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## Multiple Temporalities of the Partisan Struggle

From Post-Yugoslav Nationalist Reconciliation Back to Partisan Poetry

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**ABSTRACT:** The article departs from the diagnosis of post-Yugoslav contemporary accounts of Yugoslav and partisan events. The critique of nationalist and Yugonostalgic discourses discloses shared assumptions that are based on the 'romantic' temporality of Nation and on history as a closed process. In the main part of the article the author works on the special, multiple temporality of partisan poetry that emerged during the WWII partisan struggle. The special temporality hinges on the productive and tensed relationship between the 'not yet existing' — the position of the new society free of foreign occupation, but also in a radically transformed society — and the contemporary struggle within war, which is also marked by the fear that the rupture of the struggle might not be remembered rightly, if at all. The memory of the present struggle remains to be the task to be realized not only for poets, but for everyone participating in the struggle. This is where the revolutionary temporality of the unfinished process comes to its fore, relating poetry to struggle, but again producing a form of poetry in the struggle.

# MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES OF THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE

From Post-Yugoslav Nationalist Reconciliation  
Back to Partisan Poetry

Gal Kirn<sup>1</sup>

Ruins therefore often become palimpsest of construction, use, and decay. They give the past a palpable density, despite failing to represent any particular moment of the past. They convey various kinds of temporality, from slow partial decay to instantaneous catastrophic implosion.

*Andreas Schönle*

## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE RETURN OF MEMORY

In 1989 the triumphant discourse on the ‘end of history’<sup>2</sup> brought the death of socialism and the expansion of liberal democracy. The proclamation of the end of history could also be read literally, as the death of *history* as a discipline with a homogenized narrative. It is in the same year that Pierra Nora wrote a groundbreaking article, which disentangled the fundamental opposition between history and memory, and at the end assumed the standpoint of memory.<sup>3</sup> The crucial role in this ‘transition’ was played by ‘places of memory’ and literature. These might be crucial places and practices that would decide the outcome of the battle between memory and history. Nora’s wish became a reality over the last two decades, which saw an unprecedented boom of ‘memory studies’<sup>4</sup> in the academic field and a proliferation of new memorialization projects that have shaped a new politico-cultural reality.<sup>5</sup> After all, with the end of ‘grand narratives’, obsession with memory seemed to be the only choice of refuge in a world so devoid of meaning. Forget history as a discipline: remember memory!<sup>6</sup>

Although my research is deeply critical of the contemporary prevalence of memory, which exists at the expense of a general theory of history, the point of departure remains within the field of memory. More specifically, this research explores polyvalent ways and ambivalent poli-

tics of memory that refer to the partisan struggle in World War II as one of the key historical events in the former Yugoslavia. The history and memory of this event have not been completely buried. Neither focusing on a specific site of memory (Yugoslavia) nor considering only the form of artistic and poetic works, my 'memory study' is integrated into a more general historical context that sharpens the all-too-frequently blurred dialectic of remembering and forgetting.

The recent history of former Yugoslav republics is unquestionably one of the most exemplary cases that shows the ambivalences of new national(istic) building processes and memorialization projects. In the 1990s the emergence of former Yugoslav republics as new and independent nation states launched a large-scale project of thorough historical revisionism: all the major historical events were rewritten. For my purposes, I will limit the research scope to memory of the partisans, and will refer to the most obvious result of the recent ideological manoeuvres that will be challenged in this essay: the relegation of revolutionary partisan and communist history to the dustbin of totalitarian history.

The recent past has become a strategic stake for a vast majority of political and cultural agents that have articulated and anchored new cases for forgetting and remembering. The case for forgetting has an obvious advantage for the nationalistic agenda: to forget, or at least severely revise the memory of, socialist Yugoslavia. In contrast, the case for nostalgic remembrance glorifies the birth and times of the Yugoslav Nation.

From the perspective of contemporary and dominant nationalistic reconciliation, my reorientation to the partisan memory, that is, to the People's Liberation Struggle (PLS) from World War II seems anachronistic. We now live in a time of post-totalitarian and democratic consensus, where the central emphasis is placed on the new 'nations'. Those that dwell on the past are easily dismissed as dreamers and idealists. However, it seems that the ghosts of the past are once again haunting the living. Deploying Benjaminian<sup>7</sup> lenses to revisit the history of the now half-forgotten partisan past has become a political necessity. The task of a historical materialist is therefore to bring back to life the history of those who are now excluded and oppressed. I certainly have no intention of collecting the memory of partisans in order to simply preserve it in a museum, as was done in socialist Yugoslavia, or to reduce it to a simple formula that would transfer the revolutionary legacy to new generations through existing 'political' institutions. It would be simi-

larly naïve to expect that aesthetic means or art in general are the only means to conserve and convey emancipatory promises. This research cannot promise to solve the ‘paradox’ of memory on the partisan struggle, but I would like to argue for a partisan return to the event itself. The memory of the partisans represents a highly tense, contested, and even contradictory relationship between different temporalities. As mentioned earlier, when it comes to the Yugoslav partisan past, the dominant particular history is reflected either in a reconciliatory (teleological) temporality of Nation or in a heroic (circular) temporality of Yugonostalgia. The history and memory of the partisans that I recover and retrace have an open and ruptured (not-yet-existing) temporality. I will try to answer the question of how the memory of partisans can grasp the radicalness of the revolutionary event. The complicated nature of this question directs the research to an analysis of the fields of ideology, politics, and art.

In the first part of this article, I will situate my critical intervention in the context of other competing and dominant models of memory: nationalistic reconciliation and Yugonostalgia. Both politics of memory are founded on the idea of Nation, and conceive history as a closed process. Even though at first glance they are seemingly opposing memories, their temporality is equally teleological and closed. The second part of the article starts by briefly specifying the role of partisan art in the PLS, and then unravels an aesthetic genealogy of memory concerning the partisans. More precisely, I disentangle different temporalities of the memory of partisan struggle. The analysis consists of a close reading of three partisan poems from World War II. Surprisingly, these partisan poems attempt to memorialize the future much more than the past, in the spirit of Tatlin’s famous *Monument to the Third International*, which in its form embodies an open temporality. In other words, the partisan memorial is oriented towards the future, embracing the temporality of the ‘not-yet-existing’ or of what would be called in French ‘futur antérieur’.

## 2. POST-YUGOSLAV MEMORY OF THE PARTISANS: ANTI-TOTALITARIAN REASON MEETS YUGONOSTALGIC PASSION

To remember or to forget the Yugoslav past seems to be one of the first obsessions of the ideologues in the post-Yugoslav context. If Yugon-

ostalgia idealized a past that never existed, to the anti-totalitarian memory it served as another fantasmatic, negative, screen around which the legitimacy of the transition process was executed. During the early 1990s an organized assault on all institutional levels – or to put it in Althusser's terms, on all major 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISA), such as the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the communications ISA, and the cultural ISA<sup>8</sup> – took place: the Church became a leading force in organizing anti-communist discourse and activities with the clear intention of reviving past traditions for the public in order to regain social power. The denationalization process meant that the Church became one of the major landowners in the new states. New historical textbooks were written, sister languages were no longer taught in elementary schools, and pupils from former Yugoslav republics were segregated in separate classes at schools. Meanwhile, the media joined with museums and galleries to launch a series of documentaries, reports, and exhibitions on the topic of recent totalitarian history;<sup>9</sup> in particular, a whole 'nationalistic' journalistic assault against other brother republics and immigrants was waged in the media. Last but not least, in the midst of the political apparatus, the echo of national reconciliation and the rehabilitation of local fascist collaborators became the building blocks for the ideology of the ruling class.<sup>10</sup> Monuments consecrating fascist collaborators were erected all across the former Yugoslavia. In this climate, a large part of yesterday's communists became staunchly anti-communist, making political conversions a political norm.

This ideological remake continues in two major lines of politics of memory. The first official response to the end of communist Yugoslavia is a derivative of the dominant anti-totalitarian ideology, which paints all the recent past in gloomy, totalitarian, and dark colours. The anti-totalitarian memory tends to forget everything connected with communism, Yugoslavia, Tito, or multinational and class solidarity.<sup>11</sup> However, even though it has sought to erase the old 'socialist and Yugoslavian' legacy, this ideology would not exist without its arch-enemy. It was already evident in the late 1980s that in order to dismantle the 'foundational myth' of socialist Yugoslavia, the primary attack was concentrated on the re-evaluation of the partisan struggle. In its most extreme variant, the forgetting resulted in a historical amnesia of the anti-fascist legacy and in prioritizing nationalistic agencies in recent history.

This view was softened to some extent by a humanistic ideology calling for respect for all victims and for the universal validity of recon-

ciliation. A much-repeated humanist claim would go along the following lines: 'It does not matter if the victims of totalitarian terror were partisans, fascists, or local collaborators; in the final instance, what matters is that they were all human beings. War is absurd.' This banal and apologetic stance of an atemporal, false universality was supplemented by the nationalistic reconciliation, which 'sutured' the dialogue on World War II: 'It is true, they were all human beings, and they belong to one Nation'. Therefore, the dominant ideology of the ruling class can be encapsulated in the formula: nationalistic reconciliation = humanist reconciliation + nationalism.<sup>12</sup> The formal, atemporal aspects of humanist memory are supplemented by a nationalistic memory. In its most extreme version, it suggests a rehabilitation of fascism and the equation of partisans with totalitarians. Importantly, anti-totalitarian discourse not only uses negative references, but also uses important references to the past. It remembers the glorious days of the Nation and affirms the national cause that was supposedly upheld by the local aristocracy and subsequently by the rising national bourgeoisie. Forgetting the Yugoslav past has been accompanied by the (re)invention of old traditions, based on the existence of 'national' nobility in the early Middle Ages, the different 'national' kingdoms in the late Middle Ages,<sup>13</sup> and, more commonly, the nineteenth-century national awakenings.<sup>14</sup> Even though the ruling classes did not have anything to do with Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, or Macedonian national identity, nostalgia for a 'glorious past' is very much alive in the post-Yugoslav context. Historically, the national identity of most of these communities was 'imagined'<sup>15</sup> only in the second part of the nineteenth century, and most concretely after World War I and in the wake of World War II. The inscription of the history of the oppressed was revised: it comes as no surprise that the peasant revolts, the Reformist struggles, and the PLS, which were among the few revolutionary moments in the history of the Balkans, were almost entirely removed or downplayed in official historical accounts. The present conjuncture realized the thousand-year-old dreams that were fuelled with the circular temporality of a romantic teleology, where the role of the hero is assigned to the Nation. The national memory embodies the linear development of a holy teleology, which proclaims the beginning and the end of history *in* the Nation. History in the post-Yugoslav context ends in the Nation.<sup>16</sup>

The second response is Yugonostalgic, which comes 'from below' and can be seen as a form of 'passive' resistance to the capitalist transi-

tion, extreme nationalism, and the recent wars in the Balkans. Yugonostalgia holds on to a positive image of socialist Yugoslavia in the world and of the idealized great leader Tito.<sup>17</sup> Instead of a demonization of the recent past, one encounters the naïve idealization that invents a past that did not really exist. I would agree with Velikonja that this type of memory is much more polyvalent and critical than the anti-totalitarian memory, because it can be found in different forms and variations all across the former Yugoslav republics, mostly among very young and old generations. Also, in a way, it runs against the official state ideology, a kind of resistance to the all-nationalist horizon. One can affirm that Yugonostalgic motivations and manifestations are multiple, but they do not always exclude a nationalistic memory. Nevertheless, most often, Yugonostalgic practices are placed under the old patriotic slogan of ‘brotherhood and unity’ and demand a more authoritarian politics, striving for the return of the great leader.<sup>18</sup> It is extremely difficult to see the political effects of the cultural translation of Yugonostalgia beyond escapism and a commodification of memory.<sup>19</sup> Yugonostalgia nurtures an idealized memory of Yugoslavia, and time has stopped at a precise moment with a specific start (1941) and end (Tito’s death in 1980 or the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991). If Tito were alive, all would be fine.<sup>20</sup>

The temporality of the anti-totalitarian and Yugonostalgic memory is quite clear and linear. Either one deals with a predestined and eternal memory that is based on the Nation in order to become the first and last reference of any memorial action and reflection, or one ends up in a closed circle of Yugonostalgia, yearning for a specific historical period that is redeemed by the ‘Saviour’ of the people, Tito. These accounts fall under the umbrella of teleology, which takes history as a closed process with a certain origin, goal, and subject. These historical accounts have a well-defined origin (Nation, the making of Yugoslavia), goal (Nation, Yugoslavia), and subject (Nation, Tito). If the first deals with the legitimization of the present, the second is oriented towards the past. Yet, while they differ in their endings, they share the same structure in so far as in either case the predestined origin, goal, and subject work as the fixed and sacred core of an ideological memorial project.

It seems that the logic of reconciliation is winning the ideological battle, because it wants to appease people of all the former Yugoslav republics. After the bloody break-up everyone can reconcile with everyone; fascists and communists can embrace each other. All people can

heal the wounds of each particular nation, on the condition that they belong to it. In the name of reconciliation and nation, the anti-fascist and partisan legacy is erased or neutralized. These two different, and at first glance opposing, memories of the Yugoslavian past can be best understood in terms of a 'multistable figure' (*Kippbild*). Both positions are apparently at conflict and seem even irreconcilable in their visions of the past, but, as I try to show in this article, they are only different aspects of the dominant memorial ideology. Using the terms of Michel Foucault, one can say that these aspects belong to the same 'archive of Yugoslavia'. Yugoslavia then becomes a discursive formation that disciplines and monitors the discursive rules of what can be said and uncovered, what remains unsaid about it, and what is silenced.<sup>21</sup>

The task of this article is to make these seeming opposites visible and recover a partisan counter-archive. One of the central lessons learned from the partisan struggle was its uncompromising call for the negation of any reconciliation with extreme nationalism and forms of domination. Moreover, the memory of the partisan struggle as a revolutionary event becomes irreconcilable with the existing archive of Yugoslavia.<sup>22</sup> Rather than mythologizing the national substance in a unified archive, the revolutionary dimension is directed towards an open temporality that is thus difficult to enclose in the national myth. No matter how much the dominant archive of Yugoslavia demonizes the past or simplifies its existence, it seems that something always escapes it, or even resurrects the ghosts of the past. Whether it be called a political remainder or an excess of the revolutionary past, this 'something' is impossible to forget. This something, the Lacanian 'Real' of the partisan struggle, is perhaps impossible to remember, but at the same time also impossible to forget.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. RETURN TO THE PARTISANS

After two decades of thorough historical revisionism and anti-communist propaganda, one can now (since very recently) detect growing research and general interest in revisiting partisan legacy beyond Yugonostalgia. This revival of partisan memory takes place in different media, cultural platforms, and even political forms across the post-Yugoslav context: graphic and other artistic exhibitions, theatre plays, articles, reviews of screenings of old partisan films in film festivals and



on public television, and the reappropriation of partisan slogans in the current struggles against privatization and neo-liberal capitalism.<sup>24</sup> There is also a key theoretical reference to which I need to pay tribute: the theoretical enterprise undertaken by Miklavž Komelj, whose 600-page book on partisan art thematizes different artworks and political documents, and includes groundbreaking analyses.<sup>25</sup> After the publication of this book, topics concerning partisans reached a level of theoretical acclaim. However, maintaining a critical distance is appropriate, because a return to the 'real' cultural works of partisans does not necessarily lead us to the 'origin'. My contribution goes against a hermeneutical search for the origin and does not want to illuminate how things really were in partisan times. Already, Foucault, following Nietzsche, famously refuted the quest for an origin that would present something pure and reinstate a primary identity. To launch a new perspective on partisans is only possible by 'putting into question the very historical subject which one tries to attain'.<sup>26</sup> It should not be understood as a return to a lost paradise, but as a mobilization of historical resources that intervenes in the present conjuncture.

### 3.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTISAN ART FOR THE PARTISAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE

While Miklavž Komelj was important for the return to partisan art, another group of critical authors and political commentators returned to the PLS as the most important political event in twentieth-century Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup> This event consisted of different stages and should be read as a complex encounter of social forces that engaged in anti-fascist struggles and wars of national liberation, and also started the socialist revolution. PLS stood for the politics that affirmed a set of political principles that were based on equality, internationalism, and liberation. PLS was a revolutionary movement and resulted in a new political entity, namely socialist and federative Yugoslavia. The socialist revolution did not simply follow from the anti-fascist struggle, however. Rather, it was through the perspective of World War II, which partisans thought of as a 'revolutionary war', that it became a catalyst for subsequent events. The Axis forces attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, and two weeks later the old royal Yugoslav army signed a complete capitulation without offering much resistance. Local populations were immediately exposed to severe terror: the Axis forces and fascist collaborators sent Jews and Gypsies, but also other Slavic people and political

opponents, to concentration and other labour camps.<sup>28</sup> Many systematic killings had already occurred during the early stages of the occupation, and triggered a strong anti-fascist resistance. This was largely effectively organized by the Communist Party, which had worked illegally since its constitutional ban in 1921, but the anti-fascist struggle did not exclude other democratic forces that joined the movement, like cultural workers, Christian Socialists, and Youth and Women's organizations. By the end of the war, the anti-fascist partisan struggle or PLS became a mass uprising, in which more than 800,000 partisans formed four Yugoslav armies.<sup>29</sup> The struggle against occupation also meant a struggle against local collaborators, resulting in Yugoslavia going through a bloody civil war.<sup>30</sup>

Given the extreme circumstance of war and guerrilla partisan struggle, one would not expect to find much artistic activity. Cicero's remark that 'during the war, art is silent' seems more likely. Indeed, a majority of commentators treat cultural activity in times of war in terms of propaganda. The same diagnosis was made in the past for partisan cultural activity, but thanks to the work of Miklavž Komelj, one can recognize the full scope of partisan art. This was not merely propaganda, but was productively linked to the struggle. According to Komelj, the novelty of partisan art should be grasped in terms of its creative gesture of reinventing the material conditions of art itself. During the occupation, official artistic institutions did not dictate what constituted art or how it should be done, nor even who practised it. The former art establishment with its institutions was dissolved, and the task of partisan art was to invent a new artistic autonomy, with new institutions and its own canon. Partisan art emerged from its very impossibility: 'it created its own conditions from their very absence'.<sup>31</sup> This conception of art is radically different from the liberal idea of autonomy, which is always presupposed and affirmed by an ideology of spontaneous artistic creation. The liberal conception of art is accompanied by a set of presupposed aesthetic criteria, which legitimize what is and is not art. As Adorno already noted, the question of autonomous art is never merely an artistic question. It rather implies a very tense relation between politics and art. If Adorno argues that a politics of art exists in the very form of art, I should add that in the case of partisan art, it is the very existence of art that resists 'the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads'.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the conception of partisan art comes closer to Sartre's conception of 'engagement', which does more than just defend the novelty of artistic form: Partisan art was political from the beginning, or, as Komelj says, it 'inseparably linked its own freedom with the people's liberation'.<sup>33</sup> However, this political dimension of art was not only declaratory or blindly instrumentalized by the General Command of the partisans. Partisan art cannot be understood in purely propagandistic terms as a simple tool in the struggle: quite to the contrary, partisan art became an end in itself. The General Command financed and supported the printing of thousands of copies of the avant-garde partisan poets Karel Destovnik Kajuh and Matej Bor, and they also financed the highly ornamented graphics and large collection of poems of France Prešeren. This meant that the politico-military leadership invested in the progressive organization of cultural infrastructure. It would be difficult to understand this support for avant-garde art<sup>34</sup> if one took a more pragmatic criterion; in this case it would be wiser to use time and material means to spread simple propagandistic material, or gather more food and real weapons for the partisan struggle. However, the political emphasis on the creative and complex nature of partisan activities shows a striking awareness of the leadership for cultural activity. It has to do with a large proportion of cultural workers in the partisan struggle, and is explained well by a historical account of partisan women.<sup>35</sup> When they joined the partisans, there was no more spare time, as they were involved in military work and fighting, in nursing and caring for the wounded, or in politico-cultural work, education, and cultural organization. It was not the educated communist elite that was leading people and instrumentalizing art; on the contrary, the PLS represented the first time in Yugoslav history that masses of anonymous poets, music groups, choirs, theatre groups, sculptors, painters, and cultural workers came to the historical stage quite separately from any established institutions. Komelj's analysis refers to the tremendous force and eruption of cultural works among the masses:

It was not necessary that masses who spoke up for the first time formulated revolutionary slogans; they were included in the revolutionary process simply by the very gesture of speaking up. Liberation struggle brought also freedom of expression to people to whom this right was denied before; but they fought for it and started exerting it.<sup>36</sup>

These were times when words became weapons, but also when the words of the masses became weapons of mass creation: it was only through symbolic struggles that the military struggle for liberation could be imagined and strengthened. But could these words of the masses be transferred to people after the end of the partisan struggle, to future generations? This will remain an important question for later Yugoslav art in all its different forms. Here, I will address the question of whether partisan art during the struggle traced the revolutionary break with the past, and if so, how it was done. Partisans feared that all the partisan creativity and the effects of the rupture would be lost and forgotten due to the imminent threat of annihilation, but also that people after the end of war would not be able to grasp the radicalness of the partisan struggle. There are some illuminative examples of poetic works that dealt with these questions and that worked on the open temporality of the PLS through artistic means.

### 3.2. MULTISTABLE MEMORY ON THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE: THREE PARTISAN POEMS, OR POEMS FOR THE FUTURE

More than twelve thousand partisan poems were written during World War II in Slovenia alone. Selecting the texts that best evoke the memorial function from this poetic bulk is a difficult task. Most of the poems that explicitly refer to memory evoke the memory of home, of the beloved (mother, girlfriend, children...), the memory of peaceful times, or the memory of the fallen, when death took them. For my purposes, I chose three poems that, rather than simple personal memories, evoke a collective dimension of the struggle and an open temporality. Each poem addresses the dimension of the not-yet-existing in its own way: the first poem addresses the question concerning the (in)comprehension of the struggle in the far future, the second speaks about the structurally impossible temporality of the poem for the purposes of the revolution, and the last poem brings together the dimensions of all the tenses: past, present, and future. One could say that they all drew inspiration from the avant-garde and the call for a new communist society.

#### *a) Someday in a Million Years' Time...*

A partisan named Iztok wrote this poem in 1943. It presents a tense relation between understanding the struggle today and distortions of this struggle in a distant future. The poem refers to the memory of the intensities of the unfolding struggle.

*Someday in a million years' time...*

One day, in millions of years,  
maybe a geologist will write,  
how people lived in these days.

His lips will curve into a bitter smile:  
oh, yes, at that time, a human being was only an animal,  
which is why his acts should not be taken as sins.

But if he could only know  
how our hearts were beating warmly all that time  
that comradeship was to us more than we to ourselves,  
maybe then he would think differently about us,  
and then also understand our great pains.<sup>37</sup>

This poem speaks about the meaning of the partisan struggle, how it will be interpreted later, and what kind of 'working through the past' will take place. The poet fears that instead of Adorno's 'working upon' the struggle (*verarbeiten*), a new geologist will only 'work through' the struggle (*aufarbeiten*), which will simply remove it from memory.<sup>38</sup> If our poet only knew how correct his anticipation was, with just a small rectification: it did not take millions of years, but only forty years for new 'geologists' to cease understanding the struggle!<sup>39</sup> This poem presents a tremendous awareness and self-reflexivity of the partisan struggle, and articulates the crucial question: how could the radical novelty of the struggle be grasped? How is it possible to make sense of the extreme tension and distance between noble intentions and the brutal effects of actions? The struggle is thus located between two extremes: on the one hand, the poem evokes the brutal transformation of man into 'only an animal', that is, into someone that kills; on the other hand, it also evokes the transformative dimension of a person, which highlights the politico-ethical principles of the 'highest' order: 'comradeship' and the dedication to the universal cause (the fight against fascism and revolution), which according to Iztok brings 'great pains'. This inherent tension of the partisan cannot be resolved in moral categories of individual choice or the pragmatism of survival, but should be addressed in the light of the partisan task: that is, the liberation of the occupied country and the transformation of society. More than being a question of hate against fascism or a mere fight against the occupation, what was really at stake was their dedication to other partisans and to the partisan struggle (the PLS).

If one undertook a 'geological' journey and started measuring the events in terms of Christian morality (or 'sins', as the poet puts it), then the entire struggle would hardly make sense. The sin of killing would be too great for such a sacrifice. It would likewise make no sense if one pursued a humanistic and legal path, which would repeat the obvious: that is, one would not even 'risk thinking' of the partisan event<sup>40</sup> and would simply 'curve one's lips': terrible events and killings happened, there were many victims of war and revolution, and even 'innocent' people died on all sides. Once one posits the discussion in this framework, one arrives at the conclusion that everyone is the same, that all the victims are universal. Morality is not inherent in the situation, but is simply applied to it. Along similar lines, 'Christian morality' extrapolates the identification of partisans as animals and thus presupposes the Hobbesian formula: *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man). It lies in human nature that people are 'animals' and 'bad', and the war is evident verification of animal behaviour in human nature. This argumentation then confirms what moralists and humanists want to hear. They end up working on the level of pure empirical facts or morality, which results in counting bodies, enumerating battles, and decrying war in terms of its absurdity: every war is the same.

However, the partisan war was an anti-imperialist war that strived for the end of all wars. As Stojanović correctly claims, it was a revolutionary war that started the process of the radical transformation of society.<sup>41</sup> Also, in terms of ethics, the poem's stress on 'comradeship' pinpoints the dimension of politics that goes beyond selfish self-interest ('more than we to ourselves'); thus, it demands taking sides in the struggle against the occupation and against the pre-war ancient regime, whose majority of old party members collaborated with the occupiers. The fascist goal of World War II to organize the community on the basis of 'pure' race and nation strikingly coincides with the constitution of new national states in the 1990s. In this respect, the communist goal of the transformation of society was based on the political principle of egalitarianism and the constitution of 'revolutionary people' rather than on ethnic principles. In the war against fascism, there should be no neutrality, because neutrality means taking sides: the side of the strongest, the side of the existing state, which in this case was the foreign occupation. To decide for the partisan side was to affirm a path to a different world beyond the existing coordinates.<sup>42</sup> It is precisely in this regard that a merely geological approach of counting bodies and labelling

monstrosities does not suffice. Moreover, as Iztok correctly implies, moralization might lead to incomprehension, which in turn might result in the radicalness of the PLS being lost and the partisan memory weakened.

Another important aspect of this poem hints at the necessity of expressing and transferring the experience of the partisan struggle to the next generation. How can the legacy of the struggle continue? What artistic or political format will best conserve the very precarious existence of the partisans? Let us not forget that death was very common among partisans, and a military defeat of the partisans in the face of the better-equipped and much larger adversary seemed for a very long time more likely than victory. All these experiences and the dedication to the cause risked being lost instantaneously. The momentary and fragile character of the partisan struggle was traversed by a future that was impossible to predict, but for which it was nevertheless necessary to take risks. This was a future for which many partisans sacrificed their lives.

#### *b) Partisan Anthem*

The poem entitled ‘Why Poem?’ (or ‘Poem to What?’) could be read as the anthem to the partisan struggle, which is how its author, the partisan Franc Pintarič-Švaba, referred to it. It is particularly interesting in terms of its temporal paradox, but also in terms of its paradoxical reference to the poem itself. It has a tragic ending and an adventurous after-life that deserves to be told in fuller detail. Franc Pintarič-Švaba (1924–1942) was a fighter in the Veličkovič’s troop of Štajerska’s battalion. He was poisoned on 23 August 1942 by a German denunciator (perhaps his colleague before the war), and was taken to the German army, then died on the way to hospital. It was most probably for military reasons that the German forces translated his poems with the help of local collaborators. Perhaps they speculated about the importance of these notes or simply wanted to check the morale of the partisans. How surprised they might have been, once they translated it and found such clear thought, such strong political conviction. Perhaps the surprise was great for the researcher who first found these rudimentary German translations in the archive confiscated from the Nazis after the war.<sup>43</sup> It may never have been read aloud to another partisan nor even read silently by a partisan on a long night; however, it was read and presumably closely examined by Nazis. The original Slovene version was lost; most likely

the Nazis destroyed it. Forty-five years later, in the 1980s, when Boris Paternu finished his anthology of partisan poetry, and his editing team found and translated this poem back into the original language, Slovenian, the purloined letter finally made a full circle. It had already been there, prepared to reach the people who were supposed to fulfil its call. However, history is not always just, and when the poem finally got published in 1987, the project of nationalistic reconciliation was already on the political agenda. The dissident critique of the regime attacked the glorification of the partisan struggle and brought to the fore the post-war killings of partisans that settled accounts with national traitors in military courts, or even without judicial processes.<sup>44</sup> By the time the poem arrived at its country of origin, the memory of the partisan struggle had already been lost. What a strange historical irony! Or perhaps it could be argued that this irony simply reflects the historical moment, when the ‘addressees’ (the future partisan generations) of the poem and its historical context had disappeared. I would like to argue that this historical coincidence corresponds to the specific impossible temporality inherent in the structure of the poem. Miklavž Komelj presented an adapted form of this poem in his book.<sup>45</sup> I would like to translate Komelj’s Slovenian adaptation and then translate it again from the existing German source (1942) to compare it with the Slovenian translation from Paternu.<sup>46</sup>

First, the translation of Komelj’s adaptation:

*Poem to What?*<sup>47</sup>

The poem for which victims are falling,  
 the poem that still needs to become reality;  
 however in the moment it becomes reality,  
 the poets and writers will already write poems  
 to the glory and memory of the victims that fell for this poem.

Secondly, I will translate a more literal translation of the poem from the German archive that is combined with the Slovene translation of Paternu:

Why Poem?

We wrote poems in different times, when we did not have  
 other work. However today, when the Law is on the side  
 of the stronger, when the weapons speak, our poem is loud  
 and clear enough: ‘We want to live, live freely in a *free*<sup>48</sup> land.’  
 This poem of ours is our guide, our anthem. This is the poem for



which victims fall – innocently – fall by the thousands.  
When this poem becomes a reality, when freedom  
will approach in all its shine and power, then poets and writers,  
come forward! To the fallen victims for this poem  
– poems of eternal glory and memory (should be written).<sup>49</sup>

This is one of the most striking poetic formulations of a complex temporality that is at work in the partisan memory. This is a poem that refers to ‘pre-war’ poems (from times of peace) and to the poems of the future that will be written about the fallen heroes, but at the same time it is a highly self-reflexive poem, speaking about the present poem, the partisan anthem. It is not only a memorial poem, but an anthem, a song, one of the *thoughts* of the partisan struggle. ‘Why Poem?’ or ‘Poem to What?’ refers already in its title to the vocation of the poet or, more importantly, to the vocation of the poem. One can read it in a literal sense, as Komelj suggests: symbolic words also become weapons in times when weapons speak. Because partisans in the first years of war were not in large numbers, did not have heavy armoury, and were fighting in a guerrilla way, words and art became crucial weapons in order to mobilize and symbolize the struggle. This is *why the poem*. I translate the title in a different way than Komelj. The title ‘Poem to What?’ gives us a slightly different perspective that points to another dimension; namely, *to what* does the poem speak, what is it addressing? It is not simply a call, a duty of the poet to speak to others about the partisan struggle. It addresses the partisan struggle itself and attempts to ‘formalize’ the rupture, the revolution. It is a poem that was created within and because of the partisan struggle. In this sense, this poem participated in the process of changing the existing state of affairs, in making the land ‘free’ through words.

The self-reflexivity points to the particular temporality of the poem. I mentioned the historical coincidence that this poem was neither accessible nor made public for years; it could easily have remained lost or been drowned in the nationalistic reconciliation. But the question of the ‘real’ addressee is not so crucial; rather, what I want to explore is a certain temporal impossibility, which is structurally inscribed in the poem of the partisan struggle. This poem demands additional attention, since it refers to a temporal paradox and also a general paradox of the vocation of poetry. Temporally, the poem highlights the role of this Poem the poem of the struggle that is related *per negationem* with ear-

lier poems, which were written in a time of leisure and cannot be included in the 'vocation' of poetry. At the end of the Poem Pintarič refers to future poems, which will commemorate the partisan struggle. Not only does the poem differentiate between different vocations of poetry, it also is itself articulated from a paradoxical point in time; it evokes the standpoint of future, of the not-yet-existing – or in the words of Pintarič, from the future perspective of the 'free land'. Pintarič formulated the political maxim of the partisan struggle, synthesized in a single sentence as 'we want to live freely in a free land', which produces an engaging relationship between his present and the future to come. Žižek formulates this temporal paradox and claims that in a revolutionary situation this call to 'overtake oneself towards the future' is necessary.<sup>50</sup> It demands thinking and acting as if the future already existed, and thus effectuates the transformation before it takes place in reality. One side of this specific temporality is therefore to affirm something in the future, to act as if it is already there. The other side is its 'retroactive assertion' that this 'free land' will be achieved. Žižek takes this temporality from Lacan and Badiou, who refer to it as the 'futur antérieur'. It is not enough for a revolutionary event or a partisan struggle simply to take place: in order for it to take hold it needs to be named and retroactively acted upon.

Pintarič recognized this temporality and demanded poems to have two different tasks: to be both poems for the future and future poems. According to Pintarič, the future poems would replace this Poem of the future. Future poems would recite and memorialize the past glory of the struggle. Could it then be said that the partisan anthem would ultimately be dissolved in the commemoration of the partisan struggle? This invitation to writers and poets would seem to dissolve the very poetic function, the very vocation of poetry that Pintarič advocates in the first place in his title of 'Why Poem?' The stripping of the poetic function puts all future poems in the position of commemorating, transforming the revolutionary weapons into state weapons or ideological vehicles that convey the glorious aspects of the struggle. I would argue that the continuation of postevental truth cannot go without hegemonic-ideological struggles, and it also warns against the forgetting of the struggle. This is the way one can defend the very ending call of the Poem that dissolves into poems. This mediation is necessary, but not a necessary evil. To return to the question at the beginning: what is the task of these new poems? What purpose do these poems fulfil? Not only

mere commemoration, but also the systematization of the experience and the restoration of belief in the partisan struggle, in what will at some point be lost despite being in front of geologists.<sup>51</sup> Future poems should recreate the conditions of the struggle and reactivate its revolutionary core.

However, these future poems will not easily replace the Poem. They cannot be thought of without relation to the partisan anthem. This poem has the most complicated temporality. Pintarič signals its internal impossibility of memorializing what is still to be realized and what cannot be anticipated.<sup>52</sup> Is not the key characteristic of Pintarič's anthem precisely its disappearance through its final realization? It will disappear the moment the land is free, not when other poems replace it. It will be realized through its disappearance, through becoming a reality. The Poem was written for solely this purpose: once the struggle has achieved its goal, the anthem would only be stating the obvious, a *fait accompli*. One could argue that this poem is structured like the proletariat.<sup>53</sup> Once liberation is achieved, when the old class society is dissolved, not only philosophy but also the Poem and art will die out. Art becomes life, an embodiment of the old German Romanticist desire. *Nota bene*, it is not the task of the Poem to change the world: that is the task of the partisan struggle. The partisan anthem 'only' participates in this change. But this futuristic Poem will not disappear until the change is fully executed. It is here as a remainder, which makes us see both the never fully achievable end of emancipation and also the *contemporaneity* of the poem. This Poem is to be forever re-actualized in specific historical periods, in all the future revolutions, as an unfinished project, as a *fait à accomplir*.

### c) Poem of the 'Last' Struggle

The last poem I wish to consider was written by the renowned avant-garde partisan poet Karel Destovnik Kajuh (1922–1944). His poems were popular during, but also after, the war and were printed in their thousands in illegal printing houses. Shortly before being shot, he wrote 'Poem of the struggle':

This poem will be the poem of millions,  
this poem will be the struggle,  
because it grew from my blood,  
because it grew out of dead bones,  
from dead bones  
from the very last struggle when people were killed.<sup>54</sup>

Kajuh's poem formulates a self-referential expression that speaks of the Bergsonian coexistence of past, present, and future: he writes a poem about a future poem. The poem's temporality evokes the dimension of not-yet-existing; it is a matter of the future and of millions (the masses), but at the same time, the poem already 'grew' from the dead bones, from the past struggles, evoking the dimension of the past. Komelj correctly says that the not-yet-existing dimension of the poem is 'not the absence of concrete realizations, but the effect of all concrete realizations in temporal tension that established the *perspective* of the "ultimate" struggle as present'.<sup>55</sup> Again, in a similar gesture like Pintarič's poem, Kajuh attempts to address the question from the perspective of the future, of a 'free land', when no more people will be killed. The 'Jetztzeit' of the struggle and the poem is even more emphasized than in the partisan anthem, however, since most of the arguments from the previous section could be reiterated. I can only add that this poem, even if written in the midst of the most brutal killings and with a very militant dimension, expresses an extreme anti-war attitude. It does not follow the maxim of all 'imperialist wars' that are fought in the name of 'peace' only to eternally continue wars. The gesture of Kajuh in this poem is the opposite: it signals to struggle towards the last struggle, which is an 'anti-imperialist' and revolutionary war. It is in the name of an 'ultimate war' for the cessation of all imperialist wars that this struggle is fought for. It does not base itself on the logic of presupposed racial and national enemies, which is evoked by the fascist logic of war. The anti-imperialist and partisan war is waged against one central enemy, the anti-fascist enemy, and is led as a defensive war against the foreign occupation. This anti-war partisan logic operates on Hegelian double negation, the 'negation of negation', in the first sense negating the frame of imperialist war, but also in presupposing its own negation, in the perspective of the 'last' struggle.

If the first poem operated on the level of a more 'nihilistic' subjectivity, which did not want to be taken into the radical ethical interior of the struggle, the militant subjectivity of this last poem is clearly invested with revolutionary legacy. Perhaps the apocalyptic tone of the verses is the central reason that this poem needs no further mediation of poems, or can be seen as the poet's last testament for future partisan struggles.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: REVOLUTIONARY TEMPORALITY ON PARTISAN STRUGGLE

All three poems raise extremely important questions that go well beyond the question of the 'memory of partisans',<sup>56</sup> which would be a mere struggle for contemporary interpretations of the status of a past event. These poems succeeded in expressing a certain deadlock: how could the radicalness, the novelty of the struggle, be formalized? In a way, they already anticipate the whole 'future' history of the more or less creative failures of Yugoslav art in their attempt to invent a new aesthetic form for the Yugoslav revolution. These aesthetic attempts ranged from alternative and mainstream films, modernist monuments and architecture, and graphic arts, to literature and poetry. What most of them failed to address was the central lesson of the partisan struggle, which was conceived not to stop, but to continue the path towards building a new society. This future and communist society does not want to leave behind its archive, but carries the radical demand of contemporaneity, expressing utopian dimensions that are to be realized and are to haunt the present. Partisan struggles attempt to embody all the past struggles and open up to future struggles, which can only be realized on condition that they take place in the 'last' struggle. According to this 'utopian' procedure, any return to the partisan beginning should only be a new beginning oriented towards the future and should not be functionalized for commemorating the past or becoming nostalgic about it.

Poetry and thought about the partisan struggle has manifested a ruptured and open temporality, which radically differs from what was framed as the dominant ideological archive on the Yugoslav (and also the partisan) past. The teleological tendency of the dominant ideologies – Yugonostalgia and anti-totalitarianism – which refer to the closed temporality of Nation, resulted in conciliatory revisionisms of the partisan revolution and anti-fascist tradition. The nationalistic reconciliation with its precise goal of achieving national substance became a cornerstone of post-Yugoslavian nationalist memorialization projects. Based on the end of history, this archive foreclosed a revolutionary vision. The old national model of 'one nation in one state' marked a sign of historical regression, where wars were waged in the name of eternal hatred and animosities between ethnical groups, which was in the last instance condensed in the statement: it is impossible to live in a multinational

federation, the case of the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia being direct evidence of this thesis. The blatant continuation of local imperialist wars that were followed by a humanitarian intervention in the late 1990s finally buried even the liberal idea of a cosmopolitan and open society. The transition was achieved: from the federative and socialist experiment of Yugoslavia to seven ethnic societies conditioned by the semi-peripheral role of a neo-liberal capitalist world system. The 'mono-stable' temporality and spatiality of new nation states imagines one, and only one, alternative: a liberal state based on free-market principles. This type of historical choice goes against the partisans' struggle, which was fought against the old Yugoslavian state, inventing new political forms that were demanding, with Lenin, the dissolution of the state. What happened with these revolutionary demands in the course of socialist Yugoslavia remains another important question to tackle in the future. Recovering the past material, cultural, and political history of the oppressed demands that this be done by the researcher *in a partisan way*: that is, *it needs to take sides*. Let us end with another short poem 'Love in Storm' from a partisan poet, Matej Bor:

Tonight I saw your palm,  
how it got squeezed in the firm fist  
in the darkness of Ljubljana streets.  
And you know of what thought I, the poet-partisan?

If only my poem was like your palm,  
all soft and tender like the cherry blossom in spring  
and that it was as resistant as your fist,  
whenever you witness the fascist parade.<sup>57</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank the ICI colloquium and particularly Christoph Holzhey for valuable comments on draft versions of this text.
- 2 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).
- 3 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', trans. by Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (1989), pp. 7–25 (p. 8).
- 4 For an opposite view that speaks about the hypertrophy and obsession with memory, see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics*

of Memory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); for the death of history see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Death of history? Historical consciousness and the culture of late capitalism', *Public Culture*, 4.2 (Spring 1992), pp. 47–65.

- 5 Especially in the Eastern European context, from museums to giant memory parks, the process of testimonies and memories of the recent past has been very intense and politically motivated.
- 6 There are different definitions of history as a discipline. Here we operate on the historical difference produced by the end of history. Boris Buden's *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009) quite correctly diagnoses the emptiness, the evacuation of any meaningful criteria, or stories during the transition processes that resulted in an unprecedented obsession with memory.
- 7 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996–2003), iv: 1938–1940.
- 8 The concept of ISA comes from Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127–88, which asserts that the Church as an ideological actor became of secondary importance after the French Revolution and the process of secularization. Althusser's model of ISA is not progressivist and linear, as specific circumstances can change the outcome of the ideological struggle between the apparatuses.
- 9 Let us give one typical example from the Slovenian context, where the former Museum of the People's Revolution, which was renamed the National Museum of Contemporary History (of Slovenia), organized a massive exhibition named 'The dark side of the month' and presented a totalitarian past <[http://www.muzej-nz.si/eng/eng\\_razstavni\\_katalogi\\_03.html](http://www.muzej-nz.si/eng/eng_razstavni_katalogi_03.html)> [accessed 21 July 2012]. Also, it is symptomatic that the catalogue of the exhibition is distributed for free, while all other publications are to be paid for as normal. Eastern European states institutionally back the anti-totalitarian ideology, its real material existence being inscribed in the important national museums that lack a more complex account of the past. Besides the museum, many museum parks display to the public grand works of socialist realism. Budapest's Memory Park is an emblematic example of a Disneyland for memory, commodifying memory with extremely cheap anti-totalitarian statements. See: <<http://www.szoborpark.hu/index.php?Content=Szoborpark&Lang=en>> [accessed 21 July 2012].
- 10 Here are some Internet resources with speeches of official political representatives commemorating totalitarian crimes: <<http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/v-sloveniji-lahko-govorimo-o-regresiji-spravnega-procesa/264551>> (Slovenian centre of national reconciliation), <<http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/dan-sjecanja-na-zrtve-totalitarnih-i-autoritarnih-rezima-i-hrvatska-je-cesto-u-tome-sudjelovala/567891.aspx>> (reconciliation in Croatia), <<http://www.dw.de/groblje-za-vojnike-vermahta-u-crnoj-gori/a-15331844-1>> (reconciliation in Montenegro: preparation for the monument to Wehrmacht soldiers from World War II), <[184](http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/stres-ne-more-biti-zlocinov-brez-</a></li></ol></div><div data-bbox=)

zlocincev/92948> (report on the speech by the Bishop of Celje (Slovenia), Anton Stres, at the memorial in Teharje on 5 October 2008) [all accessed 15 December 2011].

- 11 The anti-totalitarian ideology is not peculiar to the post-Yugoslav context: many Eastern European and other European countries (with right-wing ideologies) share this common denominator. It is in this respect that one can read the proclamation of the very first European Union (EU) day of memory. It is no longer about the victory over fascism, but much more importantly, 23 August signifies the day of the memory of totalitarian crimes, where fascism is equated with communism. See the EU Parliament's resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>> [accessed 15 December 2011].
- 12 For a more precise analysis, which analyses the transformation (or rather, the destruction) of the partisan memorial sites in Croatia and Slovenia, see Gal Kirn, 'Spomin na partizane ali misel o partizanstvu?' [Memory on Partisans or Thought on Partisans?], in *Catalogue Museum on the Street*, ed. by Zdenka Badovinac and Bojana Piškur (Ljubljana: Muzej moderne umetnosti, 2009), pp. 104–12.
- 13 Different historical books of Croatian, Serbian, or Bosnian kingdoms have given scientific legitimacy to nationalist ideologies, for reinventing the roots. The example of contemporary Macedonia is the most striking. The official state ideology and politics of memory has gone far into the past in order to find the foundational myth, some kind of transhistorical essence of Macedonia. Very recently, the centre of Skopje has become a construction site of large and expensive memorial sites and sculptures of 'Ancient Macedonia'. The official memory locates the glorious past in the times of Alexander the Great, even if he was not even 'Macedonian'. See the governmental PR clip <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iybmt-iLysU>> [accessed 24 November 2012]. The official ideology does not care for historical facts.
- 14 This is the most accepted path of rooting the national tradition. In the example of Slovenians and Croatians, it happened in the Habsburg Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, whereas simultaneously for Serbians and Montenegrins it was the liberation from the Ottoman Empire. They all emerged as the struggles of the smaller nations for recognition against the Empires. For a concise analysis and critique of the nationalistic logic and reappropriation of nineteenth-century national historiography, see Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).
- 15 In his book *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2010), Benedict Anderson convincingly shows the making of national communities and nationalist ideology, which cannot be posited before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Peter Stankovič recently made an important analysis of the deconstruction of (Slovenian) national identity in partisan films, showing that national identities are always historically (mis)constructed. See his book *Rdeči trakovi. Rep-*



*erezantcija v slovenskem partizanskem filmu* [Red Tapes: Representation in Slovenian Partisan Film] (Ljubljana: Založba FDV, 2005).

- 16 See the special issue of the journal *Borec, Uneventment of history* (2008), which counters the nationalistic methodology of a new historiography and argues for a more complex theory of history.
- 17 Cf. Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgia* (Ljubljana: Mirovni Inštitut, 2009).
- 18 See the film *Hej Sloveni! YU-Nostalgia as Phenomenon of Everyday Life* by Aleksandra Vedernjak, Josefina Bajer, and Daniela Mehler (Germany, 2010).
- 19 A typical example of Yugonostalgia is a film from Mila Turajlić *Cinema Komunisto* (Belgrade, 2010).
- 20 Undoubtedly, a more political tendency – ‘progressive nostalgia’ – could be developed further, but there are very few affirmative political examples that could fit this reimagination.
- 21 For a definition of the archaeology, see Michel Foucault’s ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 139–65.
- 22 In the historical reality of socialist Yugoslavia, the policy of ‘reconciliation’ never really took place. The enemy of the people and national traitors were imprisoned; some were executed, while others fled mainly to South America at the end of World War II. The reconstruction and post-war enthusiasm in emerging states started addressing this issue with a delay, mainly concentrating on the building of different partisan memorial sites. It was only through some films that the question of ‘reconciliation’ appeared from the 1960s onwards. For details see Kirn, ‘Spomin na partizane ali misel o partizanstvu?’ and Gal Kirn, ‘Antifascist Memorial Sites: Pure Art or Mythologization of Socialist Yugoslavia?’, in *Art Always Has Its Consequences*, ed. by What, How & for Whom / WHW (Zagreb: Zelina, 2010), pp. 120–35.
- 23 See Buden, *Zone des Übergangs* and Najafi Saleh, ‘Hope Against Hope’, *Pages Magazine*, 8: When Historical (2011), pp. 59–73.
- 24 There was an important exhibition with the catalogue on partisan print in the *International Centre of Graphic Art* <<http://www.mglc-lj.si/eng/index-razstave.htm>> [accessed 15 December 2011]. For a detailed summary of some other cultural events see Miklavž Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?* [How to Think of Partisan Art?] (Ljubljana: Založba / \*cf., 2009), pp. 9–12.
- 25 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*
- 26 Giorgio Agamben, ‘Philosophical Archaeology’, *Law Critique*, 20 (2009), pp. 211–31 (p. 217).
- 27 See Boris Buden, *Zone des Übergangs*; Slobodan Karamanić, ‘Kosovo after Yugoslavia’, *Prelom Edition in English*, 8 (2006), pp. 23–39; Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*; Gal Kirn, ‘From Partisan Primacy of Politics to Postfordist Tendency in Yugoslav Self- Management’, in *Postfordism and Its Discontents*, ed. by Gal Kirn (Maastricht/Ljubljana: Jan van Eyck Academie and Peace Institute, 2010), pp. 253–305; Ozren Pupovac, ‘Projekt Jugoslavija: dialektika revolucije’ [Project Yugoslavia: Dialectics of Revolution], *Agregat*, 4.9/10

- (2006), pp. 108–17; Branimir Stojanović, ‘Politika Partizana’, *Prelom*, 5.3 (2003), pp. 48–51.
- 28 The most notable and well-organized local collaborators were the Ustashes forces of the Independent State of Croatia, the Chetniks in Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro, the Home Guards in Slovenia, the Balli Kombëtar in Kosovo and Macedonia, the Muslim Handzar division in Bosnia, and royalist forces across the country.
- 29 It was the largest resistance movement and army in Europe. For a detailed overview of data relating to the partisan struggle in World War II collected on the page, see <<http://www.vojska.net/eng/world-war-2/yugoslavia/>> [accessed 24 November 2012].
- 30 In this respect, it is important to stress that the Yugoslav partisan forces were not internationally recognized until the Tehran conference in December 1943. It was only then that they became formally a part of the Allied anti-fascist forces. This peculiar situation and tension with the royal old government in London meant that Yugoslavian partisans had to rely on their own forces to face both the occupation and local collaborationist forces. For an account of the complicated and ambiguous relationship of the Allies towards partisans and collaborators, see Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija SFR Jugoslavije: glavni procesi* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978) and Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*
- 31 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, p. 47.
- 32 Theodor Adorno, ‘Commitment’, in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 177–95 (p. 180).
- 33 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, p. 31.
- 34 Komelj’s argument is at some points far-fetched, and it seems as if what happened was not a revolutionary encounter but some kind of ‘avant-garde’ nation-building process. In essence, the thesis of small nations that can be established only via culture (Kafka’s ‘Josephine’) is reaffirmed by avant-garde means. Komelj’s thesis bases itself on the nineteenth-century national awakening, which started ‘imagining community’ by poetical means.
- 35 See the volume *Partizanke: Žene u NOB*, ed. by Daško Milinović and Zoran Petakov (Novi Sad: Ako, 2010), which comprises interviews of different partisan women engaged in the PLS.
- 36 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, pp. 104–05. Translation mine.
- 37 Translations are mine. The original is taken from *Slovensko pesništvo upora*, ed. by Boris Paternu (Novo Mesto: Dolenjska založba, 1998). Iztok, a fighter from Prešeren’s brigade, published this poem in the first issue of the partisan newsletter *Triglavski Odmevi*. As an interesting detail, I can add that the poem is a witty continuation of Srečko Kosovel’s poem ‘Tragedy on the Ocean’ from 1925. Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) was the biggest avant-garde, constructivist, and expressionist poet in Slovenia. In this poem, he criticized the downfall of humankind and reproached it for the absence of a struggle. The ocean will simply overgrow the layers, and the geologist will not find any traces of humankind. But even if a struggle takes place, with partisans, there is no guarantee that the ocean will not simply overgrow it.

- 38 For a detailed critique of these two ways of memorializing, see Theodor Adorno, 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past', in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 89–103.
- 39 I will not work on the official state memory in socialist Yugoslavia, which was also troublesome, because it tended towards the simple glorification of the partisan struggle. One can then read the historical revision as an overreaction to the former glorification.
- 40 I take this formulation of the 'risk to risk' from Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (London: Verso, 2005). When analysing the French Resistance, he interestingly observes that to start thinking is equated with entering the Resistance. Thinking meant risking the risk, doing away with the dominant opinions of the time (pragmatism, collaboration), going against the simple historicist claim that reduced history to class divisions (objectivism), and going against the morality of individual responsibility (subjectivism). I also agree with the warning from Badiou that the non-thinking of fascist politics, which leads to such monstrosities taking place, only brings more obscurantism; I will also add that, in the final instance, a lack of analytical apparatus can result in the non-distinction of the fascist side from others.
- 41 Stojanović, 'Politika Partizana'.
- 42 This is another important reason for differentiation between the 'nationalistic' (local collaborationist) and the partisan side. The former supported the order and ethnical identification, while the latter pushed beyond the existing state of affairs.
- 43 A local collaborator (or collaborators) translated all of his four poems into German: 'It Is Raining', 'Dear Mother', 'Why Poem', and 'To the Denunciator'. In the latter, he places severe judgement on all national traitors, who he says should be treated with great severity. It is tragic and ironic that he was betrayed by a denunciator – perhaps his poem arrived 'too' early for the addressee. As an added detail, it is interesting that the partisan's second family name was Švab, or 'Schwab' in German, which shows his mixed ethnical background. People from Yugoslavia usually call a German 'Schwab' (or 'Švab' because of the southern region in Germany), which brings another ironical twist to the story.
- 44 This part of the revolution became part of the shame of the Left. See Kirn, 'Spomin na partizane ali misel o partizanstvu?.'
- 45 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, p. 189.
- 46 Paternu, *Slovensko pesništvo upora*, p. 297.
- 47 The title 'Čemu pesem?' is not easy to translate; although Komelj and Paternu use 'Why Poem', I suggest translating it by sticking to the original grammatical form, a question, which is linked to 'dative' declination and refers to the neutral form: that is, to the object and not to a person or subject ('Komu pesem?'; To Whom a Poem?). This is why I suggest translating it as 'To What (Purpose) the Poem?' or 'Poem to What?'. I made a small transformation from sentence form into verse form.
- 48 Instead of translating the adjective 'frei', Paternu translated it into 'our', which leans the poem towards a national reappropriation. It was not simply a struggle

for a land that would be ours – Slovenian or Yugoslavian – but for a land that would be free from exploitation and domination, and also from the old Yugoslavia. The German source remains more loyal to the partisan experience than its later translation into the ‘original’ language.

- 49 The German source found in Paternu, *Slovensko pesništvo upora*, p. 297 is presented here:

*Warum Lieder?*

Lieder schrieben wir zu anderen Zeiten. Weil wir sonst Nichts zu tun hatten. Heute jedoch, da das Recht auf Seite des Stärkeren ist, da die Gewehre sprechen, ist unser Lied genügend laut und deutlich: ‘Leben wollen wir, leben frei auf freier Erde.’

Dieses unser Lied ist uns Leitmotiv, ist unsere Hymne. Für dieses Lied fallen Opfer – unschuldige – fallen Tausende. Wenn dieses Lied Tatsache werden wird, wenn sich uns die Freiheit nähern wird mit all ihrem Glanz und ihrer Gewalt, dann Dichter und Schriftsteller auf den Plan! Den Gefallen Opfern für dieses Lied – Lieder zu Unvergänglichem Ruhm und Andenken.

- 50 Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso Books, 2008), p. 460.
- 51 Cerkevnik interestingly defends Mayakovsky’s elegy on Lenin and the poet’s famous call ‘Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live’ in terms restoring the spirit of the October revolution; see Žiga Cerkevnik, ‘Hlače v oblakih: Vladimir Majakovski’, *Agregat*, 5.11/12 (2007), pp. 58–61. A strategic difference with the selected poems is that they do not refer to Lenin as the embodiment of the masses (Tito), but instead refer to the Cause. Of course, there are many partisan poems that are consecrated to Tito, but I will not analyse them here.
- 52 The film *Still Life* from Jia Zhangke (Shanghai, 2006) shows the opposite perspective, where the future has already gone, the utopia has already been sold or has sunk under the dam that is being constructed and will flood the city. The temporality of the revolution has a very different – that is, open and undecided – status. One cannot have already ‘sold’ the future in advance.
- 53 Karl Marx used Hegelian logic in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, relating the task of philosophy to revolutionary practice. Although much ink has been spilled on these theses, here I would only like to mention that it is along these lines that Lukács posits the formation of the proletariat as the embodiment of the negation of all classes; the proletariat is a class that is actually a ‘non-class’, since its ‘realization’ entails the dissolution of capitalist society, which would mean the advent of a ‘classless society’. For details, see Etienne Balibar, *Philosophy of Marx* (London: Verso, 2007), who discusses the conceptualization from Georg Lukács, *History & Class Consciousness* (1920) <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/lukacs3.htm>> [accessed 24 June 2013].
- 54 Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, p. 193.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 This brings us to another important question: namely, how to address the mem-

ory of the victors – should they be referred to as victors of the Revolution (not the counterrevolution)? The memory model either refers to ‘imperialist victors’ or to the victims, but once we met with the Yugoslavian case, or anticolonial struggles, we had a different ‘image’. Those who were oppressed and beaten were transformed into the victorious side. In this light, a pertinent question for the memory study perspective should be posed, which is not without a Benjaminian residue: why is there the privileged treatment of the suffering of marginalized groups, or only the history of the victims? Victims cannot be simply be equated with the oppressed. However, this will be elaborated on another occasion.

57 Matej Bor, *Previharimo Viharje* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1961).

Gal Kirn, 'Multiple Temporalities of the Partisan Struggle: From Post-Yugoslav Nationalist Reconciliation Back to Partisan Poetry', in *Multistable Figures: On the Critical Potential of Ir/Reversible Aspect-Seeing*, ed. by Christoph F. E. Holzhey, *Cultural Inquiry*, 8 (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2014), pp. 163–90 <[https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-08\\_08](https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-08_08)>

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