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THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF SUPPRESSION AND “MEMORY LOSS”: THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF POPULAR CULTURE IN POST-YUGOSLAV CROATIAN DISCOURSE

Summary

The article discusses the role of subculture in Croatia and wider South Slavic context during and after the transitional period from the hegemony of Yugoslav communist system to the national state and its new narratives. The introduction discusses the modalities of memory loss in regard to the Yugoslav system of values. It focuses on the situation in popular culture and the new media, arguing that the process of memory loss has been orchestrated by the new national hegemony in both the media and politics and in the subcultural environment of marginal groups. The emphasis is put on the discursive tactics that have contributed to this process in the public sphere. The second part of the article concentrates on the relationship between the private and the public spheres and pays special attention to the relation between spontaneous subcultural practices and orchestrated mass-cultural outlets that very often construct the sphere of popular cultural needs. It is argued that the modalities of re-constructing and re-directing the narrative as an ethical (ethnic and political) issue remain an important topic not only for a better understanding of popular culture's hegemonic order but also for the modalities of survival of the narrative as a literary autonomous field.

Keywords: deconstruction, memory, hegemony, subaltern voices, subculture, popular culture, mass culture, Croatian (and ex-Yugoslav) *new wave*, Serbian and Slovenian popular culture, politics and poetics, style in popular culture, mass culture and suppression of (cultural) resistance

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Introduction

Central to this work are the discursive tactics crucial in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the subcultural poetics and its political frame related to the ruling hierarchy of the contemporary hegemonic order(s) in South-Eastern Europe. Discussing all aspects of the problem in its complex intercultural and (occasionally) multi-cultural space of "Western Balkans," South Eastern Europe, or "Former Yugoslavia" would, at this stage, be a task too large to pursue due to the fact that very few studies on that topic have been conducted so far. However, the transformation of old political mythologies into a new set of hegemonic languages remains an open problem which will be discussed here. This study focuses on Croatian discourse, but also considers its interaction with a wider South Slavic context. The contemporary move towards "internationalization" of local paradigms and commercial ventures that artificially "cross the borders" of new self-sufficient inter/cultural policies/manipulations is not discussed here in detail.

1. From "Brotherhood and Unity" back to the "Thousand-year-old longing for one's own state": modes of suppression and the (post)modern loss of memory

1.1. The poetics of subculture

This section examines the phenomenon of the suppression of memory in the field of culture, and pays special attention to popular culture. This article mainly deals with popular music from the period which was named the *new wave* (*novi val*) and which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was closely related to what was happening in youth journalism and in the widespread cultural activity that Stuart Hall describes as "youth culture," a major subcultural activity opposed to "parent culture" (see Procter 89, Hall 217). How its poetics developed is a question of its relationship to the power centre, but also to the similar cultural processes that a few years earlier were taking place in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Scandinavia, and a number of other countries.² On the one hand, the movement was a rebellion against the power of local (socialist) authorities and against a semi-rural, raw, and very double

2 In *Guerrilla Radio: Rock 'n' Roll Radio and Serbia's Underground Resistance*, Collin, whose focus is on Belgrade, claims that "punk was taken very seriously in former Yugoslavia, perhaps more seriously than anywhere else in the World" (14-15). This aspect of popular culture's politics became a specific poetics that had a strong local flavour, especially in a discourse of a distinctive style that went far beyond fashion and music.

faced “parent culture,” but, on the other hand, it was only a continuation of trends present in Western subcultural discourse that expressed themselves through popular music.³ In relation to the dominant cultural discourse, popular music and its rock subculture(s) were always marginal phenomena in Yugoslavia. In the semi-rural country, in which the majority of the population was forced to migrate to the cities in order to populate them and construct a working class lifestyle (as a necessity for building Communism), the old rural culture survived in both the poetics of everyday life and in popular culture. The folk tradition, which produced mass culture, was always more popular than subcultural movements. Consequently, the majority of the young population were also “mainstream kids” that followed the pattern of popular culture produced in the mass cultural factories of music that was cheap and inspired by folklore. At the same time, the country’s rich oral tradition was stripped to its very core, and only the production of widely appealing melodies that celebrated an escape from reality was accepted by the masses. That style advanced the construct of happy, careless workers who enjoyed the benefits of free education for their children, free medical insurance secured by the government, public housing paid for in the form of “unit provided for life – and transferable to the next generation,” collective holidays in factory resorts on the Adriatic coast, jobs secured for life, as well as government pensions. The fact that all these privileges were secured by expensive borrowed loans represented a gray area that was exposed in public only by the “nationalists” who were officially labelled as the “enemies of the state.”

Nevertheless, the style of an average Yugoslav family was the one of pretend fulfilment, joy, and eternal happiness supported by radio and television programs with music consisting of pop-produced folk songs. At the same time, the generations of youth from the 1960s onwards challenged this style through various subcultural activities. Since it was not possible to challenge it in the realm of politics, or even in a politically aware (charged) language, this was undertaken through the newly constructed discursive practices of popular culture. They were basically imported from the imaginary space of democracy, as it was understood and interpreted locally, into a place and space where the poetics of everyday life was quite different and where the so called Western

3 In former Yugoslavia, this realm of “conditional freedom” was fairly open to anyone who did not undermine the basic structure of the regime (which was proclaimed in phrases on brotherhood and unity between nations and nationalities, the one party system, and collective ownership). The poetics of popular subculture was not considered a direct threat. Only its occasional flirting with “subversive elements” and the “domestic enemy” (*unutarnji neprijatelj*) in the form of a nationalistic subcultural discourse (language) was considered to be a real danger for the system (see Slavenka Drakulić’s book *Cafe Europa*).

paradigms were not fully understood as they were in their original discursive environment.⁴ The only two realms of different styles (language, verbal or visual) were the ones belonging to the discursive practices of popular culture (rock subcultures) and the silent (sub-altered) opposition of the nationalist democratic movement (the nationalists, urban bourgeois intelligentsia and what was later called Diaspora). It must be stressed that the realm of politics was out of the question as a space of language games (as Derrida calls these power games [2001]), and this type of discursive practice was only possible in the Cultural discourse.⁵ This is why the emphasis is on the cultural discourse and the poetics of popular (sub)-culture, and on the politics of nationalism.

Simon During claims that "the concept of popular music is connected with what is described as rebellion and . . . this connection, contrary to the concepts of television and what has later become the music industry (audio and video recording), is present in this form of expression and its support base from the very beginning." In fact, according to During, "cultural studies' claim to a politics of resistance has been deeply inflected by rock's rebellion" (124-125). On the one hand, During writes, this genre is, as its name says, genuinely popular, but it "is also divisive, segmenting communities by generation, class, race, ethnicity, tastes and, if less so, gender" (124). In this respect, one could say that even the big mass-cultural industry organises music divisions into units. These units are organized in different genres and they produce their own audiences, but here the emphasis is on profitability and history of this profitability (Negus 496). This is not the case in subcultural environments where the major point is an articulation of the original voice/position. This difference between massive and popular culture in contemporary culture will be discussed further with references to Raymond Williams (1958 and 1965). Here I would like to stress the fact that scholars in the field of cultural studies, however their genealogies differ otherwise, agree on the fact that music has the capacity to segment and "germinate, for instance, the concept of subculture" (During 125).

Despite the fact that it is appropriated from sociology (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2006), the concept of subculture in cultural studies was introduced and

4 In this respect, this can open a discussion about the phenomenon called "self-censorship" (*autocenzura*), which was not only something people were aware of but was also propagated by the discourse of power as the way in which newspaper articles and books had to be styled. The same goes for popular music. In my book *Gorak okus prešućenog (The Bitter Taste of the Unspoken)*, I discuss this problem in relation to the same issue in other socialist cultural discourses.

5 Simon During claims that "minorities," which, I believe, can also include those politically suppressed, "those who are excluded from formal politics, as well as many forms of economic activities, take culture most seriously" (17, cf. Gilroy).

explored largely due to the work on popular music (During). Subcultures, as understood in the now famous book by Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, are nurtured on “two crucial Gramscian terms that are especially useful in analysing subcultures: conjuncture and specificity” (see Gramsci 1999: 350, 732–740; Hebdige 1979: 18–19). As During pointed out, in analysing Hebdige’s starting position, “subcultures form in communal and symbolic engagements within the larger system of late industrial culture” (During 441). Their major structural influences are age and class, and their dominant form of expression is style. This is where the politics of subculture can be, in the process of interpretation, read at the level of interpreting its (or their) poetics and not only its discursive tactics. Poetics, at the level of subculture, works as politics only indirectly, as a subaltern voice that destabilizes the “strong” patterns of the “parent culture” and thus indirectly undermines the political realm of a stable hegemony. This is, at least, how the Croatian subculture of popular culture, which was the *novi val*, worked in relation to both the hegemony in which it grew as a force and within the hegemony in which its language changed, while it remained the same on the level of the signifying practice.

According to Hebdige, these subcultural styles are produced “within specific historical and cultural ‘conjunctures’” and they “are not to be read as simply resisting hegemony or as the . . . resolutions of social tensions” (2005: 441). The very concept of subculture, then, is discursively marked with relations of social order (class, generational difference, work), but in our particular case it also must be viewed within the frame of what was then the “soft regime” of the last years of Yugoslavia, in which a “certain level of freedom,” as Perković wrote in his account of the South Slavic *new wave* movement/subculture,⁶ has been achieved (or overtaken) by subcultural groups in Ljubljana and Maribor (punk and Neue Slowenische Kunst [*New Slovenian Art*]), Zagreb (*new wave*), Sarajevo (*new primitivism*), and Belgrade (punk and *new wave*).

From the point of view that studies the style of the subculture(s) mentioned above, the major topic that stands out is the question of the positioning within the pseudo-class structure of what was then socialist Yugoslavia. As mentioned above, in regards to the style, the *new wave* movements in Croatia and Serbia were more a reflection of imported style patterns than of generic developments and a subaltern reaction, or local cultural revamping, of the tradition in a region

6 The book written by Ante Perković is entitled *Sedma republika: pop kultura u Yu raspadu* (*The Seventh Republic: Pop Culture in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*). It refers to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that consisted of six republics.

and its political environment.⁷ This claim can be supported by interpreting the history of the project/band that later became one of the leading Croatian rock attractions and the forerunner of the succeeding “nationally aware rock movement” (as the whole project was seen later, when the language of Croatian nationals overtook control of the discursive realm of culture from the language of former socialists). The name of this project/band was *Prljavo kazalište* (*Dirty Theatre*). It was a project completely interpolated with style issues and was orchestrated by what was then a leading youth weekly in Zagreb, *Polet*. It should be noted here that *Polet* (Enthusiasm) and *Studentski list* (Student’s Journal) were two youth weeklies financed and established by local socialist youth organisations, which were a part of the hierarchy of the former socialist regime. They did the styling and shot the photos of anonymous “punks” with a crucial touch of mass media engineering. This was how the first stars of the Croatian punk scene were born. Soon afterwards, the first tour organised by *Polet*, a youth weekly of the socialist Alliance of Croatian youth, became what was later known as the birth of Croatian *new wave*. This means that despite the fact that these bands originated from the subcultural discourse and were interesting projects, as far as the authorship of some songs and sound is concerned, along with the subcultural and subaltern base that supported them, bands such as *Prljavo kazalište* and *Azra* were also partially projects engineered and masterminded by the editors of *Polet* and a subcultural group closely allied to this weekly.⁸ What substantially differentiates Croatian from the British discourse of the time, in which the punk movement and later *new wave* music was produced, is the class structure of the performers and their media support base, as well as the fact that in Croatia, and partially in Serbia and Slovenia, the official government funded the press that was doing the promotion, even though it was a marginal government press that was itself in subaltern and subcultural opposition to the “parent culture.” Serbian

7 However, the existence of a rock scene as a continuation of local tradition may also be argued since there was a local variant of glam-rock with folk elements in form of the specific sound of *Bijelo dugme* (White Button) and hard rock scene (*Time*, *Korni grupa*, *Yu grupa*, *Smak*, etc.) “against which” the new wave or “socialist punk movement” was produced locally and offered as an alternative. Its social background and a comparative analysis against the Western “canon” is provided in the text above.

8 One may argue that the same discursive production tactics can be read into the construction of a project named the *Sex Pistols* and the engineering of style and sound produced by Malcolm McLaren, as well as the influence of the *New York Dolls* on the English punk movement (see During 125). However, this does not diminish the fact that the subculture, which was heavily influenced by, among others, the first album of the *Sex Pistols*, is rooted in what remained of the English working class in the 1970s and its second generation offspring now unemployed, ideologically confused, and politically marginalised (see Clarke et al. 126–183). This also does not diminish the fact that bands from Zagreb and Rijeka originated from the subaltern atmosphere of the local suburbs where the “prospects of brighter future,” as preached by the regime, did not look bright at all.

bands such as *Idoli* [*The Idols*], *Električni orgazam* [*Electrical Orgasm*], and *Šarlo akrobata* [*Charlot the Acrobat*], in addition to *Pankrti* [*The Bastards*] from Slovenia, were also supported and promoted by Croatian and Slovenian socialist youth press – *Polet* and *Studentski list* in Croatia and also in *Mladina* (*The Youth*) in Slovenia. However, this endeavour was possible due to the fact that the three untouchable dogmas of late Yugoslav communism (“holy cows;” as they were referred to in youth press) were only occasionally reflected in, lyrics and the discursive style of this subculture, which very soon became a powerful urban alternative to the mainstream popular culture.⁹ The English punk movement was, on the other hand, first negated and marginalized, but later rehabilitated and followed by mass media musical journals.

As far as having a subcultural base, the movement in Western countries very heavily relied on the tradition of the working class and post-working-class environment of suburbans and cultural paradigms. The fan base for Croatian subculture in the making was recruited mostly through the student body at Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Belgrade universities, from urban high schools in the culturally most advanced pockets of the country, and from the ranks of urban intellectual, liberal, and social-democratic elites that considered themselves to be dissidents. However, the picture that this was a massive movement reaching into the heartland of the youth population of all the urban spaces in former Yugoslavia is in fact an urban myth whose discursive tactics and relation towards the hegemonies of both former Yugoslav and contemporary Croatian and Serbian authorities needs to be examined in greater detail. The deconstruction of this myth can lead towards a better understanding of another mythical realm, one that managed to transform its language from a sub-urban, subcultural and subaltern position to the position of political and economic power and mass media ownership. This shall be done firstly on the level of style, and afterwards by destructing, reconstructing, and analysing the discourse of power relations in the hegemonic order of the contemporary Balkans imaginary space.

Firstly, we need to see how the rhetoric of the last days of the communist rule corresponds to the rhetoric of the young national states and how this subculture became a parent culture. Also, an important question to be considered is how the subcultural language merged with the structural paradigms of the power-language, and how this hybrid entity became an important instrument of both the power redistribution and the monopolisation of the cultural realm.

9 On the “holy cows” of Communism see the discussions on “semi-liberalism” (Collin) or “conditional freedom” (Drakulić). These “holy cows” (untouchable dogmas) were: socialism, brotherhood and unity, and “one party democracy.”

In this process, the mass-culture of the Balkan paradigm is only a by-product of the way in which the mechanisms of cultural control and dissemination were structured and represented from the position of established political hegemonies. This is the reason why the *Before* and *After* of this "nationalistic" subaltern approach becoming the national policy of *difference* in relation to *Others* is of utmost interest.

1.2. The politics of nationalism: before and after

In his short story "Povijest gospođe za prije" ("The History of the Lady for Before") from his collection *Mišolovka Walta Disneya (Walt Disney's Mouse-trap)*, Zoran Ferić, one of the best known and highly regarded contemporary Croatian writers, explores some of the issues of contemporary style. He introduces a "fat ugly" girl and a girl for "after," which both pose for television commercials. The objective of the commercial is to demonstrate the effectiveness of a particular diet by presenting the appearance that the very same girl is photographed before and after the successful weight loss. The girl "for before" is the one that provides a simulacra for the unwanted, revived from memory (individual or collective) picture of *Oneself* before it was improved to be *the Other*, that is thin, pretty, desirable, and, last but not least, as artificial and, as far as possible, out of reach for *ordinary* people. The story can be read at two levels. It may be seen and interpreted as an ironic account of postmodernism and its representation in a sense of Jean Baudrillard's account which will, most probably, beg the following question: how has the concept of the *simulacra* taken control in a process of suppression of what is termed "reality" as it used to be imagined in the times of modernism? In this discursive environment the text will provide a critique of the consumer society and, with the death of the ugly, unwanted, and ordinary, it will provide us with "amusement" and "amazement" with a longing for the extraordinary, unreachable, and, ultimately, unnecessary as our "objects of desire." This would be a type of reading that Lacan and Žižek would most probably pursue. In a context of a post-communist and subaltern post-colonial milieu it would probably be the most viable postmodernist choice. Nevertheless, the story can also be read as an allegorical text applicable to the realms of a lived post-communist experience (as well as post-colonial and post-ethical subaltern perspectives) of "before" and "after." The girl "for before" in this (modernist) discursive situation becomes not a simulacrum, but the metaphor of ugly old times and space. The hegemonic order of the now forgotten genre/discourse, in which "grey spots" of the unspoken dominated the discourse of power, is now dead and buried in the symbolic form of the short story re/presentation of

the main character and the impossibility of its transformation. She (or it) has killed herself/itself in both the text and in the memory that is reconstructed in relation to the (con)text that needs not to be remembered any longer. In both interpretations, the keywords will probably include nationalism, subaltern voices, hegemony, and memory loss.

Nationalism, as most of the ideologically loaded *-isms* do, has a very selective and discursively complicated system of memory (re)production. This argument is in contradiction with the postmodern understanding of contemporary global order, according to which “the loss of memory” is the dominant discursive form in a new colonisation being either economic or mass cultural. However, in yet another paradox of the postmodern order where, as Lyotard claimed, “anything goes,” (1992: 8) nationalism fits very well with the politics of memory loss that is widely represented in postmodern cultural paradigms. First of all, this memory loss works well as a hegemonic neglect of the previous failures of this very ideology, and by “killing” those previous failures it rebuilds its power, at the same time appropriating these very same failures into systems of references that work in favour of the production of contemporary reality that serves the nationalist aims. By renewing old narratives that are “constant” in a nationalistic approach, nationalism also discursively suppresses counter-narratives – those, in fact, that form the collective memory of a particular generation that grew up in the discursive environment of an anti-nationalist counter-narrative. At the same time, by killing the hi(s)story of others in the mode of repetitive hegemonic action, the new hegemony redirects the failure of its own narrative to make it diachronically viable. America’s affirmation of every new military intervention, regardless of its failure and the ill-aimed nature of previous endeavours of the same kind (from Korea to Iraq), represents one of the best examples recognisable on a global level, at least as far as a comparative context may grasp each and every individual specific situation that is linked with this type of discursive analysis. The ability to mobilize the masses again and again, regardless of previous failures in similar discursive frames (for example, the American possible future interventions in Iran or North Korea, regardless of the failures and ill-natured consequences of previous interventions) is one of the interpretative potentials that first crosses interpreters’ minds when reading about the “killing of the girl for before.” I claim here that a similar “killing of the fat girl” can be applied to Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Slovenian discursive situation(s), as far as the (re) construction of history in this part of Europe is concerned. In this work, we shall concentrate on the “post-fatness” of a discourse that produces its “gray spots,” that is, the discursive/interpretative potential for revelation and/or

redirection in the text. In our context, these are the situations in which a nationalistic approach towards the continuous resistance of suburban culture has eventuated in the negotiation and transformation of the subculture from the subaltern position to the one of the similarly irrelevant voices of mass production industry. This was done through a process in which the new language of the hegemonic order was negotiated and the media and cultural hierarchy were submerged. At the moment when the narrative of national awareness (and nationalism) took over the language of power, the language of subaltern resistance needed to be renegotiated as well. From the realm of poetics (culture), it was a step towards the realm of politics (a positioning in a discourse of power/money making). The subculture has lost part of its memory in order to survive in a discourse in which a new memory was being negotiated in a process of power play.

However, before engaging any further in the theory of this discursive realm, I would like to provide a very brief overview of the poetics of nationalism in the space of the topic of articulation. In his classic book *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson claims that the question of nation is very much connected with the Romantic movement and was constructed during the period of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The contemporary construct of a nation and civic nationalism as a product of this narrative process is nowadays considered in the post-structuralist approach to text. The contemporary negotiations of nation-construction are narrated in a form of construction of new mythologemes and ideologemes and the appropriation and naturalisation of the old ones. This is still the prevalent approach to the subject. Nevertheless, historians such as Aviel Roshward (2006) suggest that, despite the verified fact that the discourse of the nation and the national does evolve around the Romantic idea of nation-building, the elements of nation and the national, that is, of myths and legends that contribute to nation building, come from an origin that connects nation(s) to much older discursive realms. This would mean that some of the mythological realms deconstructed in a post-structural approach would need to be renegotiated in theorizing history and in establishing the frames of poetics of nationalism as a cultural discourse.

The Croatian myth/narrative/image of the "thousand-year-old kingdom" and the "natural right to the Croatian Crown," as well as Serbian myths of

¹⁰ The first edition was published in 1983. The second, substantially revised, edition was published in 1991. It has been reprinted a number of times, and I am using the 2006 edition, which includes some "new material."

“martyrdom” and the “sacrifice of Kosovo,” may work in Roshward’s favour, as far as the re-construction of the national narrative(s) is concerned. This may be considered as a typical case of “the girl for/of before,” whose ugliness, non-acceptability, and essentialist understanding of *Otherness* inspire a reconstruction of memory and of hi(s)story that relies on oral memory preserved in literature and a patchwork that involves “bits and pieces,” which will together construct an “appropriate” order and produce a canon that will be related to popular hi(s)story in a way that can motivate and engage a wider community to advance the hegemonic idea of the power of the authorities. This type of memory construction will be selective and will rely on the discursive order of the day. When needed for political (Party of Right, for example, and part of the HDZ leadership),¹¹ or poetical (Marko Perković Thompson, *Prljavo kazalište* in one phase of their work in the early 1990s, or Ivan Aralica in his “allegoric” novels from the end of the 2000s) advancement, the Croatian narrative of the far right from the Second World War or Homeland War, or “the struggle of Croatian nobility” against Vienna or Budapest may in this ethical context be used and abused. Yet, when it comes to the point where the poetics becomes the politics, the usage of this narrative, which claims to exist “from time immemorial,” needs to be explored at the level of language games. The poetics of nationalism has produced its meta-language, which in the 1990s became not only an element of reality production (politics) and image-making skills (style) but also an element of identification (ideology). The interplay between language games of style (both in language and in the construction of reality) and ideology (as a construction of identity created “anew”) will be of utmost importance for the interpretative process dealing with memory loss. These language games take us back from the realm of politics to the discourse of what is traditionally called the canon, which is the major representative of the elite culture and its function in both the subversive times of subaltern opposition and the period when the national cultural field was, once again, reshaped as far as power relations within its discourse are concerned

The comparison of these language games with the language/narrative of the subculture of the 1980s, that has changed the meta-language of late communism and constructed language games of its own in the works of authors such as Ranko Marinković, Slobodan Novak, Ivan Slamnig, Antun Šoljan, followed by Goran Tribuson, Pavao Pavličić, and after that the generation of writers

11 HDZ – The Croatian Democratic Community (the party prefers to translate that into English as the Croatian Democratic Union, even though *Zajednica* means “Community”) is one of the two leading political parties in Croatia.

from the generation of the literary *Quorum Magazine*, as representatives of the literature that appeared during the period when the *new wave* was established, will be important for a comparative analysis of the discursive inclusion of literature in the subcultural subaltern opposition in the political discourse and the mechanisms of this subculture that are intertextually connected with the elite culture of subversion on the level of poetics. The poetics and politics of the "Croatian fantastic prose" of the late 1970s, at the time when the *new wave* was being constructed, was one of escapism and of "silent opposition" in form of re/presentation and depictions of literature constructing parallel worlds. The fact is that literature as a cultural realm was a discursive practice under the very close scrutiny of the hegemonic order. In this respect, the "unspoken," which was communicated "between the lines" of a narrated parallel world, made irony the most prominent literary trope. This is a constant characteristic of Croatian prose and drama, from Krleža, Marinković, and Novak to Slamnig, Šoljan, Pavičić, as well as Tribuson, Pavličić, Barbieri, and their contemporaries, all the way to the first generation of *Quorum* writers.¹²

This period was followed by the literature and discursive practices of the "transitional generation" of writers such as Zoran Ferić, Miljenko Jergović, Jurica Pavičić, Edo Popović, and others. Their work is very important for an understanding of the above-mentioned language games in the politics/poetics opposition. Even though their narratives are freed from the need of "indirect communication with the readership," their poetics are still very much dependent on, while at the same time in opposition to, the hegemony that runs and rules the language game of change. I would like once more to stress that memory loss is one of the important characteristics of the political discourse, including both its style and ideology. This also influences the poetics of contemporary writing. It will be very interesting to see how this "new speech" (*novogovor*) works/exists on the level of poetics in relation to the traditional speech (poetics and stylistic) of late socialism. It will also be interesting to see how the realm of subcultures that are written/constructed in opposition to the hegemony reacts on a political level, that is, by producing its own reality (politics) based on the construct of a relatively independent poetics (style and ideology).

Before starting this elaboration, I would like to note here that the position from which the "fat lady issue" is denoted is the very position that will

12 On that see Boris Škvorc, *Gorak okus prešućenog* (*The Bitter Taste of the Unspoken*). Zagreb: Alfa, 2005. For more details, see an overview of contemporary literature in the English Appendix to the book *Gorak okus prešućenog* that deals with the issue of ironic communication in the period after World War II.

ironically deconstruct this new speech. This postmodern process in which poetics becomes the politics of the subaltern articulation is not only possible in the realm of literature (Renato Baretić in prose, or Krešimir Bagić and Miroslav Mićanović in poetry) but also in media outlets that were not heavily dependent on the hegemony of power (*Feral Tribune*, for example, as well as journalists/poets coming from that milieu, such as Boris Dežulović and Predrag Lucić). It is interesting to note that the positions are changed here and the space occupied by the *new wave* music as the subaltern voice of subculture now belongs to the paradigm of the literary realm and not any more to the subaltern popular music. The subversive power of rock'n'roll is swallowed by the language (power) games of hegemony and its outreach in the form of monopoly on music and the mass popular production industry with a direct possibility of intervention by the hegemonic structure.

At the same time, the literature and arts in general during the 1980s have been controlled as “the space of utmost importance” for both the governing machinery and the then-opposition (in form of a subaltern nationalist subculture without the right to express itself). They are now free to express themselves without the fear that they will be censored or, which is even worse, taken seriously. Their “pocket of freedom” is no longer interesting from the point of view of the ruling hierarchy. Literature is now in a very similar position to the youth press and the *new wave* movements of the late 1970s. It is a space of semi-freedom, a realm of free speech that is allowed, and even financed by the Government funds, but a realm which has lost its political importance and is not as important any longer as something that can endanger the ruling elites through its verbal (moral) action. So, now we are in a postmodern situation in which a discursive subversive power of popular culture is submerged within mass cultural production, and literature is marginalized as a subcultural activity reserved for obscure book promotion venues – reading rooms with a maximum audience of fifty. However, this puts literature in a position where within its poetics it can start working on a political agenda of change in a more direct way, and this can be done more radically than ever before. The only danger here is the same as that which transformed popular culture into a mass cultural product.

1.3. The poetics of nationalism and the politics of subculture(s)

If reading between the lines, one will see that every political speech can also be read as a particular type of poetic text and vice versa. The poetics of language games in the Croatian post-Homeland War discourse of power-structure is orchestrated as a combination of power language games and the mass media

politics of representation. It is done in a form of language phrases whose structure is not to be critically deconstructed. I will, however, attempt to do so here. The formulas that dominated the national media and political speech for a decade have survived well into the twenty-first century. There have been a number of concepts (phrases) and language-game related issues introduced into the realm of political and media speech in order to organise the hegemonic reality perception suiting the ruling structures. Here are the examples of two very basic and simplified deconstructions of what is a taken-for-granted and unquestionable language realm that, in turn, has produced a construction of reality as a firm, unquestionable political realm. The phrase *Homeland War* ("Domovinski rat") is used as a permanent metaphor for what was really the War for Liberation¹³ ("Oslobodilački rat") or the Independence War ("Rat za samostalnost"). The phrase itself became the only term used for the period between 1991 and 1996. Any different wording of what was in fact the war for liberation would be looked at as a subversive practice. The other phrase is "Branitelj" (Defender), and it is used for a person who is in fact a War Veteran, or a participant in the War for Liberation. However, "Branitelj" was, and in most cases still is, the "politically correct" word that is acceptable in the poetics of identity construction in post-war Croatia. These are only some examples of how these language games are at the same time constructing their own ideology in form of a distinctive style and poetics.

What represents a very interesting starting point for further discussion is the fact that these and other examples also can be interpreted as a structural replica of the style and the poetics of the previous power structure (regime style) and the way in which its language games were constructed and its ideology produced in mass communication through either the political or the media discourse. The "faithfulness" to the system, regime, and power structure in former Yugoslavia, even in everyday communication with various representatives of power structures, was very much judged upon the language that was used and the ability to produce a mimesis of the language games played in the discourse of power. The official phraseology and its poetics survived from 1945 all the way to the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the form of a political structure. Even when the Yugoslav army started the War against two of its own republics (Croatia and Slovenia), it was still called the Yugoslav National Army ("*Narodna armija*"). Consequently, the language games

13 In the process of proofreading of this work, from my colleague who is a linguist I learned that the "Domovinski rat" (Homeland War) is a calque (Cro. Kalk) made on the base of Russian (Stalin's) demagogic phrase "Otačastvenaja vojna." It was most probably appropriated and first used in Croatian in the *Večernji list* daily newspapers.

of the former country ceased to exist after the country itself was split apart. However, the poetics that produced the structural realms filled with signifiers such as “Socialist Revolution,” “Brotherhood and Unit,” of *our* “Nations and Nationalities” has transformed itself into a number of regional language games, each with mimetic structures reflecting the structure of the original narratives. The basic principle of the policy that was realised as the poetics of these language games was one of recognition and identification. The *Others* were the ones that did not accept *our* language as *their* own.

One can consider this continuity as being non-authentic, since I earlier claimed that the nationalistic policies were developed in the subcultural environment of a subaltern situation, one that was shared with popular culture. What is important to stress here is the fact that the transformation of the subaltern poetics into the language games of power was constructed with the help of the very same elites who were either the owners or the users of the socialist poetics of the language-games realm. Structurally, there were very few changes in the construction of how the process of building the national identity in renewed language games is conducted. This fact underlines the problem of identity politics based on the politically acceptable poetics of everyday language games. The instruments of the identification politics in ideologically different political discourses will, on the structural level, remain very similar. These mechanisms of replication and structural repetition will also be applied in the controlling and naturalizing of popular culture, both as instruments of control and as means of dissemination.

From the point of view of a former subculture becoming the power of authority, in this newly constructed environment, the alternative rock subculture was viewed as a phenomenon that belonged to the realm of language games that became obsolete and purposeless. The structure was still in place, so now only the imagined reality and its imagology needed to be changed. The rocker, the subaltern Other, was in that context produced on television screens as a fighter (defender/“branitelj”). He listens to *Prljavo kazalište* (*Dirty Theatre* – the band is now a proud promoter of the national hegemonic course),¹⁴ wears stylized apparel that is a mixture of a rock outfit and a military uniform. On the uniform there are badges with signs such as “Sex Pistols,” “Dinamo,” or “Peace,” and very often on stylized television reports, one could also see that these young men wore headphones and were listening to music. Thus, they

14 Hegemony, as a term, is here not used in the Gramscian sense, that is, as an oppression of power. Its meaning is rather different and is related to the power structure, engaging much more than the mere political structure; it includes the cultural hierarchy, academia, the national consensus on policy in a time of crisis, and how this all is put together and pursued in a period of national state formation.

are both rockers (the subaltern Others) and fighters (soldiers who are defending the homeland). The *subaltern Other* from the time of joint exclusion has now become imagined by mass media power games as an ally to new owners of the language game field. In practical terms, however, as in the structure of style and poetics of language games, nothing has really changed. The same juxtaposition is still in place and the subaltern pop culture's Others are still opposed to the regime just as they were opposed to the nationalistic Other within the subaltern intellectual urban discourse. The image produced is similar as it was before – the tune/song has remained the same, only the lyrics are now different. It should be understood that the Other of the popular culture of the 1980s was opposed not only to the regime but also to the counter-culture that was preparing itself for the role as the owners of power. This opposition remained alive within the discourse of unification of the nation, but only as a cultural opposition. What became the politics of popular culture was the product of the opposition to mass-culture and the government policy/poetics and style (hegemonic language games), and not to the national state as an imagined concept. Unfortunately, that is the fact that the regime that was constructing language games of memory loss did not tolerate, or even understand.

In the discourse of the new language games, the appropriation of difference into a homogenised unity of nations became the prevailing *ideologeme*. It was built on a mythical narrative that was selectively chosen as a base of the language of hegemony, produced in a form of new national democracy. It is important to note that most of these images of unity and sameness were constructed by the renewed state apparatus, with the national television and radio network as its forerunners. The "rocker" of the *new wave* production is now deconstructed to his/her core and has become one of the voices of the unified whole, of the ideal structure of a nation in which no room for a subaltern deconstructive discourse was allowed. The *difference* now is not in the content, but only in different styles through which *sameness* can be presented. Homogenised as one in a national struggle for independence, the subcultural voices of urban pop culture are either becoming part of this unified whole, or are considered as the Other, the one who does not belong to the new poetics of national unity.

This is the point where the persistence of the subcultural becomes a political issue. Being different is always a problem in the time of national, class, or other types of homogenisation. The subculture of the *new wave* in Croatia was, in the early 1990s, a thing of the past. *Prljavo kazalište* is now practically a "national brand" in the same way that *Bijelo dugme* was in the last decade

of Yugoslavia. The speculation about whether that happened with or without the conscious decision of the band would, at the theoretical level, be only a speculation. Nevertheless, it has materialised through the state-controlled media and the public exposure of the band. On the other hand, Darko Rundek from *Haustor* (probably artistically the best Croatian *new wave* band) tried to continue the movement and insisted on the concept of music beyond borders, just as did some bands in Belgrade who resisted the Serbian regime and its politics of aggression and ethnic cleansing.¹⁵ The resistance to the hierarchy of power in any form and from any ideological position was at that time only a possibility of style, not of substance that could have had any impact in practical terms. The fact that most of these popular culture works have been suppressed from the collective memory by organised media campaigns does not work in favour of the post-*new wave* political agenda. Listening to bands such as *Azra*, *Haustor*, early *Film*, *Pankrti*, *Električni orgazam*, *EKV*, *Idoli*, etc. was now acceptable only in the realm of the private sphere. The public sphere of national unity was now the realm of the national agenda only. This firm position in Croatia was held all the way until the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, one needs to be careful when interpreting the available material. During the very same period when the joint urban intercultural paradigm was marginalized and neglected, it started to reshape itself as a phenomenon that was exclusively Croatian and that became narrated as being subversive in relation to the socialist regime. It was the myth of the generation that rehabilitated and at the same time corrected the memory legacy for its own advancement. The makers of this mythical realm mostly came from the newspapers and music circles.¹⁶ The rehabilitation of music

15 On the details of the “Radio Ship” (*Radio Brod*) on the Adriatic sea and Rundek’s role in this project, which was financed by the European Union as a part of the program *The Right for a Say* (*Pravo na riječ*) see Rundek in: Perković (61–62). About the Belgrade *Resistance* in the form of the song *Slušaj vamo*, recorded and performed at a concert that was a joint project of *Električni orgazam*, *Partibrejkers*, *EKV*, and others under the name *Rimtitutuki*, see also Perković (64–65). This was the anti-climax of the band aid concept and the direct expression of an aggressive opposition towards the war and the forceful conscription of urban youth in Serbia.

16 Another very careful reader of this text, Jurica Pavičić, suggested to include in this text the fact that in Croatia the rehabilitation of the new wave (*novi val*) started in 1998 with the book by Goran Tribuson *Trava i korov* (*Grass and Weeds*, 1998). Following the film *Sretno dijete* (*Happy Child*, 2003, dir. Igor Mirkovic, produced by Rajko Grlić), the *new wave* becomes the dominant paradigm of popular culture in Croatia; yet it is used as a mass cultural product and not as a popular culture paradigm that destroys the hegemony in any way. Furthermore, only the “domestic” (that is, Croatian) *new wave* was “rehabilitated.” The memory of the early 1980s became a revival subculture that suppressed the contemporary urban culture, and the narrative of the subversive power of the 1980s was then born as an important cultural discursive tactics. The public sphere of popular culture was the reconstruction of the *new wave* from the stories of its protagonists, and not from the general public. It is interesting that the same circle of journalists and opinion-makers who were young journalists and activists in the socialist youth papers, and now in major newspapers (*Jutarnji list*), are the people who again manipulated the sphere of popular culture, making it a product of the mass-cultural paradigm.

itself was in fact the promotion of the new-wave Croatian bands and other works of popular culture and the reinterpretation of what was back in the 1980s an orchestrated subversion supported by the socialist regime. They are today reinterpreted as local heroes of resistance towards the very system that back then allowed the rise of the movement. It needs to be stressed that this rehabilitation was undertaken on the mono-national level with neglecting and arising from collective memory the joint cultural experience. The intercultural memory of the joint experience has not been reconstructed yet, not even by the journalists who promoted it thirty years ago as a joint Yugoslav urban project. Even nowadays, only a few private radio stations are playing *new wave* music from all over former Yugoslavia. The existence of this intercultural sphere is not negated in these circles, but is not promoted either. What is important is not the recollection of cultural history, but the usage of what was then popular culture for the promotion of the same intellectual and power-breaking journalist circle that is undertaking this reconstruction.¹⁷

However, thirty years later, the whole poetics of popular culture is now viewed as mere entertainment. Remembering the subversive acts by the *new wave* subcultures is now part of a mythical narrative that has been forgotten by both the elites and the regime-supporting machinery. From the position of the ruling elites, this subculture is perceived as a politically subversive activity that has the potential power to reconstruct the imaginary space of intellectual contacts between the intellectual subaltern Others. This reconstruction would be a potential political danger for the new political and capitalist elites due to its subversive power to interpret the deeds of both the nationalistic political gains, achieved through the language invented for the advancement of the elites, and the new capitalist order in which the privileged classes/elites have ascended and positioned themselves through power hegemony reconstruction, re-invented language games, corruption, and manipulation of the masses. The interpretative potential of reading the "achievements for nations" as "the gains for elites" is a topic that is particularly sensitive for the hegemonic order. This is why this memory loss is orchestrated in a very unlikely marriage between the hegemony of power and mass culture, consisting of mass media and the mass entertainment industry.

17 It was suggested to me that Denis Kuljiš, one of the journalists active then (in youth press) and nowadays (in *Jutarnji list*), in one article mentioned that even then (during the *new wave* subcultural movement of the early 1980s) "we (journalists, cartoon artists, graphic artists, journalists, painters, writers) were thinking like capitalists." That would mean an acknowledgement of the "making the culture as a political project," rather than the "happening of the subculture."

In the realm of power language games, the political agenda of the *new wave* is all but erased from the cultural memory, and it has become a political agenda of the private sphere, that is, a subculture of the urban intelligentsia. Sounds familiar? History is repeating itself all over again! From an analytical point of view this means that the only space where the voice of the forgotten music is still accounted for is the “meaning eating space,” that is, the domain of mass culture. Instead of having a say, one could only entertain us. Is that what late Curt Cobain was thinking of when, with obvious rage in his voice, he screamed “Please, entertain us?” The question is, would it be any consolation if the subversive rocker knew that the subversive political activist of the 1980s was now in a very similar discursive (and moral) position – he/she also entertains us in a spectacle of the political arena (mass media and the theatre of the Parliament) and in the process he/she makes a reasonable amount of money. At the end of the story, it may be concluded that resistance does pay off, especially when the subaltern Otherness is transformed into a desirable narrative of Otherness that is acceptable as the “opposition” not only to the capitalist economy that exploits it but also to the political hegemony that uses it as its acceptable other. This is the basic premise behind the poetics of political style and the politics of a subculture whose subaltern Otherness is now visible only at the signifying level and not at the level of signification. At the level of signification, resistance to the mass media frame within which the spectacle of the subcultural Otherness is now framed works in more complicated ways. How is it possible that with the acceptance of the language games of power structures the very resistance to the world produced by them is discursively indicated only through ironic layers of indirect communication? That is the topic of the second section of this article.

2. From politics of resistance to mass-media entertainment: *Please, entertain us* (the *new wave* and the nationalistic agenda in the post-subcultural environment)

Was the erasing of the political agenda in popular culture, and especially in the *new wave* as a politically aware part of popular culture history, possible only within the realm of local language games, as a phenomenon that emerged exclusively within the discourse of the politics and poetics of the local hegemony? Are the imagined space of the “seventh republic” and the consequences of its disintegration possible only within the space denoted as the topic of this work? I believe that the answer to these questions is closely connected with a description of the contemporary postmodern condition.

I am thinking not only of Lyotard (1984) and his notes on “knowledge” in the postmodern age but also about the major characteristics of mass culture and its place in contemporary society, as described by a number of relevant authors (Baudrillard, Hall, Derrida, Eagleton, Žižek). In that context, many totalizing language games of power have found partners in the unlikely above-mentioned marriage, the one between the national(istic) memory reconstruction language games and the forgetfulness and suggestivity of mass culture, and the domain of the spectacle created by it. This is a very important characteristic of contemporary American culture. It can also be applied to most of the European paradigms, but it also works very well for authorities in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Memory loss and the construction of new memory patterns (the language games of today) are well supported by the mechanisms of mass culture in both media outlets (television, newspapers) and would-be-art (mass-produced popular music, films, video spots, etc).

Today we live in a world that is totalised not only by the political suppression of power but also by the aggressive and possessive power of mass culture and its magnates. Combined, this has become a very unlikely hybrid of the hegemonic order that has imposed itself upon our ethical (ethnic) and political discourse (Muggleton and Weinzierl 13–14). With this “unlikely marriage” between the big capital of the entertainment industry and the power of authorities, the aim is to unify the language games of political deception and the massive loss of memory produced by the contemporary mass-media eternal spectacle of today. Instead of producing popular culture in a post-heroic, post-personal, and post-localised environment as a way of resisting this de-heroisation, de-personalisation, and globalisation, the post-subcultural environment is becoming politically aware of its facelessness. It is now presented in an imitation of spectacle, as a depersonalised mask of the Anonymous, who is hidden from the responsibility of the everyday and charged with the potential of deferred responsibility. The resistance to the new hegemonic order is now as impersonal as mass cultural products and the political support at their core.¹⁸

At the same time, what is now personalised is the product itself, produced and created by the mass media hegemony, in a form of constructed rock and pop bands and/or “created” singers, films for one season, latest video games,

18 In his account of contemporary popular music, Perković (2011) is right when he recognises the new reality of the receptive agenda. The public now recognises the songs, not the artists. The subversive power of *Elemental* or early *TBF* in Croatia is now recognised through the individual songs and their lyrics, not as a project of the subaltern voice with a name and surname. Regardless of its potential subversive power, we are now only talking about a “product.”

etc. The policy of mass creation is now becoming the politics of naming, of giving names to the usable creations in the realms of politics, entertainment, and power negotiation. At the same time, the creators of the ethical realm belonging to creative culture now remain anonymous or, if more traditional, do not reach the wider public. The politics of authorship is now sub-altered and opposed to the position of industry that has taken monopoly over authorship construction. Even novels are nowadays produced in a certain way, with a particular schematic order in mind in a time of contract signing, rather than independently written as works of art with the “total freedom of creation.”¹⁹ Even with all of the subversive power, the individual works of (popular) art are now only one of equally (un)important voices that make a profit for someone, usually for large corporations with a strong alliance with the governing structures in leading (most powerful) democracies. Both of them are also presented and perceived as a part of the postmodern spectacle. At the same time, in a paradoxical mimetic turnaround, the choreography of any subversion is also orchestrated, organised, and carefully presented to the masses via mass media outlets. The alternative presented independently via the Internet has one purpose only – to become a spectacle and part of an orchestrated spectacle.

In that type of environment, and with this contemporary “horizon of expectations” in the wider receptive space, the myth of subversive power ascribed to the popular culture of the *new wave* has become only that – an urban myth. The story of a generation, one of the subaltern subculture of the urban population in Zagreb, Beograd, Ljubljana, or Sarajevo during the late 1970s and early 1980s, lays claims that during that period a strong subversive power was produced and realised within these channels, and that it has greatly contributed to the fall of communism. As mentioned at the beginning, this claim is supported by the fact that the subsequent authorities in Serbia, Croatia, and all Bosnian hegemonic domains have organised a “memory loss” manipulated through mass media outlets in which the works of the new-wave artists were erased from the collective memory.²⁰ Furthermore, one can claim that the new subcultural memory was orchestrated and conveyed with an unspoken agree-

19 It has been claimed by some authors that they are expected to write in a certain way, that their books are filmable, and that they can fulfil certain expectations of a potential mass readership on the basis of some schematic genre pre-set production criteria.

20 The Slovenian “case,” as usual when collective memory is concerned, was different; the language barrier enabled the memory continuation, with a neglect of the part of their corpus which was produced/communicated in Croatian or Serbian. The only pre-*new wave* band *Buldožer* (The Bulldozer), which communicated in Croatian rather than in Slovenian, has survived in the collective memory until nowadays not only in Slovenia but also in Croatia and Serbia.

ment between the subculture and the new government(s).²¹ In the Croatian case, we have seen how the Croatian "defender" was imagined and produced in the mass media with some elements reconstructed from the new-wave paradigm, but appropriated for the usage within the new hegemonic discourse. After the war and the post-war hegemonic "self-censorship," the field for the re-construction of memory is now wide open. However, the mechanisms of popular culture becoming mass media entertainment nowadays work in favour of the regime (any regime) and not of the subversive alternative that resists the spectacle as the only form of presentation. This spectacle issue was discussed above and I can only conclude that the very music that tried to work subversively over a period of nearly thirty years, and has tried hard to pass its message through the discourse of two opposing hegemonic orders, is perceived today as only one of the similarly (un)important voices in the cacophonous postmodern "loss of the centre" in a spectacle of time passing and colourful ignorance that suits all the ruling elites very well, regardless of them being former communists, nationalist, or purely "democratic." All that has remained alive is the possibility of a post-subcultural turn-around as a yet unachieved potential. The theoretical term that now stands in place of the subculture is the post-subcultural environment.

In the post-subcultural environment of the 2010s, the politicization of youth cultures is achieved through the cultural sphere in a very indirect manner and in structurally different ways to those that formed popular culture from the 1960s to the early 1990s. The major turnaround was the availability and the possibility of the widespread usage of the new media. It is possible to say that the "post-subcultural protest formations from the mid-1990s are taking new and different shapes and are adjusting to both the new media and subversive semiotic practices that are very much relying upon regaining the identity politics" (McKay 16–17). All post-structural practices of today claim to have a latent political agenda, which is now different than the "grand

21 At the same time, we read Perković's recollection of the time when the rock alternative scene was persecuted by the police and army officials (86–89) The same goes for the concerts of bands from other countries of the South Slavic space. Their concerts were organised in Slovenia for Croatian fans. Regardless of their anti-war stance, these bands were not welcomed to Croatia yet. I am here only interested in the subversive power/powerlessness of the fans that attended the concerts in Slovenia and of the possible subcultural paradigms they formed, or did not form as "split-personalities;" Croatian defenders and, by default, also fighters for a new memory paradigm, were at the same time the keepers of a memory that is proclaimed to be lost by the hegemony of the country which this very same young men were defending. This is a very interesting position structurally, and one that should be explored further as a cultural sign that may suggest ways in which the subculture of the *new wave* adapted during this time before the "mass media" transformation that helped the memory loss paradigm from a different angle.

narratives” of the modernist approach. In the postmodern pockets of various types of difference they have the potentiality to work on the macro-political scene as a potential to use the media created by the mass culture in subversive actions against this very culture. This is now central to the post-subcultural subversion and represents an open possibility. This is to say that subversion is now shifting from the realm of the cultural product towards the discursive practices that deal with the very structures of cultural reproduction. Subversive acts, therefore, can nowadays be either very symbolic or directly, even dangerously, subversive. They can go from *Senseless Acts of Beauty* (see McKay 17; Muggleton and Weinzierl 14–15, 19) all the way to the organisation of political anarchistic rallies through Facebook or other social networks (Kahn and Kellner 301–303).

Where does that leave popular culture and the punk/*new wave* music of the 1970s (and 1980s in former Yugoslavia)? In his article “The Death and Life of Punk, the Last Subculture,” Dylan Clark claims that punk needed to die so that it could live: “With the death of it, classical subcultures died,” he writes (223). People, he continues, have gradually become “acclimatized to such subcultural transgressions to the point that, in many places, they become an expected part of the social landscape” (224–225). He continues by saying that the image of rebellion has become one of the most dominant narratives of the corporate capitalist landscape. What happened is that the “bad boys and girls” became the perfect consumers for a new line of products in fashion, music and book production. They also are very exploitable as topics of the mass-media spectacle (Clark 225). In Croatia, as we have seen, punk/*new wave* has survived in the form of an appropriation into a new landscape of national struggle for independence as a prototype of the urban fighter for freedom, and later as a product of the “national rock paradigm.” It has also survived in the most basic form of resistance to the power of authorities and as an opposition to “Balkan turbo folk,” music and a post-subcultural discourse that is becoming the leading paradigm of post-resistance in all of the post-Yugoslav Balkan states.

What died as a “rebellious subculture” in the 1980s is not the subcultural paradigm itself, but its independence and meaningful rebellion. In a world where mass media and political language games put the spectacle of national music (regardless of this being the turbo-folk of Tonči Huljić, as the leading Croatian author in the field, or Serbian folk singers) in the centre of consumers’ attention, a spectacle equivalent to English house music is now dominating the post-subcultural environment. Escapism into a realm of an open invitation to sex, the music of memory loss, and a mirage of beautiful

people dancing in the blinding lights of the scene represents *a moment of ecstasy*. This is the ecstatic experience of Otherness that can be compared to the escapism of the hippies in the 1970s at the time of another type of political uncertainty and the pressures of another mass cultural hegemony. What provides an even more vernacular approach to turbo-folk in the context of former Yugoslavia, as opposed to the pop-culture of the *new wave*, is its apparent indifference to both the Occidental and the Oriental cultural discourse. The sound is pseudo-oriental and the setting is pseudo-occidental, but the hybrid fusion is South Slavic; it is Balkan to its core. The happy fusion that produces this imaginary Balkan spectacle is a hybrid that works well for all; it has contributed to the memory loss a great deal, whether it be the forgetting of Western paradigms or the subversive power of local tradition. It also is the fusion of folk tradition with the post-urban pop music of Croatian elites, which does not suit only political purposes but is also very pleasing for the semi-rural taste (tradition) of music. The pop-culture of the *new wave*, that is, what survived from the urban culture of the 1980s, a culture that was very much structurally linked to the Occidental cultural environment, now hardly has any room to move. The only possible option is to join the spectacle of mass culture and help to entertain us.

Popular culture, now reconstructed in this discourse, has actually become the mass culture. And what now occupies the space of former popular culture are in fact alternative scenes and the part of the punk and *new wave* scene that have survived in an alternative space and are linked to the new bands and new post-subcultural projects of today. Their subversive power is now in Croatia linked to the post-subcultural sphere, and its effects on popular (mass) culture of today are only marginal. At the same time, what was in time of socialist Yugoslavia considered mass-culture, nowadays is, according to some authors, becoming a subcultural paradigm of neo-traditional subculture, which has a large support in a part of the mainstream political establishment and is used as a political vehicle in pursuing one of the two major non-dialogic ideological and politically strongly charged agendas. In that sense, mass culture has replaced popular culture and its function, and even the strongly charged ideological agenda can be nothing more than a mere entertainment.

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POETIKA I POLITIKA POTISKIVANJA I „GUBITKA PAMĆENJA“: (RE)KONSTRUKCIJA POPULARNE KULTURE U POSTJUGOSLAVENSKOM PROSTORU

Sažetak

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U ovom članku autor se bavi diskurzivnim taktikama koje su pridonijele dekonstrukciji i rekonstrukciji supkulturalnih poetika i njihova političkog okvira zadanog vladajućim hijerarhijama suvremenih hegemonijskih nomenklatura u jugoistočnoj Europi. U radu se ne raspravlja o svim aspektima i kompleksnim odnosima koji vladaju u tom interkulturalnom i povremeno multikulturalnom prostoru, već se u središtu nalaze načini suodnošenja popularne kulture i političke moći koja ju je distribuirala u medijski i novomedijski prostor. U središtu se nalazi hrvatska popularna kultura (prije svega glazbena) 1980-ih i 1990-ih te načini na koji je ona kanonizirana, rekanonizirana, odnosno brisana iz kolektivnog pamćenja i rekonstruirana (konstruirana) u novopolitičkim jezicima pojedinih postjugoslavenskih novokapitalističkih nacionalnih elita. U svojoj osnovi riječ je o analizama taktika ostvarenih u politici konstrukcije popularne kulture koja je vremenom postala oruđem politike. U ovom radu također se pronalaze i mogućnosti obrnutog gledanja na problem, pogotovo promatrano komparativno, u šire zamišljenom (zapadnoeuropskom) kontekstu. Tekst je prije svega teorijski i pokušava dati okvire za konkretna čitanja/konstrukcije suvremene povijesti i poetike popularne kulture uokvirene zadanošću političkim i medijskim hegemonijskim pritiskom.

U prvom dijelu daje se pregled modaliteta narativa kojima se hegemonijskim upisivanjem u medije i nove medije provodio proces poticanja gubitka pamćenja te rekodiranja narativnih paradigmi i prihvaćenih stereotipa. Opisuju se učinci prekodiranja vrijednosnog sustava iz perspektive uspostave nove hijerarhije vrijednosti u odnosu potisnutih i obnovljenih ideologema i mitologema. U tom kontekstu istražuje se kako je taj proces kodiran u lokalnim supkulturalnim praksama, a u središtu je popularna (rock) glazba i supkultura koja se uz nju oblikuje (ili: iz koje je ona oblikovana). Slijedi

čitanje kulturalnih praksi kroz koje su se nacionalno i nacionalističko nametnule kao prevladavajuće paradigme upisivanja popularne kulture u prostor i virtualnu stvarnost. Izučavaju se prije svega modaliteti u kojima su se ti procesi odvi(ja)li. U zadnjem dijelu rada ispisuju se odnosi između prvotne uloge (rock) supkulture kao „otpora“ hegemoniji do njezinog smještanja u prostor zabave. Kako se isto događa i s medijskim fenomenima koji kroz žanr (ne i supkulturu) podražavaju nacionalne narative i nacionalističku mizanscenu, to otvara nekoliko pitanja a u središtu budućih istraživanja svakako se ističe ono koje problematizira odnos žanra i ishodišta, odnosno mjesta supkulturalnog izričaja kao autohtonog glasa i njegove transformacije u medijski proizvod. Odgovori koji se nameću u tom polju bit će zanimljivi i za čitanje narativnih formi u novim medijima i u tradicionalnoj književnosti. Rad je napisan na engleskom jeziku zbog boljeg korespondiranja sa sličnim istraživanjima u drugim europskim nacionalnim posttranzicijskim kulturama.

Ključne riječi: dekonstrukcija, pamćenje, hegemonija, podčinjeni glasovi, supkultura, popularna kultura, masovna kultura, hrvatski (i ex-jugoslavenski) *novi val*, srpska i slovenska popularna kultura, politika i poetika, stil u popularnoj kulturi, masovna kultura i zatiranje (kulturalnog) otpora