrounds. In Beograd it was fairly self-evident for those Titoists who had resisted Milošević's conflation of Serbian nationalism and Yugoslav communism to assert the continuity of their Yugoslav identity. However, in Zagreb, again ambiguity crept in. Many people who did align themselves explicitly with Titoist Yugoslavism did *not* actually refer to themselves as Yugoslavs. Some had done so in the past, but abandoned this practice with the wars; while others had never done so in the first place. This was illustrated by Ankica, an eighty-plus year old anti-fascist activist. I visited her a number of times in her flat in central Zagreb, and each time she would recall the Partisan struggle and the idealism that had surrounded the building of the new Yugoslavia. Ankica celebrated her Partisan past by continuing to use her *nom de guerre*. She had always declared as a Croat and called herself a patriot. Ankica loved her country and thought this was a duty of all of us. While she told me that she laughed, because it was more common to hear such statements from her opponents, such as leading HDZ figures. She recalled that when she went to Beograd for the first time, immediately after the WWII victory, she was asked: 'Where are you from *drugarica* ['comrade (f)]?' And her answer had always been that she was a full-blooded Dalmatian.

This statement came in the middle of a passionate plea for the relevance of Tito's contribution. Ankica continued that despite the recent propaganda against the former leader she had read in the paper that more than seventy thousand people had called in to support Tito on a TV program, with only some twenty thousand against him. While she admitted that the Marshall had made mistakes, she argued that he had contributed many more positive things. Without Tito, Ankica claimed, they would never have gotten Istra [region then contested by Italy, *sj*]. When I pointed to a picture of Tito on the wall and asked how people reacted to that nowadays, she laughed my question away. People, even some from the HDZ, came around all the time and saw it. And whenever someone would comment on it, she would proudly say: 'That is my war comrade'.

Ankica's story provided an example of the unproblematic compatibility of different layers of national, supra-national and sub-national identification for many people in former Yugoslavia: she defined herself as a Dalmatian and a Croat, and her whole narrative was structured by her positioning as a Yugoslav *Partizanka*. Interestingly, her long exposés about the anti-fascist struggle and her participation in the Partisan war effort permanently emphasised the patriotic meaning of this struggle. This patriotism was felt in relation to Dalmatia, Croatia and Yugoslavia, depending on the enemy in

question, for that was what almost every Titoist veteran brought home to me. For them the Partisan struggle was about defending one's people and one's country (both on different levels) against fascism.

This ideological sense of belonging to Yugoslavia had also been present amongst younger people, often those born shortly after WWII. In Croatia and Serbia it surfaced as a remembered discourse of identification in a range of anti-nationalist narratives that articulated what could be called feminist and leftist concerns. I have mentioned some of the resulting ambiguities in the previous chapter, particularly when analysing the comments of activist intellectual Monika on feminism and internationalism. Vera was another Zagreb feminist whom I met regularly on the NGO scene and on social occasions. In a marathon interview in her flat, she elaborated on the relationship between her political views and her remembered Yugoslav sense of belonging:

'Even before, when I identified with Yugoslavia, that wasn't like state identification. It was a place of belonging but it was more an ideological identification.[...] I mean, before that, until I was about seventeen-eighteen, I was probably a Yugoslav patriot. I had a romantic relation to the Yugoslav concept. Maybe because of my family background [her mother had been a *Partizanka*, sj], maybe because what we learned at school, but also... Mmmm, because I think that that Yugoslavia, at least in certain phases, was... you know ... it was a, let's say an interesting concept. Those ideas were relevant and timely. I mean... what does Europe want now? [laughs – Vera had a running joke with me being 'the man from the EU', sj] Well... it wants what Yugoslavia was doing to a certain extent: some multiculturalism, some real participation of the workers. I mean... there were some good ideas there, like non-alignment and all... I did introduce myself in those days as a Yugoslav. Of course, in sixty-eight I rationalised that and ... I relativised my patriotic emotions. I mean... I wouldn't say that I am a citizen of the world, I don't know, that seems banal and empty. But, you know... maybe I do feel as an... I don't know... as an *apatrid*. In a certain way... I am an *apatrid*. So now I just say... "I am from Croatia"

It should be clear then that ideological Yugoslavness was not strictly related to territory. In this way it is understandable that, in contrast to the suggestions within regime attacks on so-called *Jugonostalgijčari*, very few people would argue for the resurrection of some kind of Yugoslav state⁴. The remembering of 'Yugoslavness' did not include such an argument: a resurrection of Yugoslavia was considered unrealistic, unfeasible and undesirable by almost everyone. Even Ankica, the Partisan veteran, indicated this. She had been through four different states (the first Yugoslavia, the Italian occupation in Dalmatia, the second Yugoslavia and Croatia) and remained rather unphased by it. If they didn't get along with the Serbs, she argued, then they had to split up. Okay, let's have that independent Croatia, Ankica said, but there was no need to fight and kill and burn because of it.

In a form of resignation similar to Ankica's, most self-proclaimed *Jugonostalgijčari* agreed on the impossibility and undesirability of a renewed Yugoslav state. However, they would often argue that a normalisation of relations between the new states was important not just on the level of diplomacy, but also to them personally. Martina, the feminist academic whom I interviewed in a café in Beograd, became very emotional when she spoke about the changes in the last decade.

'I am definitely *Jugonostalgijčarka*. I'll tell you what ... you are now talking to ex-Yugoslavia. That was the way I lived. Mind you, I am not nostalgic for the state. We could have moved towards a loose customs union or something. To eight states or ten states, I don't give a fuck. But ten states with weak borders, where I can easily travel from one place to another. I mean, isn't that what they all want when they say they want to join

⁴ This sheds a critical light on the *Jugoparanoia* of the Croatian government, which I touched upon in the chapter on Balkan orientalism. The territoriality of former Yugoslavia *did* play an important role in a symbolic sense, as we shall see in the next section.

Europe? [*vehemently*] If that's what we wanted, we could have been there ages ago! All this for nothing... the whole war for nothing...!

In a very experiential way, Martina, who used to commute between Beograd and Zagreb had both her professional and her family life broken in two by the end of Yugoslavia, which points to a spatial dimension which was present in many memories of Yugoslavia (see Jansen 1998a; Pavićević 1994).

In what follows I take a closer look at some patterns of remembered Yugoslavness which did not necessarily convey a continued assertion of a Yugoslav identity. Rather, arguing that Yugoslav identification is only one possible way of connecting one's personal narrative with a 'Yugoslav' discourse, I explore some everyday patterns of *Jugonostalgija* in the widest meaning of the term. In a first movement, I look at the appeal of a common Yugoslav cultural space that I have just touched upon. From there, a second step takes us to the idea of *Jugonostalgija* as the assertion of mundane memories of better days through processes of selective remembering. In a last movement, I indicate that *Jugonostalgija* might derive much of its appeal not directly from memories and narratives of the past, but from its role in a pervasive yearning for the good life in the present. Throughout, I hope to demonstrate that, although we must disassociate *Jugonostalgija* from its alleged political ambitions to recreate a common state, it does provide a range of discursive elements for political subversion on the more mundane level, particularly through its articulation with anti-nationalist discursive practice in popular culture and everyday life.

4. *Jugonostalgija* take one: 'at home' in a common Yugoslav cultural space⁵

Most anti-nationalist narratives in Beograd and Zagreb contained references to the new states and to former Yugoslavia in overlapping terms: at some points 'we' and 'here' meant Croatia or Serbia, and at other points it referred to the whole Yugoslav area. Even amongst people who did not feel any sympathy for the old Yugoslavia, there would be a sort of concentric model with one's own state as the core, then the other post-Yugoslav republics and only then 'abroad'. Record shops provide a good example. In Serbia all music from the post-Yugoslav states was referred to as '*domaća*' ['domestic'] and in Croatia a similar situation existed, although Serbian music was officially almost unavailable. In Slovenia, I visited a shop which had a '*domaća*' ['domestic'] shelf with Slovenian music and a '*bivša domaća*' ['former domestic'] one with Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian and Serbian music. Generally when there were foreigners present, the ex-Yugoslav collective category took front stage, and as I have said before, I never heard anybody call citizens from other post-Yugoslav states 'foreigners', except ironically.

Even amongst a group of Beograd teenagers who had hardly experienced the common state, 'foreigners' meant non-Yugoslavs. They had been on a camp in 1994 bringing together young people from all over Europe, and when I asked them about it they told me that there had been problems because the post-Yugoslavs had been hanging out too much with each other. They had constantly spoken in their own language, sang their own songs and so on. The foreigners ['*stranci*'] had felt excluded. The post-Yugoslav kids had realised that they wanted to continue socialising amongst themselves, so the next year they had organised an exclusively post-Yugoslav camp. Anybody who's been involved in organising such events knows that this was indeed a problem with the post-Yugoslavs sitting together, speaking 'their' language, listening to 'their' music and showing little interest in the 'foreigners'.

⁵ Elsewhere I have analysed the idea of the Yugoslav cultural space as 'home' in more detail, with special reference to the work of a number of women writers during the wars (Jansen 1998a).

4.1. Yugoslav bodies in movement

Let us first look at the way in which many people experienced Yugoslavia as a common cultural space through which they moved frequently and freely. This sense of 'being at home' in a Yugoslav space did not exclude the simultaneous existence of other discourses of belonging, as it might incorporate Serbian or Croatian national patterns or be juxtaposed to those. Moreover, sometimes people positioned themselves in relation to other cultural frameworks altogether, for example a local or a 'European' one. The point is simply that people *also*, to a lesser or greater extent, drew on the Yugoslav level: it was possible and attractive for many to imagine the federation as a cultural space with a distinct Yugoslav character.

'Yugoslav culture was the common domain of different cultures and literary traditions which interacted with each other. In practice, this meant that a Yugoslav writer had to know both the Cyrillic and the Latinic alphabet; it meant you lived in Zagreb and had a publisher in Beograd; it meant your books were printed in Sarajevo, and they were read in Ljubljana, Skopje and Priština. In practice, it meant you lived in different cultures and you experienced them as part of yourself.'
(Ugrešić 1995:51)

So, whether declaring their Yugoslavness or not, whether ideologically pro-regime or not, whether nationally 'conscious' or not, many people simply felt 'at home' in Yugoslavia (see for example *Feral Tribune* 14/12/98:4-7; Drakulić 1993a:135).

This was partly reflected in actual bodily movement throughout the territory of the former state. Many people from what could be called the urban middle classes owned a house at the Dalmatian coast or in the mountains, often crossing (invisible) republican borders to reach their property. Academics and professionals in the cultural sector, in particular, occupied posts at universities or institutions in different republics. A continuous flow of interrepublican information provided ways of creating audiences as well as avoiding censorship; for example, government control in one republic could be escaped by publishing in another (Slapšak 1993:101). Likewise, students assessed different application standards, strengths and weaknesses of institutions, and craftsmen and traders ran businesses where market conditions seemed most favourable (*ibid.*:20-21). Furthermore, in the world of sports and popular music, Yugoslavia functioned to a certain extent as one market.

Amongst the people who feature in this study, those who had previously, in their words, lived on the 'Zagreb-Beograd' or sometimes 'Ljubljana-Zagreb-Beograd' line⁶, experienced this common Yugoslav 'home' most poignantly. I found this pattern particularly amongst people who had been born shortly after WWII, often from families with a Partisan background. Most of them were professionals in the cultural or academic world and they would characterise their lifestyles as 'urban' and 'modern'. Zagreb feminist Vera argued in an interview:

'Oh yes, Yugoslav culture existed for me. It existed... like, it existed in difference, in diversity. You know, I lived in "contemporary" culture, if you want, not in what might be called "traditional culture". [...] And, I always felt that I lived on the line Ljubljana-Zagreb-Beograd. So that was a Yugoslav culture.'

Often, this experience of a common Yugoslav cultural space was mentioned as one of the explanations for why the wars had been so horrific, because certain ties could only be broken with extreme violence (see for example *Nedeljna Naša Borba* 01-02/03/97:VIII). In this way, memories of a Yugoslav 'home' became an element of a political argument. The very act of asserting some sense of attachment to the Yugoslav

⁶ Again, this sheds a critical light on the tendency to retrospectively compare 'Croatian' and 'Serbian' experiences, an exercise which would be unable to account for such 'hybrid' patterns.

cultural space sometimes provided a mode of expressing opposition to the nationalist regimes. For example, some Beograd-based human rights and civil society organisations had adorned their offices with paraphernalia from different ex-Yugoslav republics: a Zagreb number plate; a tourist board poster advertising Lake Bled in Slovenia; a Macedonian flag and so on. You would certainly not find a *Serbian* flag here... However, as this chapter progresses, we shall see that more often the remembered Yugoslav 'home' was not articulated in such an explicit way. Tamara, for example, a Zagreb girl with Serbian background was only a child when the war started, but in an interview she said:

'Then, when I was little, it was like... my country was Yugoslavia. Because it was completely normal for me that we spent a part of the summer at the coast, and another part in Bosnia. That was completely normal to me. And we went there for Easter and Christmas and so on... So it was... you know, for me that was simply the same country, Bosnia and Croatia.'

A similar sense of broken-off self-evidence was expressed by two Beograd teenagers in a double interview:

Darko: 'I think that the question is not really so much about whether a state has another number of republics, like, less, and that, but simply that we suddenly are not allowed to be in that other republic, that we have no way of... well we do, but... We have to fill out forms for a visa and so on. And that was once your state, you simply went to the seaside, it's not... it wasn't necessary to apply for a visa, to pay, to wait and to see whether you would get it. And now you have to fill out what nationality you are, which religion, which citizenship... You know, it is different when you suddenly can't... ah, they are people who speak the same language, who have the same songs...'

Veljko: '[*interrupts*]... they have the same names...'

Darko: '...the same names...'

In a similarly mundane way, Rade, who ran businesses that he never specified to me, saw the former state as the background against which he had been travelling Europe during at least two decades. I met Rade in the town of Pula, where he was helping a friend to set up a bar-restaurant. We stayed up until late, and the conversation drifted to 'what it had been like', as it did so often in post-Yugoslav smoke- and bottle-filled rooms. Born in Serbia with a Serbian background but living in Croatia, Rade spoke in very sarcastic terms about Croatia. Fuelled by some alcohol, he fired off a tirade against everything that had happened in the last decade. 'They wonder why I am a *Jugonostalgičar*', he said and then went on to explain that he didn't miss the state but yearned for good places and good times. Raising his voice, he said that he never got drunk so brilliantly as in Novi Sad [in Vojvodina, Serbia, *sj*]. He just wanted them to open up the borders, so he could go where he wanted.

With the end of Yugoslavia, on a practical level, travel became extremely difficult for most inhabitants as legal obstacles and safety issues made border crossings unfeasible. Administrative problems concerning state citizenship and residence status affected large groups of people, particularly those with minority national backgrounds and mixed ancestry. Many people expressed a certain yearning for the openness and freedom to travel that had characterised the Yugoslav past—often while simultaneously pointing out its authoritarian shortcomings. In this way, as we have seen, an important part of anti-nationalist energy was invested in the maintenance, or even creation, of links across the new post-Yugoslav borders.

Bodily movement between different centres in the former state was only one aspect of the experience of a common Yugoslav cultural space, and maybe only a minor one on the grand scale of things. As we have seen, it was crucially important to a number of professionals in the cultural and academic sector many of whom left Yugoslavia during the wars. For other people, particularly in Zagreb, its importance was relative given the

fact that many only rarely left their republic, as opposed to *Beograđani*. This was mainly to do with the fact that one of the central factors in the experience of a Yugoslav cultural space, the Dalmatian coast, the great common Yugoslav summer 'home', was situated mainly in Croatia. These three excerpts from interviews with *Beograđanke* from different backgrounds indicate that:

'Yugoslavia was culturally very diverse. It was always on the margins of East and West, on the border of great empires... and it had a special flavour through that mixture. It really functioned like that: Slovenia, the monasteries, Macedonia, Kosovo, and so on... And the Dalmatian coast, in particular: a common piece of the country for most Yugoslavs. So many people spent their holidays there. We all spend two or three months on the coast ... And especially students and young kids saw this as... You know, actually not many people from Croatia came to Serbia, except maybe intellectuals. But most people went to the coast. So this is really where most young generations met and made friendships and so on. It was... that was maybe enough for building up some common identity or at least a feeling of belonging to space. It is also a sense of identity that you belong to some sort of a cultural space that you share with each other, that you exchange with each other. And, of course it is very important to keep in mind that we understood each other, that the language was the same.'

(Jasmina, a middle-aged human rights activist - interviewed in her office)

'I grew up in Beograd. I was born on the Montenegrin coast, then we came here and I lived in Beograd most of my life. But I spent often whole summers on Istra. And then I worked very often in other Yugoslav cities, and I travelled a lot around the country. My father was a Yugoslav, and my mother was a Yugoslav, born in Split. My grandfather was from Czechia. That kind of people are very common in Yugoslavia. But, you know ..., this is also a question of, ... this is not only a genetic question, the national, but it is also a question of belonging. That..., you know, that country was exceptionally beautiful. [...] Maybe I had more contacts in other republics than most people, but... but at the same time, in the common world, there were also very many contacts, I mean in a world which was not professional... There were people whose life that was, you know. How many mixed marriages! How many people who have family in one part and in another part? How many people who travelled? So many people... [...] I worked for instance in Split. But I know a lot of *Beograđani* who spend their whole lives there. Simply... let's say all of us went to the coast, we all went for summer holidays. Therefore I think... there wouldn't be such a long queue in front of the consulates. I was at the Croatian embassy a couple of days ago. Thousands of people were there. If those contacts wouldn't have existed, there wouldn't have been so many thousands there I don't think.'

(Dubravka, an artist - interviewed in her theatre)

'All that business about Yugoslavia never really having existed ... [*abruptly*] that is really stupid. Of course it existed. I mean, of course it was like that. We all went to the coast for the summer. So many people had a house on the coast... and many, many people still have some relatives in Croatia for instance. [...] As for me... well, I have difficulty getting used to the fact that Yugoslavia is not my country anymore... but, you know, now, so many lines of communication have been broken, and still, so many people have relatives in Croatia. So it's hard to realise it doesn't exist anymore. But of course, that is my problem and I have to deal with it. That is my personal problem.'

(Zorica, an NGO activist with a Croatian background – interviewed on a terrace)

These narratives clearly point to the importance of the Dalmatian coast in the experience of a Yugoslav 'home'. If we see them in conjunction with the previously mentioned stories, it transpires that very few people actually travelled all over the former state, which is, of course, not a typical Yugoslav phenomenon. Places like Macedonia and Kosovo, in particular, were out of bounds for most people. Rather, at least in those retrospective narratives, certain places seemed to play a crucial role in evoking the remembered Yugoslav cultural space through embodied memories of movement. These places had not just been imagined, but actually experienced: the coast was one of them, as were cities such as Ljubljana, Zagreb, Beograd and

Sarajevo. These places had become landmarks—in the memories of those people, they marked a land that wasn't anymore. Later we shall consider other markers of Yugoslavness which are less topographically fixable; language has been mentioned before, and icons of popular culture will come to play an important role in the analysis.

4.2. Yugoslavia as diversity: nomadic aspects of Yugoslav belonging

If many people didn't visit other republics frequently, this did not necessarily prevent them from feeling a similar sense of 'home' in Yugoslavia. 'Home', then, following Dawson and Rapport, could be defined as 'where one best knows oneself' (1998:9). Partly, the discursive construction of a Yugoslav home was a conscious effort of the Titoist regime: education and propaganda strongly encouraged the celebration of 'Yugoslav' unity *and* diversity. During my fieldwork, many people recalled bitter-sweetly how they had been taught at school that their country was by far the most beautiful in the world, uniting the most stunning diversity within its borders. Again, such nostalgia was particularly common amongst middle-aged people in Beograd, and less so in Zagreb. For example, when I went to interview a Beograd artist who asserted a fairly strong sense of belonging to his Serbian-Orthodox background, I was first introduced to his library and his collection of art works. He lived in a beautiful house in the old part of Beograd. After deploring what he saw as the devaluation of the Byzantine legacy because of recent events in the Balkans, he argued:

'I always learned about cultural traditions in the whole of Yugoslavia. It..., you know, it was part of us. And thus, when they destroyed two or three of the most beautiful mosques on the Balkans, I felt that they destroyed something of my country...'

More generally, during my first weeks in Serbia I attended a *Slava* in the beautiful house of Vojislav, a middle-aged doctor from an old Beograd family. A *Slava* is a typical Serbian celebration in honour of the family patron saint, which involves large amounts of food and drink. Not only was the house a showcase of Beograd *bourgeois* style, with its antique furniture, candle holders and a piano, but Vojislav also avidly collected Byzantine and religious Serbian art. In this sanctuary of Serbian-ness, it took only an hour or so before people were singing songs from all over the former state. The woman next to me, whom I'd only just met, leaned back and sighed that I should understand how these songs made them very sad. They made everyone think of when they had been one country, she argued, and since most of them were about forty years old now, it had really marked their lives. I remarked that she was still singing those songs, but she quickly cut me off, saying that, while this might be the case, it felt like stealing now. Others joined in and sighed with her, 'we had such a beautiful country!'

In the former system, multiculturalism, even though sometimes not transcending folkloristic tourist board formats, was seen as an asset and promoted as such through educational, political and cultural institutions. However, many people were quick to point out that they had never been forced into feeling a sense of Yugoslavness. Rajko, for example, a middle-aged intellectual who had grown up in a provincial town in Serbia, argued in an interview in his flat:

'Yugoslav identity is a real identity, it wasn't just Tito's idea. It really existed for a lot of people. We saw Yugoslavia as one country. The first football team that I supported was Dinamo Zagreb, and many people in Serbia supported Hajduk [Split, sj]. And, you know, I didn't support Dinamo because of any pressure or so; I just supported them because they were a team in my country. [...] I mean, the best example is... if you ask people where the border is between Serbia and Croatia and between Serbia and Bosnia, almost nobody knows. I'm telling you... ask them and you'll see. They know it's somewhere to do with a river, but they don't know where it is.'

In a workshop on nostalgia, organised by the feminist anti-nationalist organisation *Women in Black*, many of the stories told by women from all over the former state contained references to this lack of pressure. In fact, it was often in the face of the current *nationalist* pressure that *Jugonostalgija* was the strongest.

'I feel *nostalgija* every time I try to make a list of all the places and cities I used to visit, where I had a deep feeling for the people as well as the landscape. How many friends I have in those places! In my memories I often visit Ohrid, Prilep, Sombor, Osijek, Krsko, Rijeka, Makarska, Mostar, ... Sometimes I visit Čaplje, where I used to spend my holidays, sometimes Sarajevo or Jajce, where I was born, Titograd, Budva... When I think about it I have a feeling of helplessness. I feel Yugonostalgic every time I feel my freedom restricted... in my movements as well as communication. Whenever I want to phone one of my friends and I cannot, or when I want to visit them and I cannot. I miss old Yugoslavia as a place where I could travel and feel free.'
(Žene u crnom 1995:275)

These narratives illustrate how the common Yugoslav cultural space functioned as a two-fold narrative of 'home'. On the one hand, it was the meeting point of diverse cultural patterns in relation to which people positioned themselves; and on the other hand, this diverse context was experienced as part of oneself, of one's background. In fact, the narratives in this chapter indicate that, often, imagining and experiencing of Yugoslavia as a common cultural space was probably a more important factor than actual travel. The Yugoslav 'home', then, was a self-evident background against which everyday lives had unfolded and a reservoir of discursive material for the construction of one's individual narrative⁷. Interestingly, many people referred to the diverse and open character of Yugoslavia as that which made them feel at home in that context. Tanja, a Beograd academic, whom I met up with again in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana, argued that for her Yugoslavia had been attractive because it had allowed for diversity. That is why she had identified with it and felt at home in it. The diversity did not force people in one way or another. But she never thought about that at the time, she added, these things were only clear in retrospect.

Tanja's story makes clear that the sense of belonging to a Yugoslav common cultural space was not always explicitly articulated before. Rather, it was simply the way things were for some people, and only in retrospect did that seem special. In the previously mentioned *Women in Black* workshop, one schoolteacher explained how she felt *Jugonostalgija* for the first time when she saw the new, ethnically cleansed schoolbooks she was going to have to work with. She thought of the old Yugoslav schoolbooks and 'began to feel a link with all those parts of the country, even with those I have never visited or lived in, suddenly all the pictures returned, all the landscapes' (Žene u crnom 1995:276). In this sense, for a number of citizens, the notion of 'Yugoslavia' as a cultural space had allowed for the construction of a nomadic sense of 'home'. By not articulating all its differences into one strict discourse, the common Yugoslav discursive framework had served as a background for movement precisely because of its own diversity and in-between position. Again, the distinct Yugoslav experience was often relativised, not so much in relation to Serbian or Croatian patterns, but with regard to larger frameworks, particularly the 'West'. Some of those people had lived abroad, and many had travelled to Western Europe or North America. The nationalist wars that tore Yugoslavia apart had dramatic effects on this possibility of a sense of Yugoslav nomadism. Through forced disambiguation, a result of nationalist essentialism, those people were robbed of the cultural space that was 'home' to them. Many experienced this as a narrative break in their life story and ended up with a feeling of homelessness at home, as it became very difficult to imagine the

⁷ The life histories of Beograđani, collected by Magid in 1983, suggest that almost all his informants, regardless of political persuasion, considered Yugoslavia as the self-evident discursive background of their everyday lives (Magid 1991).

Yugoslav cultural space as a 'home'⁸. In response to the shrinking of the Yugoslav space, some people expanded their nomadic sense of belonging to a wider than Yugoslav scale. Vera, for example, the Zagreb feminist who had previously 'lived on the Ljubljana-Zagreb-Beograd line', now said in an interview:

'You know... I lost that extremely quickly, easily in a way. To my own surprise... I mean, now I suppose that I live on the Zagreb-New York line.'

For many others, however, 'Yugoslavia' came to stand for a sense of yearning, which, again, sheds a critical light on the territorial aspect of *Jugonostalgija*. If it was mainly the coast and certain cities that had become 'landmarks', this indicates that the Yugoslav cultural space was also, and maybe primarily so for many people, a discursive background against which they had lived the good life. On one of our rare outings to a bar, my friend and Beograd student Aleksandar explained to me that he considered himself very lucky to belong to the last generation of young people in Yugoslavia who had had the chance to travel in their country and abroad. He visited Dubrovnik, Istra and the Montenegrin coast with his parents. In the late eighties, he went to Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Firenze, Amsterdam and so on. People often emphasised that they had been able to travel freely and that now it was almost impossible to get a visa, even for transit. Before wages had been high, and people had lived good lives, Aleksandar said, contrasting this with the current situation. This did not mean that Aleksandar wished to see a re-united Yugoslavia. And here we catch a glimpse of the fact that this wasn't just politically impossible, but it was also unimaginable, for it would involve 'not a spatial but a temporal journey' (Pollock 1994:83). This conflation of dimensions of time and place became strikingly clear in an interview with Dragica, a young Zagreb NGO activist with a Serbian family background:

'Former Yugoslavia doesn't mean anything to me anymore. Not anymore. I think it is completely normal that now all these republics have become states and ... you know, I don't yearn for that. I mean it was great for me over there [*tamo*], it was super, but... you know, things happened and... I don't know, maybe it's better that everyone has their own state now. Probably it is. Everyone can mind their own business...'

Dragica, who grew up and always lived in Zagreb, actually referred to former Yugoslavia as *tamo* ['over there'], which not only testifies to her dramatic experience of 'before' and 'after', but also gives a whole new twist to the oft-quoted idea that 'the past is another country' (Lowenthal 1985).

This means that evoking Yugoslavia as a common cultural home through narratives of the past resonated not just with the topography of the region but also with the remembrance of better times. To put it straightforwardly, in stories of *Jugonostalgija* the years of the past were first and foremost years of the *past*, and in many of the narratives in this study, they featured as *Yugoslav* years. In the next section, I consider this dimension of *Jugonostalgija* as memories of better days.

5. Jugonostalgija take two: remembering better days

As a starting point, let us look at two excerpts from interviews. The first one was with Ivana, a Zagreb girl of mixed background who had lived in the Croatian capital all her life, and who now identified as Serbian. The second one was with Vladimir, a Zagreb human rights activist who felt as little loyalty to Croatia as he had to Yugoslavia before.

⁸ See Chapter Six. Much journalistic, autobiographical and essayistic work has been published, mainly by female writers, on the minute ways this worked in people's everyday lives. For examples, see David & Kovač 1998; Drakulić 1993a, 1996; Iveković et al 1994; Lesić 1995; Luković 1998; Miočinović 1997; Nikolić 1996; Pavićević 1994; Slapšak 1993, 1994, 1997; Ugrešić 1993, 1995.

Stef: 'Can I ask you—do you know what nationality your parents declared themselves as?'

Ivana: 'They didn't declare themselves at all.'

Stef: 'And on official occasions, like the census?'

Ivana: 'Ah, the census [*laughs*]. My parents said they were Martians. They turned it into a joke, and we don't like to talk about these things at all... Because there's always somebody who's hurt or something, you're always on some side or other. So... And, you know, dividing a family... you know, we avoid that theme. It can only lead to bad things. So: we are a family, and there's no such thing as mama is such and such, and daddy is such and such. They are just mom and dad. Bad or good, they are just my parents.'

Stef: 'Does *Jugonostalgija* mean anything in your family?'

Ivana: 'Oooh... My parents are *Jugonostalgijčari*. Because,... you know, thanks to Yugoslavia and that evil regime, they were able to get an education. Both of them came from poor and troubled families, and if there wouldn't have been such a... like, developed social system, they would probably have ended up like their parents... But because they received the opportunity... they feel very grateful for that. On the other hand, they have never been communists, and they have never been in the Party either... They just... I don't know, they,... they just felt that that brotherhood and unity was something very important in their life. So they yearn a lot for those times. I think they would, alright, like... they would be satisfied if Croatia would be a state which cared about its people in that way. You know, if they would know that their children would have the same chances as they had. Maybe then there would be less *Jugonostalgija*. But the way it is now... that is ...'

Stef: 'So it is largely social... like, to do with social and economic things? Or are their cultural factors as well?'

Ivana: 'You know... It's just... It's a memory of their times... When borders didn't exist. When I hear them talk about what they did..., they could travel wherever they wanted, without problems. They were not burdened with ninety percent of the things that I am burdened with. So then I am sorry that I didn't live in that way... So it is yearning for those better times...'

When I asked Vladimir, a Zagreb human rights activist, what *Jugonostalgija* meant to him, he said:

'Listen, I'll tell you a story from the late 1940s. Tito is travelling around the country, meeting his people and assessing how they feel about the changes his new regime is bringing about. When in Bosnia, he sees a farmer who's milking a cow. Tito walks up to him and asks: "How are things, comrade?" And the man answers: "Well, alright, Comrade Tito, not too bad". Tito, a little bit alarmed at such lack of enthusiasm, asks "Well, but surely it is better than before, isn't it?" Says the farmer: "Well, no... it was better in those times, actually". Tito stammers: "But...?". And the farmer says: "Well, in those days, I was a young man!"'

5.1. remembering the times before we were poor pariah's

In both Zagreb and Beograd, time and again people reminded me of the non-political nature of their *Jugonostalgija*. It wasn't the regime they missed, nor the state borders, it was the good times they had had. Very often, this was constructed around a fairly straightforward, socio-economic argument which referred to Yugoslav times as the good old days. Obviously, it is not within the confines of this study to claim any 'hard' economic analysis of *before* and *after*, but on a subjective level, almost all people I worked with during my fieldwork were adamant about this: life had been good, and it certainly had been better than now⁹. This was more outspokenly the case in the Serbian capital, where socio-economic ravage was simply much more tangible. Often,

⁹ This feeling that things had been better went fairly unchallenged by the knowledge of 'bad things' of the past. In the words of Julia Holdsworth, who spoke about nostalgia in Eastern Ukraine: "All things were good, apart from those that weren't" (2000).

like in Ivana's case, people mentioned the previous access to education and other opportunities to 'get ahead'. Such narratives, particularly by people who were born in poor families after WWII, resonated with the optimism and the belief in progress that had characterised those times. And even when people were not explicitly positive about living standards in the past, they would often say that at least it was not quite as bad as now.

Once, when talking with a group of students about the wars, somebody argued that the economic crisis of the 1980s was the main explanatory factor. I hadn't been in Beograd long yet, and another person in the group interrupted the conversation to turn specifically to me. She informed me: 'But Stef, ... it was really good here. Life was really really good in Yugoslavia'. Her friend nodded and added: 'The 1970s and the 1980s were the golden years... You know, before the war we had it so good. I mean... it was *because of the war* that we became so poor!' Then, a third person remarked: 'Yes... I mean, I am ashamed. Look at us... now, we are in the same category as Rwanda!'. Such stories deploring the crisis situation they found themselves in were common amongst young people, who felt they were missing out on the opportunities that their parents' generation had been presented with.

As the mention of Rwanda indicated, many of these younger people referred to the days before the wars in a psychological sense as well. 'Yugoslavia', they seemed to argue, 'was when our country was something to be proud of.' It was the time before shame.

Neven had come to Beograd from a provincial Serbian town for his studies. He was now unemployed and bored with too much free time and too little money. In an interview he summarised the general situation of his country:

'Life was good, you know... wages were a thousand, two thousand German Marks, sometimes more. We had everything we needed. Okay, there was inflation in the eighties, but not like the one of a couple of years ago. I mean I'm not saying there were no problems, but Ante Marković [then presiding over the federal government, s] he wanted to change things... And, it's almost impossible to imagine now, but then, if only we wanted we would have been part of the European Union. There were talks and everything and it would have been no problem. We only had to say yes... imagine that! That was almost 10 years ago... and now we are like 50 years back in time. [...] I mean... really,... look at what we threw away...! I mean, when we were Yugoslavia, we were great in sports. Imagine how they would be now... I mean, say you'd put together the best players of the Croatian and Serbian and other teams in football, volleyball, basketball, waterpolo, etc... What a team they'd make! They'd be invincible!'

Even amongst younger people such narratives were common. I interviewed the teenagers Darko and his friend Veljko in the former's house. Darko was a refugee from a well-to-do Zagreb family who lived in Beograd now.

'*Jugonostalgija*... what does it mean...? I somewhat remember times when we lived better, when my dad made 3000 German Marks a month, when we went on several holiday trips a year, when... I don't know, when one of our sportsmen was a champion in ski jump, he was a Slovene, when there were Olympic Games in Sarajevo, when the basketball team of Yugoslavia was one of the strongest in the world with Serbs, Croats, and so on. So... I mean, there was some sense of togetherness ['*zajedništvo*']. I was too small to remember Tito's times, but I do remember some details and I remember that there was respect and there weren't any traumas and so on. But... you know... if somebody would ask me if I wanted to recreate a Yugoslavia over new, well, I don't think that the war can be erased that easily. Terrible things have happened, years and years of horrible things... and of course, we young people, from our experience, we are far away from that blood and soil and all, but still we went through some kind of evil. I don't think it would be so easy to forgive and forget. [*silence*] But I definitely am a *Jugonostalgija*. You know, I think that at least in basket we would beat the Americans in the Olympic Games [*laughs*]!'

However, at this point his friend Veljko, slightly older and born and bred in Beograd, interrupted:

'You know what, I don't know... Fuck it..., I don't actually believe... you know *Jugonostalgija* irritates me. Okay, it was a brilliant period in which we lived and all, but I think we idealise that time you know. I think we present it as much better than what it actually was, and... you know, if it really was like that, if it really was so good, if there was no nationalism in those times, then I don't believe it would have come to this war. Because, you know, a war doesn't just start like that, now does it? It's not just foreign powers that are meddling and so on. There is something in people as well. We live in cities, you know, and in those urban environments maybe it wasn't felt that strongly, but I believe that in the villages there was some of that... but don't get me wrong, it's a pity of course, and I regret that those times, when we lived so well, have gone. But I don't believe that... let's say... I often think about that, *Jugonostalgija*... and it's running in my head, you know... But would it be a good idea to create a new Yugoslavia? I think that it would not be a good idea, and maybe that is why I don't like that word.'

He then went on to do what many people did: add criticism of Yugoslavia's authoritarian regime, its corruption, its lack of religious freedom and its inability to deal with nationalism. However, as we have seen before, people who criticised the former Yugoslav regime frequently hastened to add that their former state was nothing like the countries of the Eastern Bloc. So did my flatmate Vesna, who had never been charmed by Yugoslavia very much. When I added that many foreigners never saw Yugoslavia as a real part of the Eastern Bloc, but always somewhere in-between, she replied that, no, it hadn't even been in-between. She had really felt that she lived in a free country. Not more or less, but really free. And she had thought it was like that for everyone.

Interestingly, always the same items were brought up to support this discourse of a Yugoslavia which had nothing in common with other 'communist' countries (see also Ugrešić 1995:21, 46; 1993:74; Drakulić 1993a:50). Top of the list was without a shadow of a doubt the freedom to travel. Related to this, many people told me independently from each other that the Yugoslav passport had been one of the most expensive ones on the international black market. The lack of food shortages was sometimes invoked, but more often the topic of consumption was approached from the positive side: a wide range of consumer products was available and many people travelled to Italy or elsewhere to buy durables. Another frequently invoked element was the idea that developments in popular culture were on a par with the 'West', and therefore very different from, say, neighbouring Romania or Bulgaria, where people 'never got to see a Western film less than twenty years old'.

The fact that these examples came up frequently implies that, for many of its inhabitants present in this study, Yugoslavia's specific character was its 'Westernness'. This resonates with Dević's exploration of what she calls an 'all-Yugoslav communication space—a milieu in which two generations of people had been socialised into a Yugoslav version of urban cosmopolitan lifestyles, and into which they projected their cultural status' (Dević 1997:131). Through rapid urbanisation, secularisation and 'Westernisation', this space widened its reach from a small urban elite to large parts of the Yugoslav population (ibid.:147). This sense of a common 'home' had been based on the anti-fascist victory, but it became a self-evident, de-ideologised part of the everyday life experience of many 'little people'. The ethos that pervaded this Yugoslav 'home' was staunchly individualist and a-political, and based upon cultural and consumption patterns inspired by the 'West'. Paradoxically, then, while the republican elites of the Communist Party increasingly asserted their interests in national terms, those who felt a sense of belonging to a Yugoslav cultural space did so in individualist, 'Westernised' terms.

This might partly explain why in the 1990s *Jugonostalgija* amongst such people was more powerful in Serbia and Bosnia than in Croatia. Whereas in the latter country there were slow but certain signs of increasing linkages with the 'West' since the wars,

people in Serbia and Bosnia had little to show for this and therefore seemed to rely more on a remembered 'Yugoslavia' as their access to the 'West'. However, as we have seen in the chapter on Balkan orientalism, this was not always unambiguously the case. For example, when Branka, a young Zagreb activist with a Serbian background, had returned from a visit to Macedonia, she said that she had loved her trip. Branka often complained about her life in Zagreb and she had repeatedly told me about her plans for emigration. However, in Macedonia she had realised that she was in a way attached to this space. In fact, she had realised that she loved it. This was also, she reckoned, because there hadn't been a war in Macedonia and people had therefore 'remained normal', unlike in the other republics. Before she had always liked Bosnians the most, but now she called them 'really fucked up'. In Macedonia, in contrast, people had been warm and not so mean. And, she added, Tito's picture was hanging in so many houses!

It seemed that, for Branka, who was only about fourteen when the war had started, Macedonia had become an icon of *Jugonostalgija*. She had never been there before, but her visit had presented her with something that, in a way, evoked an unspoilt, pure expression of what used to be. Or maybe of what should have been: the good times, 'home'—the point where the familiar and the good met in the experience of Yugoslavia.

5.2. popular culture and memories of the good times in Yugoslavia

Many narratives of *Jugonostalgija* were structured around the familiarity evoked by landscape, smell, photographs, sound and so on. Talking about her feelings of nostalgia, a feminist activist who came to Beograd as a refugee from Mostar, said:

'What I really miss is one river, one bridge which doesn't exist anymore. I miss the sea. I miss the smell of the trees from my childhood. [...] I feel my nostalgia so much, that everything that I loved, everything that was mine, everything that means so much to me—is for me beautiful, the most beautiful... faultless. Maybe such a feeling is not right, maybe that is not the way to survive, but if I did not have my nostalgia, I don't know what I would live on. Everything around me is just a waiting room, for what... I don't know.'
(Žene u crnom 1995:274)

Such narratives were very common amongst people who'd lost their homes and hometowns. But even those who did continue to live in the same place were not free of these feelings of loss. In the words of a feminist activist from Beograd:

'I feel nostalgia for my own city, even when I am in it. In the same way that some cities, which have been destroyed, do not exist anymore, some subcultures have ceased to exist in this city, but in a more subtle way, without bombs. Those familiar places do not exist anymore. I often see my friends. All the people that get on my nerves have completely different political views from me, but because they have a Beograd accent it is important for me to meet them. The Beograd I used to know, has gone.'
(Žene u crnom 1995:276)

Tellingly, subculture and the city figure in the same narrative here. Further on, the same person argued:

'I have never been a Yugoslav, but now I have become Yugonostalgic. I belonged to the generation that read comic books and listened to rock music and was not interested in other forms of culture. That part of the culture was Yugoslav. [...] That whole rock culture was between Beograd-Zagreb. [...] I belonged to that urban culture and I have always claimed that the people from Zagreb were in that sense closer to me than somebody who came—from "Bela Palanka". That smalltown mentality is something I cannot stand. In the whole former Yugoslavia, it was only in Beograd, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Rijeka that we could escape it. One part of my Yugonostalgia is a voice against the killing of that urban culture, because it allows people to be different, to be "crazy", to be eccentric. People

have the right to be so. Actually, I have felt the frustration of the disappearance of Yugoslavia quite unconsciously because some of the things I loved have just disappeared. The stories, the songs, the theatre I loved so much have all disappeared. I never used to have the feeling that these were the things which were very important or Yugoslav as such, but that they were part of the culture I came from.'
(Žene u crnom 1995:284)

I have looked at the discourse of the lost city before, and I have also pointed out Yugoslavia's remembered 'Westernness' as a defining characteristic in those narratives. In this context, it is an interesting irony that much of the popular music, TV series and films which now provided such a strong sense of a remembered common Yugoslav 'home' had also been instrumental in the critique of the former regime—not from a nationalist perspective but from a 'modern', 'rock and roll' position. Most people seemed to remember many of song lyrics, which points us to another important pattern: most of what now represents Yugoslav popular music of the 1980s was made in the cities of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, and in what used to be called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian.

If, as I have argued above, we are dealing here mainly with memories of 'the good times we had', and if those times were experienced as Yugoslav times, at least in retrospect, I believe that popular culture is a crucial factor. Surely the post-Yugoslav situation was not the only one where people's narrations of memories of bliss and happiness were also hinged upon remembered items of popular culture in everyday life, such as songs, food or drink products, comic books, or sports and film heroes. I now propose a look at some ways in which these elements of popular culture feature in narratives of the Yugoslav past.

In the summer of 1997, the Croatian magazine *Globus* published a test under the title 'Are you a *Jugonostalgičar*?' as part of a *Small Lexicon of Jugonostalgija*. The article offered this definition: 'Nostalgia for certain symbols from former Yugoslav everyday life, particularly from Tito's time' (*Globus* 22/08/97:81-90)¹⁰. The nostalgia test referred to a whole series of popular culture items from Yugoslav times: pop music, film, TV series, a soft drink, comic books, magazines, certain food products, football, a car model and even a brand of refrigerators. Interestingly, while writing this down, even though I don't mention any names, I know for a fact that every person with a post-Yugoslav background knows fairly accurately which precise products I am referring to. There were very few Croatian products there, apart from some elements from the world of popular arts, which were inextricably linked across republican borders anyway. The reason lies in the specific politics of remembering which took shape in Croatian nationalism. As I have argued before, this had first implied a process of demonisation of memories of Yugoslavia, depicted as Serbian-imposed, and later a creeping exoticisation of Yugoslav cultural elements—but still with an emphasis on their presumed foreign character. Ironically, it was in the most North-Eastern republic, the 'least Yugoslav' part of Yugoslavia, that exoticisation seemed furthest developed and most acceptable. In Ljubljana, there is a bar called *Nostalgija*, which features political kitsch, postcards and photographs from the old Yugoslav days, including items from Serbia and Bosnia. It is in Slovenia that some people came up with the idea to start a web page in honour of Tito (www.titoville.com), a parody on hagiographies of the Marshall and an ironic testimony to the Yugoslav past. It was in Ljubljana on the man's birthday that I met Tito, or a very good impersonator, waving from his limousine, shaking hands, patting children's heads and addressing the amused crowds in typical style and communist jargon.

Because of Croatia's 'fear of the past', as one journalist put it (Gall 1998b:51), this was unthinkable in 1990s Croatia. Rather than relativise or parody the meaning of symbols of Yugoslav times, Croatian nationalism was articulated around a *belief* in the power of

¹⁰ In its tabloid days, *Globus* itself had been in the forefront of nationalist attacks on any kind of dissidence, denouncing people as *Jugonostalgičari*, and even claiming to have invented that label.

these symbols (Perišić 1998). In Serbia, of course, the situation was different, since the never-ending ambiguity of regime discourses hovered between endorsing Yugoslav continuity and condemning it. Ironically, a common feature of post-Yugoslav politics was the fact that, while nationalist politicians could meet on a regular basis and even strike deals in American air bases, any kind of *rapprochement* on the level of sports or the arts—let alone the family—was always subject to uproar...

However, it was precisely in the domains of everyday life and popular culture that memories of Yugoslav times existed most profusely. In an interview in a small youth club, interestingly with Croatian rock music playing on the stereo, a Beograd teenager recalled his first youth camp with young people from other post-Yugoslav states:

'The first time there were some tensions. There were us and Croats, no Bosnians. And we were simply waiting for the others, watching what they would do... Somehow we were all waiting and looking: will they make the first move towards coming together or... And it ended like... the first night, the Croats took a guitar and started to sing a song of a singer from Beograd, and then we joined in and like that... So it began. So maybe for ten hours or so there was no contact, but then everything went normal.'

In Beograd, Yugoslav music from the 1980s was aired in all its varieties. For example, one of the theme songs of the 1996-1997 demonstrations against Milošević was a remake of an old Croatian pop song. However, I remember exactly on which occasion I heard Serbian Yugo-rock from the 1980s for the first time on a public occasion in Zagreb. It was at a party attended mainly by twentysomethings, and the people I was with, *Zagrepčani* from a variety of backgrounds, were as stunned as I was. This was unheard of; for so many years they had listened to this music only in the privacy of their flats and here we were, partying the night away on a long playlist of 1980s songs from all over the former state. I must have been the only one there who didn't know at least ninety percent of the lyrics. This music, evoking memories of the common Yugoslav good times, is also being played on stereos worldwide—wherever youngish post-Yugoslavs have set up new lives.

The 1990s war has scattered hundreds of thousands of refugees and émigrés (wherever the thin line between may lie) all over Western Europe, North America and Australia. As in the case of those who stayed behind, there were at least as many post-Yugoslav narrations of past and present as there were individual migrants: some had joined established diaspora communities and some hadn't; some had articulated extreme nationalism into their personal narratives; and others had developed dissident stories of themselves and of the Yugoslav past and present. However, while these differences existed, it should not surprise us that some of the strongest expressions of *Jugonostalgija* were to be found in the diaspora. Many people narrated their personal process of leaving the country precisely in terms of preserving some sense of individual continuity¹¹.

This is not a study of post-Yugoslavs abroad, but in my experience there were strong indications that the symbolic effectiveness on a personal level of *Jugonostalgija* was actually much more developed in the diaspora. These people were further removed from the day-to-day realities of post-Yugoslav national discretisation and internal homogenisation. They were actually able to form social relations with other post-Yugoslavs of a different national background, which was much less feasible in the respective 'homelands'. Through the narrative re-creation of a remembered Yugoslav 'home', they engaged in the construction of a post-Yugoslav sense of belonging. One explicit and far-going example is the Cyber Yugoslavia web site ([ww.juga.com](http://www.juga.com)), which reflects many of the previously mentioned tensions of Yugoslav identification and aims to reintroduce some voluntaristic sense of Yugoslav belonging. The opening statement on the web site reads as follows:

¹¹ As in the interviews with well-known emigrants Ugrešić and Furlan in *Feral Tribune* (05/10/98:38-39; 14/12/98:4-7) or in the notes by another one (Šnajder 1997:42).

'This is Cyber Yugoslavia. Home of Cyber Yugoslavs. We lost our country in 1991 and became citizens of Atlantis. Since September 9, 1999 this is our home. We don't have a physical land, but we do have a nationality, and we are giving CY citizenships and CY passports [sic]. Because this is Atlantis, we are allowing double and triple citizenships. If you feel Yugoslav, you are welcome to apply for CY citizenship, regardless of your current nationality and citizenship, and you will be accepted. Please read our Constitution for the details. If you are just curious, you are welcome to visit us as tourists.

This land will grow as our citizens wish. Neither faster, nor slower. Neither more, nor less. So, this site will always be under construction. For a solid country to grow, even a virtual one, it takes some time. When we have five million citizens, we plan to apply to the UN for member status. When this happens, we will ask 20 square meters of land anywhere on Earth to be our country. On this land, we'll keep our server.'

In May 2000, Cyber Yugoslavia counted over 12,000 virtual citizens. However, as in the actual post-Yugoslav states, people in the diaspora narrated *Jugonostalgija* in a variety of ways, articulating many of the elements of popular culture mentioned before: sports, literature, comic books, seaside memories and, of course, pop music (*Feral Tribune* 05/10/98:38-39). Again, memories of the good times in Yugoslavia were articulated with a deterritorialised yearning for a better life (Buden 1998b). And again, I believe, the personal and political relevance of this *Jugonostalgija* lay not so much in its portrayals of the past, as in its status of critical comments on the present.

Let us now briefly revisit something I have referred to in Chapter Eight: a Darko Rundek concert that I attended in Zagreb. I explained before how the recent songs of this Zagreb singer resonated with themes and styles associated with 'Balkan', and I argued that this indicated the possibility to articulate some lines of a Balkan orientalist counterdiscourse. I want to come back to this here, because I believe that his specific counterdiscursive potential was related to his previous position and to more general evocations of *Jugonostalgija*. Rundek, who moved to Paris during the war in Croatia, was an icon of the 1980s YU-rock scene, popular all over the former state. Not only was he a famous singer, he was also known as a critic of the previous regime, which added to his credibility as a dissident voice during and after the war as well. The Zagreb gig took place in a small club, with an urban, subcultural reputation spilling over from the times of the former regime. It was packed, and the audience consisted largely of people in their twenties and early thirties, i.e. the generation for whom 1980s YU-rock was most likely to evoke memories of the 'golden years'. Even I was thrown back to my teenage years, with the deejay before and after the concert almost exclusively drawing on albums that have featured in my own record collection since those days. The atmosphere was unlike that at any other gig I attended in Zagreb since Rundek's pitch-black humorous songs resonated unashamedly with memories of the 'good times we had'. And I would argue that precisely because his lyrics dealt with everyday memories—with harmless, recognisable items of a past which happened to be a Yugoslav one—Rundek deployed *Jugonostalgija* in a subtle, but ultimately, subversive way. Resonating with memories of everyday life *before*, his performance was a wildly exciting, as well as a strongly gripping, event. As such, it represented a truly enjoyable kick in the face of the official politics of amnesia.

In this way, 'Yugoslavia', was not so much a geopolitical configuration, but the context in which personal memories of the everyday made sense. Certain items of Yugoslav popular culture then served as metaphors which evoked the 'good life' from those days. Even when it was Tito who was remembered, this was done largely through popular culture and everyday life memories. And as we have seen before, 'good times' meant memories of relative affluence, but particularly memories of days *different* from now. *Jugonostalgija*, then, brought together memories of the times before the war, before the chaos, before the poverty. It meant people 'remembered a time when they had a home, peace, furniture, more or less developed social security; a time when war was an abstract noun, and the word neighbour didn't mean enemy' (Stojić 1997:4).

6. Jugonostalgija take three: yearning for a better life

Nostalgia, argue Chase and Shaw, becomes particularly prominent when the present is experienced as difficult or unsatisfying and people retreat into the private sphere because they feel they have little or no impact on public life (Chase & Shaw 1989:3). In this sense, it could be argued, *Jugonostalgija* was an escapist strategy, allowing people to forget about the reality around them through the construction of a rosy past. Now, while this might contain more than a grain of truth in many cases, I would argue that in the specific context of Beograd and particularly Zagreb in the late 1990s *Jugonostalgija* also provided a reservoir of material to be incorporated into critical comments on the present situation. First of all, it brought with it a vocabulary and a style which was per definition seen as oppositional by the regimes. Secondly, when articulated with anti-nationalist discursive practice, it also provided a counterpoint to nationalist amnesia and selective remembering through 'yearning'. Thirdly, this 'yearning' could then inform practice. In the introduction to her collection of cultural criticism, bell hooks argues that the notion of 'yearning' could function as a much-needed bridging mechanism between the longings, the desires and the fantasies of everyday life, and the struggle for political change. By conceptualising a shared space and sentiment of 'yearning', hooks proposes, we can access a common ground where a host of different desires might meet and be articulated into a potential dynamic of change (hooks 1991).

Making this leap into the unknown means a further step in the build-up of this chapter. I began my analysis of *Jugonostalgija* by arguing that, in most cases, it was not the memory of a state or a political system, but of a somehow nomadic sense of 'home' in a common cultural space. Then I explained how this remembered 'home' was reconstructed through everyday life memories of 'the good times we had', in opposition to the 1990s situation, paying particular attention to the importance of popular culture in those narratives. Finally, in a third step, I now argue that *Jugonostalgija* often contained a large element of 'yearning' for a better life *tout court*. In other words, I believe that many people did not or not exclusively experience nostalgia for a lost 'home' in the golden years but rather a yearning for an anti-nationalist 'home' that didn't and doesn't exist anywhere in reality—a 'home' in a better, utopian future at best, or in a parallel universe at worst.

Particularly in anti-nationalist narratives *Jugonostalgija* evoked the times before the hatred, before the violence, before the madness. Times less complicated, less politically repulsive and not yet contaminated by nationalism and war. Times more manageable. As I have argued in Chapter Six, this often led to the construction of what I have called 'stories of innocence', narratives of what life was like 'before the fall'. In Stojić's words: 'Yes, it's a fairy tale, but it's much more acceptable than this nightmare around us, through which we slowly pull our tired bones, alone and no use to anyone. Nostalgia is the only feeling in which we experience the fullness of our selves.' (1997:4; see also Lowenthal 1989). We could then argue that, by referring to things 'Yugoslav', people constructed themselves a 'home' which was not just based on the overwhelmingly nationalist context around them, allowing them to create a fuller sense of self. Now, as we have seen, such anti-nationalist discourses articulating *Jugonostalgija* were predominantly formulated in terms of memories. Through narratives of the past, people expressed a longing for certain patterns of continuity. In the words of a Beograd artist, taken from an interview in a Croatian paper:

Q: 'Finally, tell me, what is really your political position today?'

A: 'If you really want to..., my political position could be called Yugoslav, although ... My position is a position of continuity; of everything which is today compromised and proclaimed "betrayal". Nationalists permanently talk about how they have preserved something, and how they want to achieve something great in the name of the nation—but in fact they haven't achieved anything at all.'

[...]

Q: 'What do you understand under the concept of *jugoslavenstvo*'?

A: 'I think first of all of stopping racism, hatred and the ongoing mutual persecution. As long as it doesn't come to that, it will be very difficult to live—be it in individual countries or together.'

(*Feral Tribune* 05/10/98:48-49)

The words of this self-proclaimed *Jugonostalgičarka* make clear that even for someone who strongly identified with the notion of a past Yugoslav 'home', its relevance in 1998 lay just as much, if not more, in its oppositional potential to the present circumstances. Throughout this chapter, most narratives have pointed to such a counterdiscursive angle in *Jugonostalgija*, even when constructed around narratives of a past that has been lost forever. In some cases, as we have seen, the sense of a 'Yugoslav' home had not been important before at all, but only now this remembered discourse became a badge of resistance because of the politics of remembering and forgetting enforced by the regimes. Whether official policies relied mainly on amnesia (as in Croatia) or on an ambiguous combination of amnesia and incorporation (as in vampire-Serbia), *Jugonostalgija* functioned as a dissident discourse for many people in many different ways.

Even amongst a generation of people who were too young to have more than vague childhood memories of Yugoslavia, it could provide an imaginary point of reference. This allows us to see the contours of a frightening and uncanny parallel. In the first half of the 1990s, eighteen year-olds had taken up guns to shoot their neighbours, constructing their narratives around memories of WWII, of which they had no individual recollection. During the late 1990s, other youths partly relied on the imaginary past of a common Yugoslav 'home' in order to formulate their dissident narratives of self and society. *Jugonostalgija* allowed people, even those with few personal memories of the Yugoslav past, to relate their individual narratives to a larger imagined context which was not the current nationalist one. In this way they constructed a sense of continuity of their personal story with a past that was officially 'forbidden' in the new state of affairs. Therefore, the political relevance of *Jugonostalgija* for most people was not any real longing to go back to anything, but rather, it lay in the light it shed on the present. The political point, then, was not what it said about the Yugoslav past, but about the post-Yugoslav present.

Importantly, *Jugonostalgija* did not just surface in bouts of miserable moaning about loss and past glory. Quite the contrary, the memories of the Yugoslav 'home' provided material for fun and humour, whether they referred to an individually remembered or imagined past. Paraphrasing the official discourse of the Croatian regime, my Zagreb friend used to laughingly refer to the Yugoslav past as 'the time of darkness and abundance'. In another example, on a day-long walk with a mixed group of Zagreb twentysomethings, two topics dominated the conversations: sex and Yugoslavia. I won't go into examples of the first item, as this is surely beyond the scope of this study and can hardly be said to be a post-Yugoslav exclusivity. *Jugonostalgija* was played out in many different ways: pioneer stories; songs and references to what constituted a good pioneer; dramatic recitals of socialist poetry; paraphrasings of the Partisan moralistic ethos ('Children, always when it was difficult for the Partisans, they would sing a song!'); and Tito, of course (who 'could be kissed by the first one to reach the top of the hill'). The tone was always highly ironic, and the general line was that life under totalitarianism had been hell for them. Some younger people passed us, and one person in our group—himself a Bosnian in his late twenties who now lived in Austria—shouted at them that they should enjoy life while they were still young. 'Ah son', he cried pathetically, 'my youth was nothing like yours! It was destroyed by the communists! I have never known freedom!' It is important to see this in context. The mass media permanently brought testimonies from 'former dissidents' who supported their allegiance to the Croatian nation by reference to their past sufferings. A parody like the

one above, therefore, provided a comment on the present situation in Croatia, as well as a plain bit of fun with memories of a common 'home' as one of its backgrounds. A lot of the humour was hinged upon the legendary figure of Tito, particularly amongst people who had still been children in 1980, the year of his death. People would talk about him in many different ways: respectful, derogatory, favourable or angry, but often a combination of these. They would recall his public performances, their pioneer days, the mourning on the day he died, certain lines they learned at school, songs to his praise, the yearly all-Yugoslav relay-race in honour of his birthday and so on. The authoritarian sides of the Titoist regime were not elaborated upon very often in anti-nationalist discourse because their significance seemed to pale in the light of the present situation. Joking about the past seemed to be yet another way of coping with the extreme sense of discontinuity that most people were facing. A common feature in many anti-nationalist narratives was an underlying sense of relativity and good humour—a looking back in irony, rather than in anger. This reflected a characteristic of almost all articulations of *Jugonostalgija* with anti-nationalism: a bitter-sweetness.

7. popular culture and everyday lives: the Balašević phenomenon

In this section, which also functions as a sort of conclusion to the chapter, I focus on a phenomenon surrounding one man: Đorđe Balašević, or Đole (or sometimes Đoko), as he is affectionately known to his fans. In many ways, Balašević evoked a number of discursive elements that I have explored in this study. This included a fierce resistance against being categorised, a pronounced emphasis on 'European' and particularly 'urban' values, a matter-of-factly ironic attitude with regard to language and post-Yugoslav differences, a hatred of turbofolk and, as I argue in this section, an extraordinary preoccupation with continuity¹².

'I belonged to another people, and I haven't found my people yet in all those divisions.'
(Balašević in *Globus* 15/01/93:21-22)

Balašević was always and everywhere depicted as the ultimate icon of *Jugonostalgija*, and his music, particularly the lyrics, played an important role in the lives of many people who would be charged guilty of *Jugonostalgija* by their nationalist regimes. It is in this respect, and only in this one, that I would like to have a closer look at the Đolemania. I am not trying to understand his popularity in general, but I hope to shed a light on how he became such a significant figure in many people's narrative constructions of (dis)continuity with the Yugoslav past.

Partly, this had to do with continuity on a very straightforward level. A singer-songwriter from Novi Sad, Vojvodina, a historically very mixed region in between Serbia proper and Hungary, Balašević was one of the most well-known artists in Yugoslav popular culture before the wars. As such, he provided a channel of direct continuity with the former Yugoslav cultural space. The man toured the whole of the former state and sold high numbers of records in different republics. In songs, interviews and writings, he always presented himself as a Yugoslav and did so until he argued that it had become impossible because of the wars. Unlike many of his colleagues, he then distanced himself from the rising tide of Serbian nationalism and became an outspoken critic of war and the different nationalisms throughout.

In the 1990s, Balašević still never performed for less than sold-out venues. He must have been one of the best-selling artists on the black market in Croatia, and he was

¹² All of this emerges from almost every interview or extracts from conversations with Balašević that I have come across. For examples, see Buden 1998; Gall 1998a; *Globus* 15/01/93; Jovanović 1998; Jović 1996; *Nacional* 16/12/98; *Nedeljna Borba* s.d.; Senjanović; Slapšak 1997:140-143; Tatalović 1998. For loads of info, lyrics, correspondence, and a series of transcribed interviews (all in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian), see his fan club's web site: <http://www.oaza.co.yu/muzika/djole/>

probably one of the most popular singers amongst post-Yugoslav youth, both at home and in the diaspora. He didn't play in Croatia, but his yearly Slovenian concerts were always attended by thousands of people who'd come there from Croatia especially for the occasion.

Although this explicit aspect of Yugoslavism and anti-nationalism certainly was important, I would argue that it was only a secondary one. Yes, Đole's more recent lyrics contained references to the old times and to the narrative break that characterised so many lives. But although he sometimes relied on directly subversive political discourse about the war and about nationalist madness, usually he preferred a sort of popular-poetic language, rich in references to everyday life. In fact, as Balašević himself liked to say, he was just a *chansonnier*, a *troubadour* who brought people songs—often love songs, romantic ballads. So where did the *Jugonostalgija* factor come about in his songs?

A first aspect, I would argue, was the very fact that he continued to perform and that people continued to listen to a whole series of songs which he had been singing before the break-up of the former state. Secondly, Balašević's lyrics, even when they did not explicitly deal with things related to former Yugoslavia, were almost without exception formulated in terms of memories. Memories of youth, of love won, but more often of love lost and simply of mundane life in general, all phrased in strongly experiential terms. In this way, for a large number of people from different backgrounds, Đole's songs provided a sort of soundtrack to memories of everyday life. And again, that everyday life, for those people (and for all citizens of the former state to a certain extent), had unfolded against a 'Yugoslav' background—however this background might have been evaluated. Therefore, in a highly stylised way, Balašević's work seemed to evoke some elements of *before*, both to his numerous fans and his equally numerous opponents (Gall 1998a:32).

However, reflecting the structure of this chapter, there was a further twist to the story (see Buden 1998a:36-38). Đole's concerts were notoriously hysterical affairs, with people travelling across borders to cry their hearts out on the sound of his simple love songs. And, interestingly, this included young people, teenagers, who couldn't possibly have a lot of individual memories of life in former Yugoslavia. Surely, those teenagers were not seeking to travel back in time to a past that they never knew. Again, it is not my intention here to explain Balašević's success, as I believe that just the act of crying their heart out might well be a crucial reason for people to attend a gig. However, indirectly, the man's popularity amongst those younger fans also seemed to resonate with a specific kind of *Jugonostalgija*, which allowed them to position themselves in relation to an imagined 'Yugoslav' background. Having grown up in a situation of dramatic discursive shifts, war, chaos and selective amnesia, they incorporated some evocations of this imaginary background in an attempt to narrate their own personal, emotional form of continuity with a past that was *not* theirs and that was 'forbidden'.

In this respect, the relevance of this *Jugonostalgija* evoked by Balašević lay in the ways it made visible some patterns in the present reality. This was to a large extent a purely emotional-imaginary phenomenon, and the regime's attempts to detect political pamphleteering in these little songs about love lost were in vain. People attended his concerts and played his songs endlessly on social and private occasions for emotional reasons. Đole's job, so he and his fans knew, was to break their hearts, provide them with a lump in their throat and make them whisk away a tear, not to engage them in a political initiative. As a result, from certain anti-nationalist perspectives, he was sometimes accused of encouraging passivity, victimology and fatalism. In a roundabout way, these critics argued, Balašević was the ultimate pseudo-subject, as discussed at the end of Chapter Six, a man who represented all the politically ineffective characteristics of the *palanka* (Jovanović 1998:32). While there probably were such elements present, I would argue that precisely because of his non-political image there was an extraordinary political significance in his popularity.

In this context, the cultural critic Boris Buden argued that the primary political relevance of Balašević's concerts was often not even located in the place where they were actually held. For example, his legendary first concert in Sarajevo after the war, in the spring of 1998, was a matter of great debate in the media in neighbouring Croatia. Although the man was performing in Bosnia, Buden argued, this gig carried enormous political significance in Croatia where the argument against him having concerts there was that he came from 'the aggressor state'. In other words, while Balašević was welcomed in Sarajevo, which had been under siege by Serbian artillery for three years, in Croatia the wounds of the Serbian attack on the homeland, so the official line went, were too fresh. They hadn't had the chance to heal yet, and it would be 'too painful to see the Croatian youth singing along with a Serb about nostalgia for a fallen Yugoslavia' (Buden 1998a:38).

'Balašević as a purely cultural phenomenon has opened new spaces of political freedom. [...] Today, Đorđe Balašević is the name of the greatest post-Yugoslav cultural-political paradox: with him on stage autonomous modern culture is more political than politics itself!'
(Buden 1998a:38)

In Croatia, moreover, Balašević was deemed unacceptable because of his sheer acceptability: this middle-aged softie in jeans and trainers could not possibly confirm the stereotype of Serbs as, per definition, monstrous *Četnici*. Whereas interviews with Milošević's men or with other extremist Serbian nationalists were regularly published in the state media, a man like Balašević couldn't feature as easily. This was because he would remind people of 'the fact that some Serbs are normal, and that they were normal before as well, and that they have a common "better past", and maybe even a dream of a common better future' (Gall 1998a:47). However, the post-Yugoslav regimes were fairly powerless in the face of his popularity. Even if they could attempt to stamp out patterns of similarity, break off lines of communication and destroy multicultural cities and villages, they could not wipe out everybody's identification with his/her own everyday past, whether imaginary or not.

[chapter eleven] anti-nationalism and individual narratives

then again,
we can only meet ourselves
at an unexpected bend in the road

Eugène Ionesco

wearing badges is not enough
in days like these

*Billy Bragg – Days Like These*¹

In this brief concluding chapter, I take up some lines of thought that run through this study but that haven't been spelled out in a systematic way. Particularly, I propose a brief look at the role of individuality and the notion of 'personal identity' in relation to the specific ethnographic material presented throughout. Rather than wanting to take on a series of debates that have raged for at least a couple of centuries, I merely hope to indicate how this study, a particular combination of theoretical concerns and ethnographic rootedness, touches upon such issues. In doing so I bring together the main themes of this text and thereby attempt to integrate some ideas into a more or less coherent narrative. This is not to say that there are no other ways to do so, nor do I want to close off other interpretations. Rather, I explicitly aim to leave a number of loose ends, but I hope to provide the reader with a set of loose ends which are interesting for further critical engagement.

1. is that all...? summing up some central themes

This study of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism as a set of discursive practices has constructed its own object, not in a surreptitious way, but purposively and explicitly. The focus on anti-nationalism as a discursive practice, rather than on 'anti-nationalists' allowed me to indicate how different citizens of the post-Yugoslav states deployed, reinforced, modified or undermined those discursive practices to differing extents. Also, I have shown that they did so in a variety of ways, for a wide number of reasons and with different goals, if any, in mind.

My choice to approach anti-nationalism as a discourse which provided subject-positions for contextualised, dissident narratives of self is not, I hope, simply a result of some fashion-conscious preference for post-structuralist vocabulary—although it would be silly to assume that I could have written the same text, say, fifty years ago. The discursive focus was partly the result of the nature of deterritorialised multi-sited fieldwork. I have traced a range of cultural-political practices and flows of meaning which could not be located in any particular place, although I have tried to demonstrate their divergent relationships to places in the former Yugoslav states, and particularly to Zagreb and Beograd. The choice to engage in such multi-sited research, however, was also partly a *result* of my initial borrowing of insights from post-structuralist social theory, in trying to analyse post-Yugoslav nationalisms as discursive practices. Chapters One, Three and Four, in which I attempt to locate the *altérité* of anti-nationalism in relation to some central aspects of Serbian and Croatian nationalism and in the light of Titoist nationality policies, bear clearly distinguishable imprints of this attempt.

¹ Billy Bragg, from *The Peel Session Album* © 1991 Strange Fruit Records.

The bulk of this study looked at the 'resistance' side of the story, focusing on the narrative mechanisms which people deployed in order to locate themselves in opposition to the dominant nationalist discourses. This included an analysis of the ways in which they more or less strategically positioned themselves in relation to a number of related discourses that were particularly influential in the post-Yugoslav context. In this way, I examined in detail the meanings surrounding the urbanity/rurality dualism and the central place of the cultural construct 'the City' in the critique of nationalism and war, with the latter often being understood in terms of rurality and 'peasant culture'. On another level, I explored anti-nationalist engagements with the symbolic geography of Balkan orientalism and pro-European discourses. Both the village/city and Balkan/Europe dualisms were critically analysed in terms of counterdiscursive strategies of negative self-definition. Also, with women playing a central role in anti-nationalism, I unravelled some of its articulations with feminism, thereby attempting to include a sensitivity to the situated meanings of discourses of women's rights and women's solidarity.

Throughout this study, I have relied predominantly on ethnographic material of a narrative character. This is partly because of my personal affinity with the verbal, with the power of words in all respects and because of my fascination with the subtleties of different languages. However, I would certainly not argue that words exhaust human experience, and I would feel all the poorer myself if they did. Still, as I have argued, there were certain reasons for the narrative emphasis of this study, which transcended my personal obsessions. The matter of access in a situation of polarisation was one of them, as was the particular character of some of the issues explored in this study, such as people's positionings in relation to dominant discourses of identification. Most importantly, however, the post-Yugoslav context was one of heightened narrativity, forcing some people and enticing many others, who might have remained silent in other situations, to 'speak out', to locate themselves explicitly in national terms. As a result, paradoxically, my focus on narration also brought about a sharper sensitivity to the role of silences and discursive 'black holes' (see also Jansen 2000b). Specifically, I attempted to highlight the critical role of strategic *non-narration* in anti-nationalism.

Through the centrality of narrative, notions of (dis)continuity came to play an important role in this study, with contested narrations of past and present taking shape both on the level of the self and that of state and/or nation. In particular, I uncovered patterns in the ways in which people, individually and in solidarity with others, established a non-dominant sense of continuity within their biographies in order to cope with a defining narrative break. When we see anti-nationalist discursive strategies of articulation and inversion in this light, a closer look at the contested meanings of memory, of remembering and forgetting, becomes necessary. Particularly, I analysed the mechanisms that structured narratives of self in relation to individual memories of everyday life and popular culture in former Yugoslavia. This resulted in a critical analysis of the controversial notion of *Jugonostalgija*, attempting to disentangle and re-entangle some of its cultural-political potential.

Within the previously sketched theoretical framework, this implied a critical look at the idea of national identity itself. There was a trap ready for me there. So many approaches to the post-Yugoslav conflict state at the outset that national identities are socially constructed and then disregard this insight in the remainder of their analysis, turning a blind eye to the ways in which it problematises the use of such notions. In contrast, I analyse anti-nationalist narratives of the meanings of national identity *before* and *after* and explore how they (re)constructed its current status in relation to its previous importance or lack of it. As a result, I referred to 'Serbs' and 'Croats' only when this was a label deployed by the person in question or when addressing a situation in which this label played a determining role in the experience of that person, whether by choice or in spite of it. On other occasions, if using a collective category at all, I have preferred to use the term 'citizens' or *Zagrepčani* and *Beogradani*, reflecting the emphasis on 'citizenship' and on 'urbanity' in many anti-nationalist narratives.

2. 'a person as a person'

Throughout this study, I have demonstrated that a notion of individual continuity was a central mechanism to many discursive practices of anti-nationalism. I argued that the nationalist violence of the 1990s represented a defining break in a number of narratives. Through divergent combinations of amnesia and selective remembering, the dominant discourses attempted to establish a radical departure from the recent Titoist past, while constructing continuity with a presumably more nationally correct distant past. The citizens of the post-Yugoslav states coped with this situation in a variety of contradictory ways, but in this study I have focused on the narratives that some of them developed in direct opposition to the dominant nationalisms. Despite a wide range of qualitative differences and diverging levels of intensity, I found that the notion of 'personal' or 'individual' integrity was crucial to many of these stories of self. In order to cope with a situation of extreme discontinuity, it seemed that anti-nationalist discursive practice located its resistance overwhelmingly in continuity. And, with war around the block, violence around the corner and xenophobia pervading virtually all spheres of life, it seemed that more often than not this continuity was constructed on the individual and inter-subjective level. For some this might have been a conscious decision, whereas for others it was mainly a result of having been thrown back into that micro-sphere by circumstances.

Interestingly, many narratives on the collective level were not only defined by the 'grand' break of war and nationalism, but they also actively engaged in the (re)construction of the process by which this discontinuity had taken place. Therefore, this text contains so many narratives of 'how it used to be', resonating with a strong sense of nostalgia. However, we are dealing here with a nostalgia that needs to be contextualised in the problematic present from which it emerged. People didn't just reminisce about the City that used to be—they did so in the experiential context of a City that was *not* acceptable to them, and that they defined as ruralised. People didn't just recall an almost European Yugoslav past—they did so in an experiential context that was far removed from their European ideal, and that they defined as 'Balkan'. In short, people didn't just yearn for peace and the good life—they did so while experiencing the consequences of war, socio-economic deterioration and generalised xenophobia.

Again, we have to keep in mind that anti-nationalism was truly *anti-nationalism*, as in a reaction against nationalism and often even a mechanism to cope with it. The overwhelming reference to individual continuity was also part of this coping, as it pitted these dissident stories against what was seen as the blind collectivism of nationalist discourses. So without being a *necessary* response to nationalism, the centrality of individual narratives becomes more understandable when we see it as a coping strategy and a reaction against mass compliance and conformism. In this context, even the references that people made to 'care for others' as one of their main driving forces, was often part of a simultaneous, more or less conscious project of care for oneself. Treating 'a person as a person' was a crucial point here, as illustrated in the interview with Ivana, the girl from Zagreb who thought of herself as Serbian since the outbreak of the war:

'I hope a way of thinking will prevail... which makes people look at other people with regard to their qualities. So I don't ask somebody I get to know what they are and who they are, but I want to get to know them as a person. So looking at a person through their opinions, their thoughts,... And not on the basis of which way s/he prays to God or which church s/he goes to. So, absolutely, nations exist, I am far from denying that, and that brings a feeling of belonging to a community, but that shouldn't be a key factor in all inter-human relations.'

In Beograd, in a previously mentioned quotation, Zorica argued along similar lines, simultaneously emphasising how her concern with individuality was embedded in continuity. In our first conversation, long before she told me that she had grown up in a Croatian family on the coast, she stated that for her there were 'just different people:

good people and bad people... but it is not connected with nationality'. Coming from a different angle but arriving at a similar conclusion, Beograd writer Slavko, argued in an interview that nationality was just one of many factors shaping people's identity.

'I don't think a national sense of belonging is bad. To do with tradition, milieu, family, language,... that *is* part of one's personality. The question of identity has, of course, to do with one's birth in a certain surrounding, one's upbringing, one's language... Those things do give shape to a certain identity, so that people perceive themselves in a certain way. But..., that's not everything. Identity is not just these things—they don't amount to full identity. It also takes shape through life, in interaction with other cultures, languages, surroundings, people, etc. And this part is at least as important! So it is not just national identity. All of them together constitute an identity. And that identity is not static, it is fluid, it changes. But that was the way it became here; national identity became everything, the whole idea of identity was occupied by national identity.'

As such, even many of the oppositional discourses that were articulated on a *collective* level, such as those surrounding the 'City' and 'Europe', actually constructed those notions as exemplifying the power of individuality. In combination with multiculturalism, peace, tolerance and civilised decency, urban and European stories of 'Us' strongly centred upon a sense of individual freedom and integrity, which was then contrasted with the compliance and sheep-mentality of rurality and 'Balkan'. In that sense, it seemed, they proposed an intersubjective, freely chosen and 'rational' collectivity of equal individuals, rather than what they saw as a *collectivist*, ascribed and 'irrational' national group. As was to be expected, some youth subcultural discourses and particularly feminist critiques of nationalism were less adamant in their emphasis on individuality, but it was still an important element there as well.

3. responsibility and disobedience

A key-notion in this context was 'responsibility'. Most post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist discourses relied to a certain extent on the difference between 'guilt' and 'responsibility', and they made this explicit in their approaches². They argued that, while not everyone was *guilty* of violence and xenophobia, everyone in whose name this had taken place carried some *responsibility*. Therefore, they said, a situation in which violence against national Others was considered normal and war-criminals were being celebrated as national heroes was one of the occasions where silently sitting on the sideline was simply not enough—action was required. And while this action was to take shape preferably in solidarity with others, it was up to the individual to make the original decision to join in.

I think it is important to see this in the highly homogenised post-Yugoslav context, where nationalist policies and everyday practice not only suppressed national Others but also forced people to 'speak out', as it were, in national(ist) terms. Simply *not* being a national Other was only one part of the story—one had to actually prove oneself as a true national. This could take many different forms, from fighting on the front, to voting for the right party, to reproducing the right story lines in front of the neighbours. It was always to the detriment of Others. Sadly, many citizens of the post-Yugoslav states responded with great enthusiasm to this encouragement to establish oneself as a good national at the expense of Others. They might have done so out of fear and confusion, out of a deeply ingrained belief that it was the right thing to do, in the hope of reaping benefits later, out of simple-mindedness or... Most probably they did so because of a combination of some of those reasons and a variety of other ones, related to their own personal experience. Throughout this text, I have attempted to make clear that I do not believe that the success of nationalism was a 'Balkan' thing, nor that it was the result of some exclusive cultural characteristic of Serbia and Croatia, which cannot be found in,

² This was a major theme on meetings and seminars, as well as in publications (see for example Zajović 1997:33; Buden 1996: 97-101; Erceg 1998: 16-17; Dufgran 1997:16; Helsinški Povelja 1997).

say, Belgium or Britain. However, I believe that in the particular circumstances of 1990s Serbia and Croatia, most of the citizens who belonged to what Povrzanović calls the 'forgotten majority' (1997:153) complied with and conformed to the dominant nationalist discourses.

We have seen how anti-nationalist narratives contained a whole range of explanations of the appeal of nationalist discourses, many of which included the articulation of yet another process of Othering. However, it was often emphasised that the majority of the population simply went with the flow and kept quiet. And it was in response to this relative absence of resistance that many anti-nationalist narratives evoked a sense of continuity of self.

This might strike the reader as a paradox, for surely the Yugoslav past had also been one of imposed collectivism. In fact, many anti-nationalist narratives did result in a general critique of collectivism *tout court*, condemning both communism and nationalism. However, there was a further 'but' to this story. In the previous chapter, I elaborated on Dević's conception of the 'Yugoslav home' as a discursive space which articulated highly individualist lifestyles into a loose whole (Dević 1997). So, whereas Titoism was a collectivist system, in most anti-nationalist narratives of the past it was portrayed as leaving plenty of room for individual manoeuvre. In fact, as we have seen in Chapter Six, many people had simply ignored 'politics' all together. However, while one might explain the emphasis on individual stories in post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism with reference to sheer envisaged continuity of lifestyle, this explanation seems only partial to me. As we have seen, amongst a number of people there was a sense that they 'should have known better *then*', with regard to their previous apathy. In this way, it is possible that, for some, their post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism also included an element of 'getting things right this time'.

In a number of cases, people's evocations of anti-nationalism in the 1990s were embedded in a narrative of disobedience as a general approach to life. One of the main slogans of *Women in Black* was 'Always Disloyal', and many of their leaflets or texts included references to disobedience and disloyalty (Zajović 1995:161-162; Žene u crnom 1996:87-88). For some, this was a political choice made long ago and, as we have seen, a number of dissidents emphasised that they had been in opposition to the former regime as well as to the new ones, thereby setting themselves apart from 'born-again nationalists' and protecting themselves from accusations of belonging to the former *red bourgeoisie*. Similarly, particularly in Serbia, many people of varying backgrounds stated their scepticism with regard to any kind of organised activity which was beyond their everyday life experiences. Organisations, it was argued, whether foreign or domestic, regime-minded or non-governmental, were not to be trusted, for not one of them was ever considered independent enough to provide 'true' information³.

4. individualism/collectivism: personal integrity and the lack of it?

Let us recall the words of one interviewee in Zagreb, who expressed his doubts about the feasibility of my study upon hearing what I had set out to do. This academic, who had been villified and lost his job because of his anti-nationalist stance, argued:

'It will be very hard or even impossible for you to find something in common between those people, apart from resistance to nationalism. [...] Now, we have very little, if anything, like a new collective identity. There are only individuals, like myself, who try and preserve their little microcosm and who would do anything *not* to end up in a new collective identity.'

³ Elsewhere I have briefly illustrated the consequences of such far-going scepticism with special reference to the reception of media messages during the Kosovo crisis and the NATO air strikes (Jansen 2000a:294-296). Maybe, this sheds a critical light on Nigel Rapport's writings on irony and individuality (1999), for it points to a number of problems at the extreme end of such distancing and detachment from collective discourses.

In the context of the main ideas arising from this text, this kind of statement might strike many people—including myself—as individualist to a rather problematic extent. When I started this project, individualism in itself was certainly *not* something I was particularly looking for. Quite the contrary, I was hoping to find subaltern forms of solidarity and togetherness developed in response to an oppressive, dare I say, pathological excess of collectivist discourse: nationalism. In this respect, given my own previous engagements in social action of the 'alternative' kind in Western Europe in the 1980s-1990s, I found myself in an extremely uncomfortable position. Whereas, in the former context, 'dissidence' was associated with change and solidarity, in many strands of post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism I found a strong preoccupation with continuity and individuality, to the extent that, at times, it smacked more of a Thatcherite-Reaganite discourse than of anything remotely 'alternative'. Although this was not so much the case in the economic sense, the role and the importance of the self-interested and sovereign individual was sometimes privileged in almost evangelical terms. Also, rationality and modernisation, particularly through education, were high on the agenda for most of those whom I would call established dissidents, and even in many of the more alternative critiques of nationalism.

This had to do with the fact that the success of nationalism was often explained with reference to a lack of individuality on the side of those who had gone with the flow. As we have seen, in its extremer versions, such anti-nationalist perspectives blamed most of the violence on a combination of opportunistic politicians, media manipulation and an easy audience of uneducated Balkan peasants. It is interesting that many people, especially intellectuals in the cultural sector, pointed to the late Danilo Kiš, a famous Yugoslav literary figure, as a source of inspiration. In 1978, defending himself against a witch-hunt which had been unleashed on him by the former regime and by colleagues of the 'national realist' variety, Kiš wrote:

'Nationalism is first and foremost *paranoia*, individual and collective paranoia. As collective paranoia it is the product of envy and fear and primarily the result of a loss of individual consciousness; it is thus nothing but a set of individual paranoidias raised to the degree of paroxysm. If an individual feels unable to "express himself" within the framework of the social order either because it fails to encourage or stimulate him as an individual or because it constrains him as an individual—in other words, stands in the way of his self-fulfilment—and he feels obliged to seek fulfilment outside his identity or the prevailing social structures, he joins a Masonic-like group dedicated (in appearance, at least) to solving the problems of the age: keeping the nation alive, protecting its prestige, upholding its tradition, safeguarding the national patrimony as represented by its folklore, literature, philosophy, etc. Burdened with this secret, semi-public, or public mission, he becomes a man of action, a tribune of the people, a pseudo-individual; reduced to this dimension, his true dimension, he becomes an individual without individuality, a nationalist, a Cousin Jules.'

(Kiš 1996:15-16)

The mentioning of Cousin Jules is a reference to Sartre's work, whose existentialism seems sometimes well in tune with the individualism of many post-Yugoslav anti-nationalist narratives. Many times people reminded me of the crucial place of 'personal integrity' in their work and lives. It was then argued, like in Kiš' case, that persons with little personal integrity easily turned to national identity, and even to nationalism in its extreme forms, in order to establish some sense of security.

Hence, it is not a coincidence that the lyrics of singer Đorđe Balašević carried plenty of references to the importance of individuality and the danger of collectivism and conformism, such as in his songs *Nevernik* ['Non-Believer'], and in *Slow Motion*:

*možda i nisam neki biser
ali sam barem svoj režiser*

[maybe I am not some kind of treasure
but at least I'm my own director]

(Slow Motion - Balašević 1998:185)

In the context of this study, this is slightly ironic on a theoretical level as well: having started off with a conceptual framework strongly influenced by certain post-structuralist insights, I ended up placing much emphasis on individuality, which would seem contradictory at the very least (Rapport 1997a:7). However, as demonstrated in this study, rather than postmodern critiques of the sovereign subject, I found a widespread exercise to retain this notion and its political implications in debates about citizenship. Here I had a sustained struggle by a wide range of people to reinforce the possibility of what Nigel Rapport would call transcendent individuality (1997a, c). In an interview, Ela, a prominent figure on the Beograd independent intellectual scene, argued:

'My family is from Krajina. Almost the whole of my family was killed during WWII. But I was lucky that my father never used that in a sense as to generalise towards the present period. So when we destroyed Vukovar I never thought, like a lot of people, that that was some kind of retribution for what happened fifty years ago. [...] I think I belong to that minority of, let's say, cosmopolitans. I think that the great majority, people who think their national identity is so important to them, I think that they don't have a strong enough sense of personal identity. I myself never had the need for a sense of belonging to a people. Not even to my family. I don't need them to know where I stand.'
(Ela, Beograd)

The presence of such strong assertions of individuality in this study could be explained partly by the focus on narrative in general and on stories of self and society in particular, which might be likely to privilege individuality more than, say, an emphasis on materiality. However, I would like to stress that I do not think it is only a result of my approach. As we have seen throughout this study, for many people anti-nationalism was constructed as part of a wider discourse of anti-collectivism, especially with retrospective reference to Yugoslav communism. Several activists seemed to have explicitly considered this, and maybe upon seeing my discomfort with their frequent evocations of a very mainstream liberal discourse they argued that this was a strategic choice. In fact, several people told me that, had they lived in Western Europe, they would most probably sympathise with Red/Green or left-libertarian politics, but given the situation in their own state, they felt they *had to defend* 'the individual' in ways that would be considered conservative in the 'West'. In this sense, the liberal discourse that was so dominant in anti-nationalism might have struck *me* as very mainstream, but they conceived of it as a potential source of subversive material in an authoritarian and collectivist context.

Their strategic individualism, then, could be seen in terms of what Chen Xiaomei has described in the Chinese context as 'Occidentalism'. We therefore have to take into account the latter's warning that it is a frequent ethnocentric mistake of Western European and North American 'leftists' to exclude the possibility that some discourses that might support the status-quo in one state hold subversive power in another (Chen-Xiaomei 1996:9; see also Žižek 1992).

5. the individual and the peculiarities of anti-nationalist resistance

The focus on the individual in many anti-nationalist narratives, then, must be contextualised and seen in proportion. For many people, liberal notions of individuality seemed to provide possible building bricks for a critique of both the current nationalism and the previous communism. This was not just the case on an ideological level, but it also had to do with a sense of *real-politik*. Not only did almost all organised anti-nationalist initiatives survive thanks to funding from Western Europe and the United States, bastions of exactly such liberalism, but in a quest for at least some domestic legitimacy and effectiveness, they felt they had precious little else to turn to. While individualism might be oppressive and exclusive in other contexts, in the post-Yugoslav situation many dissidents found it liberating.

However, the frequent emphasis on rationality and individuality was perhaps one of the reasons for the relative lack of success of anti-nationalist alternatives in the post-

Yugoslav states. Its appeal was always limited and its focus was fairly strongly on urban, educated and 'modern' individuals, and there was little effort to expand activities to those who did not inhabit similar life worlds (although such efforts did exist). However, I would immediately add that the marginality of anti-nationalism had more to do with other factors, outside of the discourse, such as violence, self-interest, manipulation and so on. Also, I believe that, while post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism might not have succeeded to prevent war or to impinge greatly upon the discursive climate, it *did* play a crucial role in the everyday lives of a range of individuals and their small social circles. As we have seen, for them, anti-nationalism provided something to hold on to: an alternative discursive practice, an attempt to construct a temporary 'home' in a thoroughly unhomey context.

The reactive, *anti*-nationalist nature of the focus on individuality was illustrated, for example, by Staša Zajović, who stated:

'Đurđa's obstinate refusal of the logic of categorisation: "There are no Serbian women, no Croatian women, there is only Staša from Belgrade, Biljana from Pančevo, that is, there are women according to what they are and not according to their nationality." I recalled her words every time they harassed me outside, rudely and aggressively, often asking me: "And who are you: a Serb or a Croat or...?" I am what I choose to be. I am my own individual creation, as Brodsky would say.'

(Zajović 1997:32-33)

I chose this example out of a wide range of such statements, because it comes from one of the places where I least expected it: in the fairly radical anti-militarist, feminist and pacifist organisation *Women in Black*, which had strong networks with, for example, Western European peace and women's initiatives. More 'established', or 'mainstream' articulations of anti-nationalism contained very similar elements, both in Serbia and Croatia.

Did this mean that post-Yugoslav anti-nationalism denied the importance of sociality and solidarity? Most certainly not. In fact, the above extract was preceded by a sketch of the centrality of *Women in Black*'s embodied protests on Beograd's Square of the Republic and followed by references to the power of encounters, of friendship, of care, love, tenderness and so on. Why then does this study seem to hold relatively few evocations of practised emotion, passion and togetherness? Again, partly, this could be explained by its focus on narratives of self and society, but a more crucial factor is that anti-nationalism was a counterdiscourse, articulated as a counterweight against what was seen as the surrounding barbaric madness of war-mongering nationalism.

As we have seen throughout this text, the public scene in 1990s Serbia and Croatia was clearly dominated by collectivist discourses of nationalism. And here's the catch: solidarity, community and love was precisely what *nationalism* was all about. I have argued throughout this text that it would be a mistake to pin these discourses down to hatred and aggression, because the language they depended on was one of defence, love, pride and justice. Also, we should not forget that it was primarily the different nationalisms which articulated notions of solidarity and resistance. Theirs was a story of suppressed communities who had finally found the power to engage in solidarity and collective rebellion; theirs was a discourse of subversion, equality, brotherhood and change. Dissident representations, therefore, found themselves in an uncomfortable situation, as much political discursive material which could be seen as subversive in other situations was, for them, tainted and discredited.

In combination with nationalism's perceived colonisation of discourses of togetherness and solidarity, there was the previously mentioned wider post-Yugoslav attitude towards 'politics' as a dirty game. Political engagement was generally considered a shady business, and attempts to impute the term with a positive content were sometimes laughed away, as illustrated during a workshop I attended in Beograd. A speaker, a British academic with an interest in the development of 'civil society', argued that 'politics is about working out how six billion people can live together on this planet'. A roar of sceptical laughter went up in the audience, and several people shouted: 'Oh no... that's not what politics is about at all!'. In Serbia, as we have seen, the situation

was extremely confusing, with the regime actually articulating both nationalist *and* socialist/multiculturalist elements into an ambiguous whole.

If we consider those two factors together, maybe it becomes possible to see some of the contours of the context in which we can understand the peculiar individual-centred nature of most Beograd and Zagreb anti-nationalist narratives. People were very reluctant to explicitly link up ideas of solidarity, bonds and friendship with political action. Dissident rituals of community were also rare and there was little effort, it seemed, to change this. In terms of anti-nationalism, many seemed to prefer to stay somewhat on the level of individual motivation, rationality and interests. Thus, they avoided the shark-infested waters of passion and togetherness, which had on the one hand been colonised by the dominant nationalisms, and on the other hand reminded them of the embarrassing slogans of Titoist communism.

6. anti-nationalist narratives of belonging

I have, of course, mentioned occasions in which people 'practiced community' (Heller 2000) and in which experiences of solidarity were paramount. Some post-Yugoslav cross-border meetings of activists provided examples, as did certain demonstrations and commemorations. A crucial element, in my experience, was humour and popular culture, particularly music. This is precisely why I paid so much attention to the display of emotion at the seemingly a-political concerts of Đorđe Balašević, where, I have argued, *Jugonostalgija* was imbued with a new meaning, providing critical commentary on the current situation. When thinking about such occasions, the small bit in me that subscribes to optimism might say: yes, a recapturing of the discursive practice of resistance-in-solidarity from the grabbing claws of nationalism! But on the whole, I believe, people told jokes and sang songs and partied simply because that's what they felt like doing. Which, in my view, does not prohibit it from having some relevance for political critique, as I have attempted to argue throughout. If I have not written more specifically about such experiences on more directly inter-personal levels, this has less to do with its relevance than with my desperate attempts to shield certain experiences from the (i.e., in the first place, my own) anthropological gaze. After all, I am not only an anthropologist and anthropology is not the only thing that counts in my life.

Alternative narratives of self were not stories of self-sufficient individuals completely detached from actual material place (Oliver, Jansen & Heller 2000). I have demonstrated above how, for many, the city in which one lived provided a place to belong to through its urban landscape. Similarly, the former Yugoslav territory, exemplified in its cities and its coast, functioned as a 'home' for a number of people. We have seen how this sometimes resulted in counter-exclusivism, for example, through city-centrism. Interestingly, some of those narratives of 'alternative belonging to a place' contained a strongly experiential and sensory element. No talk of homelands, then, nor claims to historical righteousness, but evocations of the lived experience of place. Let us have a look at a couple of such narratives—excerpts from interviews—in a bit more detail:

'In a way I am also a regionalist. but not in the sense of [*loud*] "This is our land!" I mean, the place where you live is like your bed. It's like... there might be a certain smell in your bed,... or in your garden, which is not the same anywhere else, because only in your garden this combination of plants grow together.'

(Ela, editor and independent intellectual, Beograd – interviewed in her office)

'I always say I am from Zagreb, because I have lived here for most of my life. I sort of like it here, and I feel at home, but I feel most at home in Dalmatia, where I grew up. You know, those towns on the coast, they are really... I don't know, that is really something special to me: the light, the air, the sea, the smells,... That will always be important to me.'

(Stipe, literary critic and well-known dissident, Zagreb – interviewed in his office)

These are narratives of non-exclusive belonging to a place, articulated through a discourse of experience and partiality, as well as of some sense of familiarity with different dimensions of a landscape. Now if we combine such stories with those that conjure up images of webs of togetherness, for example through the recalling of 'sitting on a terrace on the Dalmatian coast with so and so', or even through the ironic nostalgia for 'singing pioneer songs with so and so', we can see that individuality never exhausts these people's life experiences. Also, it points to the fact that there are not just differences *between* individuals but also *within* individuals, both at one and the same time and at different points in time.

Let us relate this point back to the insights of Paul Ricoeur, elaborated upon in Chapter Two. Ricoeur argues that narration is an important tool by which people negotiate their sense of self. While it allows an experience of one's self as unique within the constancy of time, it also integrates a sense of self within a larger context; and, as this study has illustrated, the two are inextricably linked. Many of the anti-nationalist narratives that I analysed and reconstructed displayed a preoccupation with the telling and re-telling of some sense of continuity. In a wider context of extreme confusion, violence and oppression, the people I worked with permanently negotiated a story of themselves that, even though ambiguous and multi-dimensional, made *some* sense to them. This was retrospective work, and it took place in a context which was far beyond the control of the person in question.

The individuality we encounter in these narratives is therefore the individuality of the hero(ine), and of a narrator of a story, but never that of an author (Ricoeur 1991a:32-33). However, by engaging in the critique of nationalism, by taking political action, by opposing violence, by helping out a neighbour, by teaching their children to refrain from nationalist generalisations, a range of citizens of Serbia and Croatia did engage in the collective authorship of the discursive practice of anti-nationalism. I would argue with Goldberg that:

'The discourse promoting resistance to racism must not prompt identification with and in terms of categories fundamental to the discourse of oppression. Resistance must break not only with *practices* of oppression, although its first task is to do that. Resistance must oppose the *language* of oppression, including the categories in terms of which the oppressor (or racist) represents the forms in which resistance is expressed.'
(Goldberg 1990:313-314)

Taking into account Balibar's insights on nationalism as differential racism (1991), it doesn't require a great leap of the imagination to replace 'racism' with 'nationalism'. In tandem with the brute force of military violence and war-mongering propaganda, the practice of discretely and exclusively categorising in national terms, and the very categories of 'Serbs' and 'Croats' themselves, constituted, I believe, one of the most powerful tools of the post-Yugoslav nationalist discourses. If exclusive nationalism is to be resisted as a discourse of oppression, then the overwhelming dominance of such categorisations and the ensuing obliteration of *other* differences must be defused. We shouldn't wait for those who are directly oppressed by them to do so.

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