Surviving the aftermath: trauma, resilience, and chronic insecurity in postwar Sarajevo

DRAFT: please do not circulate or cite without permission

European Association of Social Anthropologists
12th Biannual Conference: Uncertainty and Disquiet
July 10-13, 2012
Nanterre, France

Peter Locke
Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton University
plocke@princeton.edu

INTRODUCTION

To judge by the long-dwindling attention devoted to the former Yugoslavia by media and international organizations, the "humanitarian emergency" precipitated by the wars of the 1990s has long passed, eclipsed by an onslaught of new conflicts and natural disasters elsewhere. Nevertheless, people throughout the region continue to live with a different, less visible kind of emergency—chronic, routinized, seemingly endless social crisis. In Sarajevo, a city emblematic of the extremes of violence and resilience that marked the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina, economic instability, government dysfunction, and a steady flow of belligerent nationalist rhetoric from politicians combine to make people feel as if they are always on the edge of another war. While humanitarian psychiatry has introduced trauma and post-traumatic stress into local semantic repertoires, framing the complex affects of the postwar milieu as PTSD seems to render them *less* visible—or at least less politically potent—by defining them as symptoms of past damage. Life continues, and present-day struggles and frustrations become the coordinates of people's evolving symptoms and relationships to their memories of loss and mass violence (Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009; Biehl and Locke 2010; Garcia 2008; Han 2004; Scheper-Hughes 2007; Young 1995).

In this paper, I explore the accounts of three parents whose children attend counseling at a psychosocial support center called "Wings of Hope" (*Krila Nade*) in Sarajevo, Bosnia-

Herzegovina, where I conducted anthropological fieldwork from 2006 to 2008. Their stories suggest some of the possibilities for care, for political transformation, and for social scientific understanding that escape the framing of postwar forms of suffering in Sarajevo as war trauma. As they find precarious ways of sustaining health, material subsistence, and family relationships, Sarajevans challenge us to account for those psychosocial impacts of war and its aftermath that escape diagnostic categories—and to advocate for the value of this ethnographic knowledge, both as complement and contrast to technical analyses, for how we define and attempt to address "humanitarian emergencies."

ADIS [SKIP TO EMIR]

Consider Adis, a war veteran who brought his ten-year-old son, Ermin, to Wings of Hope for regular tutoring in language and math. Adis also attended free one-on-one counseling sessions with one of the NGO's staff psychologists. "My job, in my old age, is to take care of the children," Adis told me. When I knew him, he appeared to be in his sixties or early seventies, with coarse, graying hair and weatherworn skin; though he might have been younger, aged prematurely by the stresses of wartime and post-war struggles.

Adis was living with his wife and children—Ermin had a little sister, two years old at that time—in the small house that they own in Bistrik, an old, traditionally Muslim neighborhood on the lower slopes of Mount Trebević, just above Basčaršija. Adis's wife worked as a janitor at the *Narodno Pozorište* (National Theater). Adis had worked for 24 years painting houses, but when the war came his firm fell apart and was "liquidated," so he had no means of drawing a pension. Instead he was receiving 150 marks per month for having served in Sarajevo's defense forces during the siege. "I was in the trenches. I was everywhere." After the war he couldn't find a new job; and besides, with his wife working six days a week, someone had to look after the children. He had no health insurance. His wife and kids were insured, at least, through her job at the theater. "She carries everything. Me… no job, no insurance, nothing."

One morning we got to talking about politicians. *Nama je da mučimo, a njima je da uživaju*, said Adis: "It's our lot to suffer, and theirs to enjoy." Adis told me that, in his opinion, politicians were making the laws only for their own benefit—rights, health, and prosperity existed in Bosnia, but just for them. "All the rest of us can do is complain, and beg the politicians to do something for us." I asked about the difference between what he hoped for

during the war and how things had actually turned out. For Adis the worst thing about post-war life was how divided people seemed to have become. "There was never such division here! As long as I lived, fifty, sixty years, nothing like this. It struck me like a bolt from a blue sky [*to mi je palo kao iz vedra neba grom*]. Always we lived together, no one hated anybody. Now people hate each other. No one helps anyone. All these enclaves keep to themselves—separate schools, separate teachers, separate neighborhoods."

Adis was referring to Bosnia's deep post-war ethnonational divisions and the persistence of de facto segregation in schools—children from different backgrounds entering the same school building through different doors, working in different classrooms and from different curricula—a phenomenon often euphemistically referred to as "two schools under one roof." (Hromadzic 2011). But when I asked him about how these divisions play out day-to-day, in his friendships and neighborly relationships, Adis shifted terms. "Here's how it is: for whomever has money, everything is fine. When you don't have it you withdraw into yourself, you don't have anything to do with anybody. You worry about thieves and you're always wary."

"It's not religion that divides us," he concluded. "It's money."

For Adis, without a functioning economy, without relative equality of financial security, employment, and income, nothing else—no improvement in ethnic, or any other, relations—was really possible. *Mi bi sutra se svi dogovorili da živimo, ali nam nedaju para*, he said: "We could all agree tomorrow to live, but they [politicians] don't give us the money. First they have to find a way to employ all of us who don't work, or the young people will just keep leaving." Adis's phrasing was interestingly ambiguous—*we could all agree tomorrow to live*. What did he mean? We, the divided ethnicities, could agree to live *together*? Or was he implying something broader, a collective decision to start again, as if life in general had been on hold since the war?

Adis—like most Sarajevans I met who had come of age in Yugoslavia—missed life before the conflict. "I miss having a job. I loved working, I was a good worker. Work sustained me. Now I'm busy, preoccupied, but it's different, my job is the kids. I dress them, I clean them, I feed them, I drive them around. Everything I do now is really woman's work." This reconfiguration of gender roles in the family is widespread in Sarajevo, as is the kind of discomfort and resentment about it that Adis expressed. While husbands were away fighting, the day-to-day labors and economic burdens of supporting the household fell to women, who, when the war ended, usually continued to fill the role of breadwinner. Men returning as demobilized

soldiers—sometimes wounded or disabled, alienated and unable to communicate with those who had not "seen what they had seen," and hooked on intense, alcohol-saturated all-male sociality—found their previous family and workplace roles intolerable, reconfigured, occupied by women, or simply absent. Thus, in the new division of labor, Adis found himself uncomfortably shouldering child-rearing duties traditionally allocated to housewives (*domaćice*) while his wife became the family's primary source of income and main point of access to health and social services.

Adis felt other changes—beyond the immediacies of family life and economic strain, more abstract, more intangible—to life in Sarajevo. Something seemed hollow, used-up, broken: the city survived, but drained of day-to-day pleasures and neighborly warmth. "I have lived here so many years," he said. "It's good, it's beautiful here. It's just that it doesn't feel like it did before. Life is utterly different. It's as if the city became quiet [*isto k'o da je grad utihn'o*]. There used to be so much joy." I pressed Adis to elaborate, to explain how and why he thought this had happened. In his view, the key break was Tito's death, over ten years before the hostilities began. "We don't have life since Tito died," he said, and uttered—in the past tense, poignantly—an old Yugoslav slogan: *Tito je bio za sve. Za Tita svi.* Tito was for all of us; and we were all for Tito.[1]

"They were just waiting for him to die," said Adis, referring to the nationalist politicians—Tuđman in Croatia, Milosević in Serbia—who were so central to Yugoslavia's disintegration. "And now there is no happiness. None."

ALMA

Irfan, an eleven-year-old boy, comes to Wings for free tutoring in English and mathematics. He has a fair amount of trouble in these subjects in school, and his mother, Alma, thinks he may have some form of learning disability. "He has a few ticks that he does often"—she mimicked a subtle twitch—"and I think they are a burden for him. But you don't have the right kind of doctor here to help him." She was thinking of what Bosnians call a *logoped*, a speech pathologist and specialist in children with special needs. Alma has been referred to

[1] Josip Broz, known as "Tito," was leader of the Partisan resistance to the Nazis in WWII and president of Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death in 1980.

another psychosocial organization for children to consult with the logoped on their staff; but it will be at least two months before an appointment will be available.

Though Alma appeared to be at least in her sixties, she had two young sons—Irfan, eleven, and Faruk, fifteen; as well as two grown daughters, one 32 and the other 27. She had been starting to learn English—"I have a big desire to speak English and Italian very well"—and peppered our conversations with the English versions of words or expressions whenever she knew them. ("*Ja nemam* very much, *mnogo novca.* Money."—I don't have very much money.) Her husband is older than she (71; they have been married 32 years), a veteran of the Sarajevo defense militias, and has been intermittently ill and in pain since the war—"something hurts his stomach, sometimes his legs. He often has colds. He is weak." Alma blamed many trips during the war, in the freezing cold, rain, and snow, to cut and fetch wood for heating, which she believes "chilled him to the bone."

When Alma's husband could work he drove a taxi, but for years he has not felt well enough to continue. He receives a very small pension from the government (230 marks, or about US$160, per month), plus an additional monthly payment of 50 marks (US$35) for the children. This is the only income the family has to live on—one of the adult daughters lives and works in Germany, and is not in close contact; and the other, still in Bosnia, does not earn enough herself to be able to help her parents and little brothers. Alma has basic state health insurance as a registered unemployed person, and her husband and sons all have insurance through his pension.

Alma is effusively grateful for the fact that Irfan's tutoring at Wings is free of charge. "Only here are these classes free," she said. "And thank you very much to everyone here!" She is too busy caring for her sons to have a job, she told me, though she has skills that she wishes she had time to put to use—in the past she has worked as a typist, a seamstress, and a confectioner. Originally from Brčko, she came to Sarajevo over three decades ago when she married, but still feels a strong connection to and longing for her hometown—a place she found tremendously and painfully transformed after the war. Her family's home, for one thing, had been occupied by Serbs. She and her husband stayed in Sarajevo throughout the siege, during which both of her sons were born—Faruk in 1992, as the hostilities began, and Irfan in 1995, as they drew to a close. "I could write a long novel about it all. Very long."

Alma has a strong desire to create, to express her feelings, experiences, and knowledge of life, its simple pleasures and bitter heartbreaks, in music, poetry, and fiction. She has skills that

she wants to apply, stories that she wants to communicate. I asked her what she would write about in her novel. "It would illuminate everything I went through," she told me. "All of life is so interesting. And I was a typist, I would do a great job. I succeeded on the high school exam in Bosnian. Then it was the Serbo-Croatian language. I would just need time… It would somehow be right (*pravo*) to do it."

I wanted to know why it would be right, why she felt the need to write about her experiences. She answered me with a story about returning to Brčko. "I love to write. I was born in Brčko, and married in Sarajevo. And when I went back to Brčko, there were Serbs living in our homes. We talked with each other. They told us, 'go back to your own place, to your own houses' [even though they had occupied our houses.] We used to take care of each other [*mi smo se pazili*]. Our nationality was never of interest." Something in this experience—the loss of her home, the transformation in neighborly and interethnic relationships—needed to be shared and accounted for. "I love to write, but I have so little time. The children."

Alma and Irfan became involved with Wings of Hope through a friend, Rasa, who works in a Center for Social Work. "Rasa and I look after each other," Alma said. She mentioned Irfan's troubles in school, and Rasa replied: "go to Fadila," the secretary at Wings. Alma thought that she would have to pay something for lessons, and was not feeling optimistic when she first spoke with Fadila. "And Fadila said to me: 'Do you want Irfan to learn English and mathematics?' I replied, 'I don't know if Rasa told you that we could pay. We can't.' 'No,' said Fadila, 'No one pays.' I was so happy."

Concerns about money dominate Alma's day-to-day life and anxieties. I asked her, as I asked many of the people I met at Wings of Hope, about her plans for the future and for her family. Alma said: "*Bogami, Bogami, o tome ne smijem ni da mislim. Ja ne smijem ni da mislim o tome.*" My God, my God, I don't dare to think about that. I don't dare to think about it.

"Faruk says to me… Spring is coming. 'Mother, please give me 120 marks to buy sneakers.' I think, my God, what can I do. I don't dare to think about it. But these children now, Faruk, Irfan, their generation, they want Nikes, Benetton."

Alma's children have material needs and desires—some basic, many fostered by the new goods, consumer culture, and ubiquitous advertising that have come to Bosnia with the end of socialism—that she cannot afford to satisfy. This tension, between her children's expanding desires and her own poverty, causes her intense anxiety. Alma told me that she cannot even

afford to buy for Faruk, her growing, voraciously hungry teenage son, the food he wants to eat. I wondered whether Alma was able to get extra food and supplies from Merhamet, the charity wing of the *Islamska Zajednica* (Islamic Community). Alma, who otherwise radiates positivity and serenity, became briefly animated by anger. "It's thievery," she exclaimed. Even charity is thoroughly corrupt. "For a whole year, for a whole year they will maybe give you a liter or two of oil, a kilo or two of sugar. You go two or three times, and they say, 'Don't come anymore!' You have to go one hundred times before they will give you anything." The people responsible for the charity supplies—meant for any in need—give them only to their own friends, relatives, and connections, or trade them for favors or payments. "In Bosnia we do not have a strong state to stand in their way."

Alma, like many other Sarajevans of her generation whom I met, sees that people have become more isolated and self-absorbed as their lives have become more difficult. "I think the war taught most of us nothing. People are still hungry and afraid." But she nurtures her own relations of care and friendship, and asserts the irrelevancy of most distinctions between people—including ethnicity—relative to God. "I say that I, you, everyone in the world, we are all brothers. Everyone, everyone, everyone. Before God we are all one. Before God, there is only good or evil." She listed neighbors in her building, taking care to mention both Muslim and Christian names—"I have Antonija across the hall, I have Mirajana and Marina, I have Bahra, I have Hana, I have Velinka, and we look out for each other. Because I know that people must maintain their relationships and love each other. Islam tells me, 'if you want to go to hell, close the door on your friends.'"

I asked Alma if she felt like most people in Sarajevo were good to each other this way. Seeming to contradict her earlier statement—that people had learned nothing from the war—she said, unequivocally, "yes, yes. People are good." This is a conviction that her experience at Wings of Hope seemed to nourish, helping her to actively resist the tendency—which she did reluctantly acknowledge in others, especially, for example, the staff at the public kitchen—to become cynical, selfish, and bitter as a result of the hardships of the last two decades. "The only thing the war changed in me is that I want to help people more. And I say to myself that if my Faruk finishes school and is successful, I will always, if we have money, set aside one hundred, two hundred marks. And I will buy the most beautiful clothes and shoes for children who need them."

Alma reflected on the challenges of survival, of making ends meet and providing for her children in today's Sarajevo, with a placid acceptance and determination, a seeming acceptance of her lot—an affect, perhaps, that sustained her through, or which she might have learned during, the long siege. Other parents I met were not so serene. Alma's survival and hard work were enabled by more than resignation to the realities of her world, however; they were for the sake of her family and for the possibility of a better life for her children. "Look, I go to chop wood so that we will have something to burn, because electricity is very expensive. I chop wood so that we will spend less and things will be easier. And when I go to buy things, if one market is too expensive I will keep searching others till I find a place where the prices are lower. Sometimes it takes all day. I struggle and I fight for my family… I am healthy and I fight for them."

I said she seemed like an expert in getting by with very little. "I think so too." But, she continued, "I wish I could make things, sew, crochet, make sweets, and send them to England or to the United States of America, to get a little money. I would work that way. I would love to." This dream suggests a desire for relations of reciprocal exchange, of equality and care, which would extend to the kind of wealthy Western nations that fund and direct Bosnia's international governing apparatus, as well as the humanitarian projects of the war and post-war era. This strikes me as a less a variety of "humanitarian dependence" (Harvey and Lind 2005; cf. Barnett 2011, Fassin 2012) than a desire for dignified work, the chance to make a decent living, and to engage with foreigners on less unequal terms.

EMIR

Džana is eleven years old and comes regularly to Wings of Hope for free tutoring. She also participates in "creative workshops" held each Saturday morning—she is extremely shy, and the psychologists at Wings hope that playing and engaging with other children in this context will help to better "socialize" her. Her father, Emir, a thin, silver-haired man with a deeply creased face and heavy, dark bags under his eyes, always brings Džana to her lessons and to the workshops, and waits quietly with coffee and cigarettes. He is articulate, open, and soft-spoken, with a gravelly voice and an eccentric and expansive vocabulary ("I am a communicative man," he often observes). With his spouse, a *domaćica*—housewife—Emir has three children altogether: Džana, a 20-year-old son, and a 22-year-old daughter studying economics at the

university (with the help of a small scholarship from a war veterans' association). Aside from the scholarship, the family's only income is the veteran's pension—300 marks per month—that Emir receives from the state.

Emir and his family are originally from Zvornik, a town on the Bosnian side of the Drina River, which forms Bosnia's eastern border with Serbia. Zvornik was brutally "cleansed" of its non-Serb population by Serb forces very early in the war. Emir and his family managed to leave in the nick of time: they lived for a while in Tuzla, then in Gračanica, then in Croatia; finally Emir "returned to defend Bosnia," while his wife and two young children (Džana was not born until after the war) were received as refugees in Pakistan. Emir fought with the Army of the Republic of BiH (ARBiH) throughout the conflict. He lost hearing in one of his ears when a shell landed next to him in a trench.

After Dayton Emir's family returned from Pakistan and they lived for seven years in a tiny basement apartment (rent-free because of Emir's army service) in Vogošća, a suburb of Sarajevo that took in large numbers of refugees from eastern Bosnia. Emir got a job working as a locksmith—his trade before the war—for Konzum, a Slovenian-owned grocery store chain. He was paid around 350 marks a month. On that income Emir could barely afford to pay bills and feed his family, so when the state sold his building and the new owners wanted to charge rent, they had to move—after a frightening and stressful period of bureaucratic frustrations and homelessness ("we didn't even have a roof over our heads")—to a relative's flat in Otoka, a socialist-era neighborhood in Novo Sarajevo, where they still live.

Emir's first engagement with Wings was for the sake of his son (Haris), who was only five when the war began and his family had to flee their home. "During the war he survived an enormous shock. And then he could not speak. He stopped speaking, he didn't…" Emir's eyes shimmered and he trailed off. It was clearly hard for him to think about what the war had done to his son's childhood, and if there was any particular experience or event that he thought might have triggered Haris' speechlessness, he did not volunteer it. Haris remained mute throughout his family's refugee years in Croatia and Pakistan, communicating only through occasional notes and gestures. Back in Bosnia after the war and enrolled in school, he began to try to speak again, but felt crippled by shame and embarrassment and the derision he was subjected to by his peers. There were many everyday words he struggled to pronounce. Teachers were not sympathetic, and there were no specialists in the school system to help him, so Haris received very poor

grades. But finally, when Haris was about 15 or 16, one teacher suggested that Emir bring Haris to Wings of Hope. "I am extremely satisfied with how they acknowledged him here, how they related to him. He began to have more success. They really helped him."

Haris was not alone in having trouble communicating after the war. As a small-town refugee in Sarajevo—Bosnia's urban center—Emir "felt like a stranger" in his own country. It is in Emir's nature to connect with people, to make friends, to "communicate," and so Sarajevan resentment of newcomers was especially difficult for him to bear. "I am a communicative man, so this was very hard. I tried in every way not to notice these bad attitudes toward my family and me. 'Why don't you go back where you come from?' people would ask. I'd say, 'There aren't any jobs there. Not for us.' I wanted to say more, but I got past it, the way people treated us, as best I could, so I wouldn't have problems with anyone." Emir wanted to explain, that is, what he and his family had been through, why home was no longer home for them, that even if they wished they could return—which they did—living in a town where most of the Muslims had been killed or driven out was clearly not a better choice than eking out a new life in Sarajevo. But he had already learned that any claim to suffering tended to provoke not sympathy but anger: counter-claims and competition over rights to true victimhood. So he held his tongue.

For Emir, the day-to-day "struggle for subsistence" (a phrase he used often) and to provide for his family on a meager income would have been much more bearable were it not compounded by this persistent sense of alienation and disconnection from his adopted community, neighbors, and co-workers. The impossibility of finding support and empathy—both in bureaucratic institutions and in social relations—was a constant theme in the stories he told about post-war life in Sarajevo. Emir felt this callousness as a grave injustice, a wound more painful, even, than his wartime experiences or the hard facts and choices of poverty. The experiences he shared of engaging government bureaucracies to secure housing and, later, a veteran's pension (after Konzum laid him off to avoid, he thought, paying retirement benefits) were intensely Kafkaesque, full of heartless, robotic clerks, unreachable behind the glass screens of office counters, and requirements for paperwork, stamps, and signatures that were nebulous and shifting to the point of absurdity.

"I tried so, so hard with all these administrations. I never had a chance to rest. The police came to the flat in Otoka and threatened my wife with eviction, even though we had a right to be there. 'You need this or that paper,' they said at the bureau, but they already had

everything they needed. It's mistreatment, complete mistreatment. 'Why did you send the police and intimidate my wife?' I asked them. 'Oh, that was just a mistake,' they said. But *whose* mistake? And there was no apology." Emir thought that some bureaucrat was trying to take the flat for himself or sell it illegally, or to push Emir to offer a bribe just to be left alone.

"In the war I only had one goal: to keep my head [*sačuvati glavu*], to survive. Just that. But now it's a fight with bureaucracy. A fight for my family and for financial subsistence. Back then we lived off humanitarian aid, this and that. You know how it was, would you or wouldn't you have food, you know." Emir said flat-out that life is harder since the war than it was during. "OK, during the war I didn't have my family, now I have to worry about them." For Emir, this meant constant wrestling with cold and recalcitrant state institutions simply to sustain the basic conditions of day-to-day existence. "Now it's about what you have to go through to get the subsidy for electricity, to be able to get coal or wood for the winter… it takes so much patience, all your nerves, so many administrative obstacles to get around, so many doors to knock on. You have to get through five, six people, six offices, and in the end you end up back at the office where you started. That's how it is today. Bureaucracy. Our laws simply aren't regulating bureaucracy the way they should."

Emir advises his children to leave the country as soon as they can find the means. "The fact is that I am so frustrated that if I could leave I would never return. And I advise the children to leave. Anywhere, any country. Because I believe that in any other country I would have the possibility to work, and to make a living from that work. Just to make a living from that work. That is my opinion. That is how I think now. I would never come back." Emir has cousins in the US: they tell him that "here you can live well from your job and from your trade." He thought about this for a moment, then leaned forward and said firmly: "I could say that three percent of human rights exist here. The rest do not exist."

Necessities keep getting more and more costly: heat, gas, electricity, food staples. "And why does water get more expensive? At least we have plenty of that in Bosnia, if nothing else. But our government does nothing about it. I simply think that politicians only worry about themselves, about their own position, their own personal interests. The people don't interest them." Emir feels sick when he sees politicians on television, and he has to leave the room. He said he felt hopeful about the new UN/EU High Representative, Miroslav Lajčak (who has since resigned after less than two years in office to become foreign minister of Slovakia), but in

general he placed a great deal of blame on the international community for failing to put pressure on the Republika Srpska to "accept that they must be a part of Bosnia."[2] He follows war crimes trials taking place locally as well as proceedings at the ICTY in The Hague, in part because one of his brothers is among the thousands of missing people presumed murdered in concentration camps or mass killings. "In 1992 they kidnapped him and we never heard anything about him again." Another brother was severely wounded when a shell fired by Serb forces landed in his apartment, and later died undergoing surgery.

Emir paused, swallowed hard, folded his hands together on the table. "I can respect Serbs, Croats, Muslims, it doesn't matter to me. I respect all good people. But I do not respect nationalists."

Emir's comment, which concluded his wrenching narration of the death of his brothers, seems to assign blame for the tragic (and to Emir, extremely personal) losses caused by the war directly to nationalist politicians—of the sort, that is, who led Bosnia into conflict, regardless of ethnic identification, and who continue to dominate post-war politics. Emir's view is not unlike that of the vast majority of the Sarajevans I got to know, and points to the likelihood of significant variation in the degree to which the ethnic fears and animosities promoted by Bosnia's politicians actually represent the feelings of its citizens.[3]

I asked Emir how he wished life and the way things work in Bosnia would change. Immediately he nodded vigorously and said, "good," as if I were a struggling student who had finally gotten something right. "Good question. In fact that's the burning question. I'll tell you that I was a big optimist during the war. I was so optimistic that many things would be resolved, that things would be better, that everything would be fair for the people, and so on. But after the war I was so disappointed because of this bureaucracy. So disappointed, I went to the mental health clinic. They told me to contact a psychologist in Otoka. That psychologist sent me to the psychiatrists at Jagomir. So I go there once every month or two to talk." But not just to talk: Emir goes to Jagomir for prescriptions. "I must, I am compelled to take some pills to calm down, really because of all that, the bureaucracy, the struggle for subsistence."

---

[2] The *Republika Srpska* began as Radovan Karadzic's breakaway Bosnian Serb statelet at the outset of the war in Bosnia, and was later institutionalized as a semi-autonomous sub-entity of the Bosnian state established by the Dayton Accords in November 1995. For analysis and critique of the Dayton Constitution and Bosnia's sub-entities, see e.g., Bose 2002, Burg and Shoup 1999, Chandler 2000, Cousens and Cater 2001, and Hayden 1999.
[3] For a range of views on this question, see, e.g., Bringa 2005, Bougarel et.al. 2007, Hayden 2007, Markowitz 2010.

In explaining his need for medication to make the anxiety and frustration of his post-war life endurable, Emir suddenly thought again of what he once had—and cannot return to. "I need to tell you: I have a house in Zvornik. But it's destroyed. It's in a village, actually, on the periphery of the town." Emir began to voice complaints common to those reluctant to return to hometowns now dominated by another ethnic group. "My village is one hundred percent Bosniac. But the only people who live there are old and retired, because they have nowhere else to go. They have relatives abroad who send them money. But children can't go to school there, because they are Bosniac. They would have to take a bus every day all the way to Tuzla for school. Serbs come from across the border and make trouble, and the police don't do anything about it. So it's not safe. The pensioners tell me, 'it's not safe to come back here with your children.'"

Emir continued, speaking quickly and with evident anger. "The second thing is there are no health services. And then my house has no roof, it's destroyed. By my calculation it would take at least 15,000 marks to make the house livable again. But even if we could live there, there are no services, no school for my kids, no doctors for us, no jobs. Eighty percent of the houses are abandoned, empty, just decaying. The pensioners there tell me they feel like they're in a camp."[4] Emir pulled out his wallet and withdrew an old, wrinkled photograph. "Here, I have something to show you. This is the place." He pointed out the landmarks—downtown Zvornik, his village, Serbia on the other side of the Drina. I asked Emir why he carried the picture. "I was born there. I love that place like I love myself. All the ethnicities [*narodi*] lived in harmony. But the mosque was destroyed in 1992. The Serbs built a church there after Dayton, in 1996. A lot of people would return if the church was removed. But there it is."

MEMORY AND MORAL IMAGINATION

Zlatko Hurtić, a former director of Bosnia's "poverty reduction strategy" and one-time World Bank employee, complained a few years ago that Bosnians "expect to live like they used to before the war—going abroad, buying Italian clothes. But it wasn't real; the economy was funded by Tito's foreign borrowing, and they won't believe that" (Eager 2003). Indeed, the Yugoslav state was struggling with a foreign debt of nearly $20 billion by the early 1980s,

---

[4] For closer analyses and critiques of the post-Dayton process of refugee return, see, e.g., Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007; Gilbert 2003, 2005, 2008; Stefansson 2004.

among other deep and systemic economic problems (Donais 2005: 6; Ramet 2002; Woodward 1995a, 1995b). High-profile local psychiatrist Slobodan Loga diagnosed all of Sarajevo with post-traumatic stress disorder during a 2003 interview with a British journalist; but as the conversation continued, he pinned the blame for what he saw as widespread symptoms of traumatic stress not on wartime experiences but on the "economic and social problems" of the post-war era (Eager 2003). His further comments are revealing: "We had a good life before the war," he said. "Why can't we go back to that? Our communism wasn't like Russia or Hungary. I don't mind democracy but this privatization is just a mafia. I don't know why the international community wants us to be in this mess" (ibid.).

For Loga, as for the beneficiaries of Wings of Hope, the Yugoslav economy had *moral* reality, whether or not it was *technically* "real." Today, two decades after the collapse of socialism in Yugoslavia, the values, ethics, and social expectations of a lost—perhaps mythical—time still have emotional and moral force in Sarajevo. Dismissing this force as a kind of backward-looking nostalgia, a willful obliviousness to the march of time, the true realities of the past, or even as another symptom of traumatic stress—an inability to reach grief's ostensibly final stage, the acceptance of loss—misses the moral and political content of what Sarajevans communicate when they evoke their history. In Sarajevo memory is not only about obsessive commemoration of, or unfinished mourning for, a lost era. Older generations perform acts of remembering that are as much about the present—and the future—as the past. These acts of memory are modestly *mobilizing*: the invocation by Sarajevans of Yugoslav-era dreams and values, that is, contributes to the construction of small, alternative solidarities on the margins of Bosnian society (Bancroft 2009, Buric 2010, Simmons 2009, Volcic 2007, Gilbert et.al. 2008, Palmberger 2008). Here coping with the wounds of war—and, perhaps more importantly, the hardships and constraints of war's aftermath—is inherently sociopolitical and intersubjective, accomplished as much through individual counseling and processing of painful memories as through the small-scale, tentative restoration of ties of trust and support in contexts outside of formal psychotherapeutic encounters.

Throughout my time in Sarajevo, I witnessed an everyday moral imagination that seemed to be given no voice or value in Bosnia's post-war economy and political process. Through their varied and creative engagements in Southeast Europe and across the world, anthropologists continue to have an important role to play in advocating for the potential value of this form of

imagination in contemporary economies of truth- and policy-making. It may be a tired anthropological mainstay, a banal statement of the obvious, to point out that any broad concept—"trauma," "reconciliation," or "ethnic division," for example—will fail to fully capture complex and fluctuating sociocultural realities or to tap the rich inventiveness of people's local knowledge and arts of existence. But getting close to people through ethnography can remind us of just how much is at stake in our capacity to engage with what exceeds our analytics: at the very least, whether we can come to cultivate a greater awareness of the indispensability of organic, day-to-day social processes to the work of social repair and transformation over time. These processes cannot be easily engineered through policy—but they could certainly be better valued and attended to in both academic and political debates, with far greater humility and willingness to learn from the Herculean efforts people must exert to build and sustain their lives in the face of terrible loss and structural constraint.

Bibliography

Bancroft, Claire. 2009. "Yugonostalgia: The Pain of the Present." *ISP Collection.* Paper 787. http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/787

Barnett, Michael. 2011. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Biehl, João, and Peter Locke. 2010. "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." *Current Anthropology* 50(3): 317-351.

Biehl, João, and Amy Moran-Thomas. 2009. "Symptom: Subjectivities, Social Ills, Technologies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38: 267-288.

Biehl, João. 2007. *Will to Live: AIDS Therapies and the Politics of Survival*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Biehl, João. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bose, Sumantra. 2002. *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention.* London: C. Hurst & Co.

Bougarel, Xavier, Elissa Helms, and Ger Duijzings, eds. 2007. *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Bringa, Tone. 2004. "The Peaceful Death of Tito and the Violent End of Yugoslavia." In Borneman, John, ed., *The Death of the Father: An Anthropology of the End in Political Authority.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Burg, Steven L. and Paul S. Shoup. 1999. *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Buric, Fedja. 2010. "Dwelling on the Ruins of Socialist Yugoslavia: Being Bosnian by Remembering Tito." In Todorova, Maria, and Zsuzsa Gille, eds., *Post-Communist Nostalgia.* New York: Berghahn Books. pp. 227-243.

Chandler, David. 2000. *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton,* 2nd edition. London: Pluto Press.

Cousens, Elizabeth M. and Charles K. Cater. 2001. *Towards Peace in Bosnia: Implementing the Dayton Accords.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Das, Veena, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds, eds. 2001. *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Donais, Timothy. 2005. *The Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Post-Dayton Bosnia.* London: Routledge.

Eager, Charlotte. 2003. "The war is over but Sarajevans cannot find the peace they seek." *Daily Telegraph,* September 6.

Fassin, Didier. 2012. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Garcia, Angela. 2008. "The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, and the Melancholic Subject." *Cultural Anthropology* 23:4, pp. 718-746.

Gilbert, Andrew. 2008. "Exercising Foreign Authority in Contexts of Linguistic and Cultural Difference." In *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Connecting Research and Policy*. Working Memo, CUNY Program on States and Security, pp. 18-25. Accessed online, September 10, 2009, at: http://www.statesandsecurity.org/_pdfs/PostConflict PeacebuildingMemo.pdf.

Gilbert, Andrew. 2005. "Humanitarianization and *Politika* in the Refugee Return Process in Bosnia-Herzegovina." Paper presented at the conference *Politics and Society Ten Years After Dayton: Young Scholars Conference on the State of Social Science Research on Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, November 10-13, 2005.

Gilbert, Andrew. 2003. "Exploiting Humanitarian Spaces: Exploring the Politics of Antipolitics in the Refugee Return Process in Bosnia-Herzegovina." Paper presented at the 102nd annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, November 19-23, 2003.

Gilbert, Andrew, Jessica Greenberg, Elissa Helms, and Stef Jansen. 2008. "Reconsidering Postsocialism from the Margins of Europe: Hope, Time, and Normalcy in Post-Yugoslav Societies." *Anthropology News* 49(8): 10-11.

Han, Clara. 2004. "The Work of Indebtedness: The Traumatic Present of Late Capitalist Chile." *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 28:2, pp. 169-187.

Harvey, Paul, and Jeremy Lind. 2005. *Dependency and Humanitarian Relief: A critical analysis.* Humanitarian Policy Group, Report 19. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Hayden, Robert. 2007. "Moral Vision and Impaired Insight: The Imagining of Other Peoples' Communities in Bosnia." *Current Anthropology* 48:1, pp. 105-131.

Hayden, Robert M. 1999. *Blueprints for a House Divided: The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hromadzic, Azra. 2011. "Bathroom Mixing: Youth Negotiate Democratization in Postconflict Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 34(2): 268-289.

Markowitz, Fran. 2010. *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Palmberger, Monika. 2008. "Nostalgia Matters: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as Potential Vision for a Better Future." *Sociologija* L(4): 355-370.

Ramet, Sabrina P. 2002. *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milosevic.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2008. "A Talent for Life: Reflections on Human Vulnerability and Resilience." *Ethnos* 73:1, pp. 25-56.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2007. "Violence and the Politics of Remorse: Lessons from South Africa." In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations,* Biehl, João, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, eds. pp. 179-234. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Simmons, Cynthia. 2009. "Miljenko Jergovic and (Yugo)Nostalgia." *Russian Literature* 66(4): 457-469.

Stefansson, Anders. 2004. "Refugee Returns to Sarajevo and Their Challenge to Contemporary Narratives of Mobility." In Long, L.D., and E. Oxfeld, eds., *Coming Home? Refugees, Migrants, and Those Who Stayed Behind*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Volcic, Zala. 2007. "Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(1): 21-38.

Wagner, Sarah. 2008. *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Woodward, Susan. 1995a. *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Woodward, Susan. 1995b. *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945-1990.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Young, Allan. 1995. *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.