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## Editor's Note

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This special issue you're holding in your hands is mostly a result of the *Summer Institute on Cultural Trauma*, held at the premises of Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik from 30 May to 4 June, 2016, in collaboration with the FP7 project *Social Performance, Cultural Trauma and Reestablishing Solid Sovereignties* (SPeCTReSS), the network of scholars that involves nine universities from the four corners of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The main aim of the project was “to undertake a four year programme of scholarly exchanges focused on the concept of ‘cultural trauma’ and national identities... [and] not only to look at societies assimilating trauma, but more specifically also at the way in which the arts and culture reveal and assist in this process”.<sup>2</sup> Cultural trauma, defined as “a discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, occurring when the foundations of established collective identity are shaken by one or a series of seemingly interrelated occurrences”<sup>3</sup> involves collective epistemic struggle, produced by the breakdown of a meaning-making system.<sup>4</sup> Its outcomes have enormous impact on national identity, especially in terms of repeating the bad pasts, crippling the future and therefore contributing to communities’ self-imagination as besieged fortresses. In such a context, trauma studies’ canonical terms of *acting-out* and *working-through* do not seem to be two ends of a bipolar continuum, but pro-

<sup>1</sup> Participating universities are: Trinity College Dublin (Ireland), Ruhr-Universität, Bochum (Germany), Jagiellonian University (Poland), University of Tartu (Estonia), University of Zagreb (Croatia), Jawaharlal Nehru University (India), University of São Paulo (Brazil) and Yale University (United States).

<sup>2</sup> See more about the project at the link: <https://spectressnetwork.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed on 15 February 2017].

<sup>3</sup> Eyerman in this volume, page 13.

<sup>4</sup> Compare to Blanuša in this volume, page 171.

cesses in a complex and dynamic relationship whose products could lead to healing but also to significant civilizational regressions.

From its beginnings, trauma studies were devoted to the ethical issues and responsiveness to human suffering and its psychological, political, cultural and artistic representations (Andermahr, 2015: 500). We can accept Cathy Caruth's (1995: 5-9) ideas that to be traumatized means to be possessed by an inconceivable image or indescribable event, to carry an impossible object that makes the survivor a carrier of crisis, as well as the symptom of history, whose truth is paradoxically bound up with its crisis of truth and isolation. To overcome such isolation, Caruth recommends "speaking and listening *from the site of trauma*... on what we don't yet know of our traumatic pasts... [to] provide the very link between cultures" (*ibid.*: 11). That is exactly what we have been doing in this project for the last three years. In this volume, you can find only a part of our discussions as scholars from traumatized countries, searching for the knowledge of collective recovery or at least the means to bear the catastrophic age.

## REFERENCES

- Andermahr, Sonya. 2015. Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism – Introduction. *Humanities*, 4: 500-505.
- Caruth, Cathy. 1995. Trauma and Experience: Introduction, in: Cathy Caruth (ed): *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore and London. Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-12.