The first three papers of this issue are long, and together comprise different but complementary approach to understanding memory. The first, *Exploring Contortions of the Authentic: Voodoo in New Orleans*, by Elvira K. Katić, relies on a first hand encounter (or rather series of encounters) with a contemporary practitioner of voodoo rituals; the second, *The Performativity of the Archive from a semiotic perspective*, by Martin Acebai, Claudio Guerri and Cristina Voto, explores how meaning and knowledge of the past are constructed on archives, and how indeed our knowledge of archives itself is constructed. The authors adopt a Peircean inspired approach to clarification and explication of historical materials. In the third, *Postcolonial Memorabilities and Transforming Performativity in Dispersion*, Fatima Festić focuses on the aftermath of Balkan wars, and in particular overseas Bosnian-Herzegovinian “cultural circles” and emigres. Through a crucial distinction between diaspora and dispersion the author clarifies the role of the individual creative artist in remembering intensities, details and feeling associated with past conflicts, in a way that can elude public accounts of history.

The papers share two main directions - one, interest in multi modal representation and materials of the memory, and second, questions about authenticity and meaning of our knowledge of the past. These questions seem to be at the core of contemporary understanding of language as sign systems, helping to qualify the ubiquitous effects of “post modern” popular and media culture in meaning of the past.

All three papers are long, each over 5000 words. Their publication is part of a deliberate policy to include and indeed welcome and feature the long paper. It is felt that the presentation and rationale of many arguments requires and deserves the articulation and structure that only a longer paper provides. The opportunity to published longer works is extended to the monograph, and to sections and full text of a book. For example, Festić’s paper comprises a chapter from her forthcoming book *Responsiveness to Comparison* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2021). The number of papers in each issue will be flexible, and within an overall total word count per issue
of 30,000-35,000. Few and longer papers also allow more and deserved attention to individual authors and articles, by the reader and also by the editorial team.

This issue testifies to the value of publishing long papers. Each of the first three papers of this issue are of high quality, and represent a substantial research commitment. Collectively they demonstrate the merits of semiotic concepts and methods, in responding to a “post modern” world with a media, discourse and economic tendency to an “ahistorical” disconnect with memory and the past.

Katić provides an absorbing account of field work or empirical anthropology in a semiotic framework, in her enquiry into voodoo practices. She encounters a practitioner first hand, on several occasions, and frames communicative data with background of etymology, religion and cultural stereotypes. The meetings, while in a “bounded system”, give the author access to a full range of non verbal materials often overlooked by linguists or more generalised accounts of culture. The temple and its cluttered artefacts, proxemics of objects and bodies, chanting and sounds, movement provide the locale for a spectrum of symbolic embodiment to be observed and analysed. She invites and deploys visual and photographic records. Katić is assured and scholarly in treading a line between self identification of herself as researcher, and construction of the site as a cultural other. She avoids sentimental subjectivity, as well as authoritative and imposed objectivity.

Like the temple it studies, the research is multi layered and complex, enough so to suggests its own limitations and directions for further research. One might suggest that the voodoo example could expand to include participants, and video recording of events, while the methods for study of religious practices could be applied more wisely to faith groups, churches and cults, of diverse persuasions.

Acebai, Guerri and Voto (The Performativity of the Archive from a Semiotic Perspective) present an absorbing theoretical approach to the raw historical materials and data. Their theory is very
compatible with the case analysis of the first paper. The paper develops Guerri’s previous work on the Nonagon, which schematises and applied Peirce’s mature sign categories. By applying Peirce further into ideological, economic and political fields, the authors seek to theorise the inevitable loss of objectivity in historical materials. Archives do not grow or exist in some “idealized”, neutral or scientific sense. They identify indirect and subtle approaches by which colonial histories “fetichize” and proliferate objects and persons, aided by digitization. While democratisation of access to sources increases with digitization, and appropriation of decontextualised archives, finally performativity and artistic production is relied on a means of restoring and authentication of the use of tools of memory in contemporary contexts. This is a theoretical paper with considerable nuance and insight.

The argument of the second paper flows well into Fatima Festić’s paper (Postcolonial Memorabilities and Transforming Performativity in Dispersion) on memory and the Balkan wars. She uses Deleuze’s rhizomic thinking to subvert the concept of a coherent diaspora network, argument for a more convoluted array of individual expression, especially by artists, to maintain full and authentic expressions of facts, emotions and experiences of conflicts only 25 years old. Forces of economy and rebuilding, and the short memories of media, make a deeper sense of historical recollection necessary. Festić’s paper is most eloquent in its argument, and its best accredited in its words. “These evolving dynamic interactive platforms enable what in my current work I conceptualize as “dispersive mediated witnessing”. That is, the cultural subjects’ singular creative ability of speaking from one’s both recent and deeper mnemonic layers, while also integrating and signifying the encountered-in-migration symbolic, artwork, and topics. Hence, they are dissolving the inherited or experienced compulsiveness to perpetuate what is indeed a hurtful group memorability – in documenting the hurts only of one’s own ethnic “origin”. An intrinsic feature of performativity is such transforming, engaged act with the effect of social change that in nomadic subjects only gets more intensified. Such mediated witnessing also advances the emerging ideas on witnessing-testimony-authenticity-mediation produced in culture (for example, in Sarah Jones 2018, or Katherine Roseau 2017, and other scholars around the recently launched journal “New History”). History comes with its hurts (of its equally or
unequally targeted subjects). However, it is the ability to transform history’s troubled legacies that distinguishes a critical, creative human subject out of the darkness of the history’s forests that otherwise threaten to evolve into everyone’s inner dark forest, too.”

Anna Proskurina *(On the Issue of Performativity of Hymns)* offers a crisp and insightful analysis of Christian hymns, applying pragmatic techniques of social linguistics that challenges the transcendental or privileged status of traditional hymns. She seeks a subtext or pillow for a context of action and non verbal responses that surround hymns, and can lead to intense feelings, reverie, thanksgiving and spiritual and aesthetic states beyond the print word. The author draws from various authors (Searle, Proskuric, Benveniste) to extend the functionalist project into what might be regarded as a specialised and quite literary domain. She does not avoid linguistic analysis, and provides some precise and insightful treatment of key hymns, in particular Welsh, yet also insist on mnemonic and deictic embodiment of symbolic meaning. This approach could be extended to visual icons of the Christian church, as other iconic decor and written texts. Rather than being object in themselves, religious artefacts provide props in forms of realist and consequential behaviour (voice and body) and ritual. The first issue is not one of truth, but of understanding the eventful nature of the written word. This fundamentalist dependence on the written word is displaced by a more contextual, layered sense of the integrity of the religious communicative event. This paper resonates with that of Acebai, Guerri and Voto, as well as Katić’s understanding of the multiform nature of religious events.

Finally, this issue includes a book review, on a linguistic study of traditional Australian Aboriginal languages. This commentary, along with the book, addresses themes that have been a key interest of this journal, and potentially for core contemporary semiotic study. This inclusion of the review also represents a return to review publication. Book reviews, along with commentaries on artistic events, film or current affairs, are welcome.
Exploring Contortions of the Authentic: Voodoo in New Orleans

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Abstract

This study examined the nature of authenticity in a presentation of the Voodoo religion open to non-practitioners. Temple space and artifacts available to tourists for examination were analyzed to identify how/whether they contributed to a presentation of Voodoo faith deemed authentic, rather than inauthentic. Tourist voodoo in New Orleans is a designed product which is intentionally created to disseminate information or turn a profit. However, it seems to constitute a genuine representation of the religion as well because of the simulacra it perpetuates. Because this simulacrum is presented as authentic Voodoo, actual religious Voodoo may seem inauthentic because of its scarcity and suppression.

Key words

Authenticity, simulacra, Voodoo religion, visual semiotics, meaning-making
The word voodoo comes from the word *voudoun* from the Fon language group and has been spelled (vaudou, voudou, vodou, vodun, etc.) and defined (spirit, mystery, dance, power, etc.) in a variety of ways, seemingly resisting any definitive standards. Voodoo practices originating from African tribal roots particularly impacted Haiti’s religious and folkloric cultures: “Vodou is a creolized religion forged by descendants of Dahomean, Kongo, Yoruba, and other African ethnic groups who had been enslaved and brought to colonial Saint-Domingue (as Haiti was known then) and Christianized by Roman Catholic missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries” (McAlister 2004). Hebblethwaite describes Voodoo as “an ancient culture thriving in the present… a religion that helped integrate slaves from a multitude of African nations and languages within a cultural system that preserved important elements of a diverse African ethnolinguistic tapestry” (Hebblethwaite 2014, 6). Voodoo practitioners generally operated autonomously in accordance with their congregation’s needs until about a decade ago when Max Beauvoir was designated as the formal leader for the faith (Lacey 2008). Beauvoir began as a biochemist whose work concentrated on steroids and hydrocortisones (notably the plant-derived hecogenin,) but later became a high-ranking houngan (oungan; priest), the Supreme Servitur (supreme servant) for Voodoo practitioners. He wrote extensively on the Voodoo religion and its capacity for resolving Haiti’s political, economic, and social problems (Beauvoir 2009) and has been referred to by many researchers studying aspects of the faith. The religion’s reputation is often saddled with negative connotations due to prohibition, exploitation, and misunderstanding of the Voodoo practice and practitioners. Bartkowski states that common American typifications of voodoo have been inspired by media, military personnel, and misinformation to include descriptors such as “(1) a religion based on black magic and witchcraft; (2) a mélange of superstitious beliefs used for deceptive purposes; and (3) a cult religion which sanctions human torture and sacrifice” (Bartkowski 1998, 559).

In everyday colloquialism, the term voodoo conjures up exotic and eccentric connotations. It has come to refer to magical or religious practices, mysterious control over
another, supernatural items that may influence one’s luck, or misfortune or bad luck beyond one’s control. In conversation with several tourists to the French Quarter in New Orleans, non-practitioners of the Voodoo religion expressed their understanding of it in widely differing ways. Some described it a spooky force, others as a branch of witchcraft, still others as a gimmick. Voodoo was also tacitly understood to be complicated and mysterious, making it an alluring device for many tourist venues:

Only in New Orleans. (sighs.) I don’t believe in all that hocus-pocus Voodoo stuff, but there’s nothing wrong with taking a couple of Voodoo dolls back to Normalville. (Judy [tourist], personal communication, 2015);
I loved the Voodoo city tour. It’s cool for people who think voodoo and witchcraft are interesting. (Sheila [tourist], personal communication, 2015).

Practitioners, unsurprisingly, describe their understandings of Voodoo in rather different terms. They explain that they create meaning from the word for themselves, which in turn reaffirms their individual beliefs and/or identities within the practice: “People worship within the Vodou system…for a multitude of reasons including the following: for the attainment of spiritual goals; for physical needs; for social bonding; for esthetic, musicological, cultural, and ritual interests; due to the inheritance of familial or temple traditions; and to give meaning to their lives” (Hebblethwaite 2014, 8). McCarthy Brown states that healing is the central focus of all Voodoo rituals: “People bring the pains, problems, crises and sore points of their lives to this system. Much of what happens in Vodou, therefore, happens in the intimate and largely inaccessible relation between the specifics of individual lives and the ritual drama” (McCarthy Brown 1987, 68-69). This foundation of interpretation is also a large part of Voodoo ceremonies, where enigmatic messages are conveyed (not always articulately) by the loa (lwa; spirits) and participants must interpret and apply what is said: “A person is ‘mounted’ by the loa…the actions and events which result are the expression of the will of the rider. Since the conscious self of the possessed person is, meanwhile, absent, he cannot and does not remember the events; he is not responsible, either for good or for bad” (Deren 1970, 30). Participants thus celebrate the
idiosyncratic, metamorphic elements of Voodoo: the freedom to change and incorporate, to decide what works best for the individual, and to create symbols and signs that resonate with identity:

You do not choose Voodoo, it chooses you. I know people who have always known that they have an ability to see and understand past what we see. They can interact with the spirits when not everyone can. A lot of the time they don’t want it. But they were chosen. (J. Gandolfo, personal communication, 2011).

Despite the varied interpretations of Voodoo, most people seem to agree that New Orleans Voodoo is unique. It is both like and unlike its Haitian counterpart and significantly different from Santeria. There is a sense that the faith is somehow also rooted to the identity of the city—that New Orleans is a physical and spiritual crossroads between old and new, past and present, a crucible for both ancient loa and their ongoing (re)incarnations: “The Crescent City is a natural crossroads. And in voodoo, as in most forms of shamanism, the crossroads is a sacred space” (Bookhardt 1998). That there exists a symbol which could be interpreted as a New Orleans veve (symbolic line drawing of a loa) indicates the impact of the uniqueness and greatness of the Big Easy upon the religion.

This veve meant to represent the “spirit of New Orleans” appears to have the initials of Marie Laveau and Dr. John above a rudimentary line grid of the city, the foundation of which is a snake. (Figure 1)

In 1998, the Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou exhibition (organized by the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles) opened at the New Orleans Museum of Art and showcased a variety of Afro-Caribbean artworks including dolls, flags, and
altars. Co-curator Donald Consentino stated that “the Big Easy is the North American beachhead of vodou” and explained that New Orleans is one end of a spiritual tether that is linked to Haiti and Africa “where the religion was born and where it leads a vigorous parallel life” (Bookhardt 1998). There is a sense amongst the locals that voodoo is “in the air”—an elusive but accurate way of describing a relationship that seems difficult to pinpoint despite its ubiquity. This sentiment was echoed by David Mayo, designer for the Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou exhibition, hours before the exhibition opened at the Fowler: “I am acutely aware that this is not merely a presentation of art objects, attractively arranged and well lit. This is a presentation of a life style which will be reviewed by individuals who live this life and will be the final judge of authenticity and sensitivity” (Mayo 1996, 71). Because Voodoo remains primarily an oral tradition with few records, “all most people will ever see of it are the outer signs and trappings of a mysterious yet familiar culture” (Bookhardt 1998).

The Voodoo Spiritual Temple

The Voodoo Spiritual Temple was established in 1990 by Priestess Miriam and Priest Oswan Chamani. At the time of this essay, Priestess Miriam remains the only practicing priestess or leader for the Voodoo Spiritual Temple community, as Priest Oswan passed away in 1995. Priestess Miriam was a bishop in the Angel Angel All Nations Spiritual Church in Chicago before relocating to New Orleans and opening the Voodoo Spiritual Temple. The temple (hounfor) which this essay is based upon no longer exists, as the original location of the temple on North Rampart Street directly across from Louis Armstrong Park was destroyed by fire on February 1st, 2016 and was relocated further east along the same street to a less prominent location at 1428 North Rampart Street.

The website for the temple states that it is the “only ‘formally’ established Spiritual Temple with a focus on traditional West African spiritual and herbal healing practices currently existing in New Orleans” (Voodoo Spiritual Temple, n.d.). Descriptive information available on the web site defines the temple’s focus as one of balance and alignment: “The Purpose of the Voodoo Spiritual Temple is to train and develop the spiritual and mental powers lying dormant...
[sic] in each one of us” (Voodoo Spiritual Temple, n.d.). Paper brochures available in the temple list a variety of services that are offered such as card readings, voodoo weddings, and the preparation of potions for success or love. The temple has been incorporated into the tourism of New Orleans as it welcomes visitors and is a scheduled stop on several of the various tours throughout the French Quarter.

Sandwiched between aging apartments, the bright yellow building of the Voodoo Spiritual Temple had religious symbols painted on its external walls and door. Bells on the door chimed as one entered to a view of tapestries and stuffed alligators, a smell of roots and sweet earth. The entrance led one directly into the gift shop, where a variety of Voodoo gifts and products could be purchased, from mugs to special herbs, to roots, oils, and incense. Staff indicated that tourist traffic through the temple on a yearly basis was steady. Tourists milled about in the small gift shop, handling shells, bottles, candles, cord dolls, and books. Although a partially curtained hallway leading out of the shop towards the back of the building was not marked “No Access,” few ventured in that direction. There was the sense that this hallway was not necessarily open to wandering visitors. One could ask to see the temple and some (but not all) were invited through that narrow hallway, lined with jars and bottles. They then passed Priestess Miriam’s office/consultation room on the right and then went through a back door into a small courtyard which was completely hidden from the street. To the left of that back door was another door, another narrow hallway, and at last the shrine room or temple proper.

The temple was a large, high-ceilinged, open room with a concrete floor. The sunlight that filtered through the few windows was muted and softly glowed different colors as it passed through draped cloths that adorned the windows. While the entire room appeared to serve as an offering table with every conceivable gift and offering tucked into every conceivable nook and cranny, there was a main altar as well as many smaller altar areas that were designed to focus on specific loa (See Figure 2). For example, one of the smaller altar areas was entirely decorated with blue and white materials, marine images, small model boats, sea shells, and a veve that was used to represent the loa Agwe (i.e., Shell of the Sea, Captain of the Seven Seas) who evinces intuitiveness and deep thinking. Initially, an observer might think that this altar was constructed to worship the phenomenon of the sea, but it is not the concrete in Voodoo that is worshipped,
but rather the divine spirit that is manifested in the concrete and the relationship that is cultivated with this spirit: “To worship the loa is to celebrate the principle, not the matter in which it may be momentarily or permanently manifest…A loa is an intelligence, a relationship of man to matter” (Deren 1970, 89-91). The main altar was larger than the smaller altar areas and there was an ornately painted and carved wooden chair behind it. Although the main altar was also covered with a variety of offerings, it was not difficult to notice the predominance of even-armed crosses (some plain, some intricate) that covered the surface of the flat altar top and adorned many of the objects placed upon that altar. An observer might be tempted to associate these crosses as symbols of Christianity which the Voodoo religion had acquired as it adapted to a European, colonial culture that recognized only their own religious forms. The cross however represents a crossroads, where interaction between two worlds occurs: “The sign of the crossroads is …where the communication between worlds is established and the traffic of energies and force between them is set up. It is at this point of intersection that the food for the load is placed; and here also that they emerge to act upon the material world” (Deren 1970, 36).

Data Collection and Methodology

The methodology of this study was based on the model of the intrinsic single case study; the 'exploration of a “bounded system” or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context' (Cresswell 1998, 61). Researcher generated field notes of ceremonial observations, transcriptions of structured individual interviews, and researcher generated photographs were the different forms of data collected to obtain rich description and seat the research in a thick bed of knowing (Geertz 1973). As each type of data was collected, I sorted it according to its type, carefully thought about its content in terms of my research interests, and wrote myself analytic memos to pose questions for forthcoming visits to the temple (Cresswell 1998). In addition, this study used semiotic analysis of visual artifacts (Mitchell 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen 1996) to interpret the type and quantity of various artifacts found in the temple space.
Interviews with Priestess Miriam Chamani were requested, granted, and subsequently conducted on April 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2011 and April 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using grounded theory methodology to facilitate the coding of dominant themes that emerged from the discourse data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). With grounded theory methodology, the interview data is chunked and examined by turns, to code for participant perceptions and ideological orientation of the visual artifacts. I also generated reflective memos for every interview transcription (Cresswell 1998). These memos helped to summarize the interview, create preliminary codes, and note the range of discussion topics.

While I conducted the first interview, an assistant took photographs of the temple with a digital camera. Although of course no intentional action can be considered completely random, the assistant took multiple photographs in all directions of the room from different observational points in the center space of the temple, which was open and presumably for participants. The goal was to attempt to capture a random yet representative selection of the possible presentations of Voodoo that an observer could potentially witness while standing in the central area of the temple intended for participants.

Both distant and detailed photographs were taken. In some cases, composite photos were created by putting together photographs of the same area to create one panoramic image. Of the one hundred photographs that were taken, fifty were analyzed in terms of content (Mitchell 2011). Using techniques described by Kress and van Leeuwen, I analyzed the photographs by delineating and coding the items in each one. Modality cues are “motivated signs” in particular contexts that evoke certain “truths” (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 159). These cues reflect and recreate what a particular social group regards as questionable and credible. Not only do modalities function within a particular social group but they also function across groups to comment on competing truths. These orientations indicate certain ideological assumptions on the part of the maker and the society surrounding them, for the maker draws upon the things around him or her to create a picture with modality cues that can be socially understood.

It is important to consider that while many of the items in this space were intentionally (and perhaps presumably) placed there by Priestess Miriam or other practitioners (such as altars to different loa, religious images, or special cakes for ceremonies), many other items in these
images were left in the temple space (again presumably) by participants, observers, and tourists (such as cigarettes, dollar bills, or plastic Mardi Gras beads). The temple’s presentation was thus a combined effort between practitioners and observers and it seems unlikely that a dividing line can be drawn between them. Even the earlier assumption about who placed what where is inconsistent as it is impossible to know the origin and placement of every item.

However, the temple was ultimately the property of the Priestess and her associates, who (once again, presumably) spent the greatest amount of time in this space and had the most agency when it came to its presentation or arrangement. It is possible, that if they wished, they could have altered the position or placement of certain items or removed other items altogether, whether or not these items were initially introduced by them. The design presentation of the temple, whether it was actively constructed by the Priestess and associates or whether they actively just left it to accumulate items as they were left there by the different participants that engaged with the space, was ultimately an intentional presentation by the practitioners, despite the great overlapping influence of observers. If we consider that modality cues need to be socially understood, then the selection of items and orientation(s) with which Priestess Miriam (and her associates) chose to render the temple would be indicative of how the they approached and understood the temple and faith.

Finally, I was invited to attend a ceremony in the temple on the evening of April 15th, 2015. During the ceremony, I watched as Priestess Miriam, garbed entirely in white, sang, danced, and performed ceremonial rites with water and fire. Beautiful cakes decorated with frosted flowers, unopened bottles of liquor, bowls of fresh fruit, a bowl of clean water, cigarettes, dollar bills, and other new gifts were meticulously laid out on embroidered cloths upon the altar that sat in front of Priestess Miriam’s chair. Candles as well as all the strings of colored lights within the temple were lit. The temple was quite warm and dark and felt almost like a cave, especially the corners, the ceiling, and other areas where there were less lights and the darkness was more pronounced. Two drummers sat on the floor (with their backs to the altar space pictured in Figure 2)
and kept a steady beat in accompaniment to the Priestess’ songs. I also sat on the floor near three other participants, off to the drummers’ lefts, with my back to the temple entrance and faced the main altar that was covered with offerings for the loa. As I observed the Priestess’ dancing and chanting, I experienced a disorienting shock as she executed a slow counterclockwise turn and her head came to face me and the participants near me. There was a black and white patterned snake coiled around the top of her head, its head seated at the center of Priestess Miriam’s forehead, very much like an ancient Egyptian pharoah’s headdress. Priestess Miriam did not begin the ceremony with a snake on her head and I did not see her place the snake there, although I had been intensely focused on watching and listening to her, almost to the exclusivity of other things around me. I do not know where the snake came from, but it was very much alive and remained on the Priestess’ head for the remainder of the ceremony although she continued to dance and sometimes flung her head from side to side. After the ceremony had concluded and I went to say farewell to Priestess Miriam, she placed the snake into a cage that was tucked in
amongst the many items along the shelves which flanked the right-hand entry wall of the temple. I generated reflective memos after this experience (Cresswell 1998), which helped me to summarize and clarify what I had observed. For example, I did not realize until days later that the word “Damballah” often ended or began some of the repetitive chanting throughout the ceremony. Damballah is the loa of the serpent spirit (sometimes identified with Saint Patrick of the Christian saints).

That this study only examines one altar design is a significant limitation of the study. I recognize that additional study and research needs to be done to strengthen the nascent observations in this work. This study would be improved with additional studies of other Voodoo altars using the method described in this paper: a semiotically-based, mixed-methods approach that attempts to map and interpret the contents of these altars. With additional such studies, the impact of this study would merit greater consideration. In addition, although I made every attempt to be meticulously attentive with regards to my data collection and analyses, my role as an observer may limit the scope of my claims: “Whose interpretation, then, of the sense and experience of a religion is to be preferred in the name of science; that of the one who has been touched and psychologically transformed by the rites, or that of the one who has not?” (Campbell 1970, xiii). In studying the Voodoo religion as a non-practitioner, there may be much that I have overlooked, misidentified or misunderstood and if so, I beg the reader’s patience and indulgence with regards to this essay.

Analysis

Analysis of the photographs began with organizing and creating an item inventory for each one. All items in each photograph were counted and described. Items that were not clearly discernable were not counted (as when the photo was out of focus), as well as items that were more than half cut out of the photograph’s frame. For example, if it was clearly discernable that an item was a packet of cigarettes despite missing part of the image, that item was counted. Similarly, if fifty percent or more of a packet of cigarettes was visible along the edge of a photograph, that item was also counted. Codes were then created inductively that would encompass groups of like or related items.
Tallies were then generated for each of the codes and were arranged hierarchically according to total numbers of items in each code. This created a small sample overview of the visually presented items that the temple contained. Ultimately, eighteen different categories of temple objects were inductively identified. Of these categories, the top three types of items found in the temple were: 1. Money (n = 134); 2. Religious Voodoo images (n = 56) and 3. Non-Voodoo statues and figurines (n = 38).

The Voodoo Spiritual Temple billed the temple space as the true back room as opposed to the front room or the false back room. Tourist destinations have at least three levels: the front room that presents a certain façade to the public, the true back room where this façade is created, and the false back room that is shown to the public, to satisfy the desire of many sightseers to catch a glimpse of the “truth” behind the “playacting.” This staged authenticity (Goldberg 1983) implies that there is a reality under the façade of the front room that is a more genuine aspect of the experience and one that would remove the romantic and mysterious nature of the performance if shown. The false back room masks certain aspects of the experience so that a certain degree of privacy can be maintained with regards to the true back room, which is generally hidden from public view. It was in the Voodoo Spiritual Temple’s and its related practitioners’ best interests to present an authentic version of Voodoo and whether this space was the front room, false back room or the true back room was impossible to determine from a layperson’s examination. However, what is possible is an analysis of the visual and symbolic presentation of this temple space and how this resonates with regards to its claims of authenticity.

Hebblethwaite asserts that the Voodoo temple is “an expertly planned space” (Hebblethwaite 2014, 14) that is well maintained both inside and outside. The outside of the Voodoo Spiritual Temple seemed minimally maintained. The exterior of the temple was differentiated from nearby homes, as it was painted yellow and decorated with religious symbols, but it appeared that had been done some time ago. The interior courtyard initially appeared abandoned. It did not appear particularly well-maintained and some areas of vegetation were overgrown. If there was expert planning underlying the layout of the exterior of the Voodoo Spiritual Temple, then it was not immediately apparent or recognizable to Western organizational systems.
The interior of the temple proper was initially overwhelming because of multi-layered perspectives that each vied for attention. Bookhardt stated that the original Voodoo Spiritual Temple space was “classically Caribbean in appearance; in fact, the viewer may imagine himself in Haiti. But the overall content is fairly similar in either case: a welter of candles bottle, crucifixes, pictures, shells, food or fruit, dolls or doll pars and the inevitable statues of Catholic saints” (Bookhardt 1998). Consentino describes this as weltanschauung, a particular world view or vision that imbues each symbol with meaning: “To look at a Vodou altar cluttered with sequined whiskey bottles, satin pomanders, clay pots dressed in lace, plaster statues of Saint Anthony and the laughing Buddha, holy cards, political kitsch, Dresden clocks, bottles of Moët and Chandon, rosaries, crucifixes, Masonic insignia, eye-shadowed kewpie dolls, atomizers of Anaïs-Anaïs, wooden phalluses, goat skulls, Christmas tree ornaments, and Arawak celts is to gauge the achievement of slaves and freemen who imagined a narrative broad enough and fabricated enough to encompass all this” (Consentino 1996, 67). Voodoo altars and ceremonial spaces are also constantly augmented through use and “their aesthetic is improvisational. They are never ‘finished’” (Consentino 1996, 67). McCarthy Brown states that altars are the nexus between practitioners and spirits and serve to precisely focus healing energies: “Altars happen. Altars must be awakened. Altars wax and wane in potency. Altars breathe. Altars tell stories… Altars places where the living and the dead, the human and the divine, meet” (McCarthy Brown 1996, 67). This is particularly true in this case, as the original Voodoo Spiritual Temple altars no longer concretely exist, but their existence remains an unbroken one as they continue in their new set-up and location.

Based on the amounts of money, religious Voodoo images, and non-voodoo statues and figurines found in the temple, we can surmise that these items/offerings must be considered important to the religion, practitioners, and participants. If quantity can in some ways indicate value and/or authenticity, then these items may have greater value to the faith than others because of their sheer numbers, whether placed there by practitioner, participant or observer.

Money is a common offering to many religions and not unique to Voodoo in particular. Without going so far as to say that many religions encourage the donation of money as a religious offering, without it many faiths would not be able to maintain religious structures, hold
services, or provide for the basic needs of their practitioners. The faith may be alive and well in the participants’ minds and hearts, but without concrete monetary offerings the force of its presence in the external world may weaken and diminish. Money is often offered in exchange for a more personal religious service in different faiths (i.e., the purchase of indulgences, currying the favor of Mamam Brigette) and may also be the lingua franca for visitors who are not of the Voodoo faith, but wish to convey their respect or leave an offering that is easily understood by many religions.

It seems reasonable that the second most commonly found item in the temple was religious Voodoo images. Though of course it can be argued that all images in the temple are religious, the intentional or recognizable religious images that have been or have become a part of Voodoo were coded separately. For example, images and symbols of the loa or spirit intermediaries of the Bondye, (Bon Dieu; Good God) and loa that have long been syncretized with Roman Catholic saints to appease European authorities (i.e., Papa Legba/Saint Peter) are recognizable as religious images particular to the Voodoo faith (Herskovits 1965).

Figure 3. Currency (predominantly United States one-dollar bills) was an item that was frequently observed throughout the temple interior.
Historically, it is well known that Catholicism was imposed upon Haitian slaves during early colonial times and many elements of the Roman Catholic religion became incorporated in parts of the Voodoo religion, which was carried over to the Americas (Wilmeth and Wilmeth 1977). However, Mc Carthy Brown argues that unlike the Catholic saints whose names they use, the Voodoo loa possess characters which are contradictory and conflicting, rather than beatific and unwavering (Mc Carthy Brown 1991, 98). Images of loa (such as Papa Legba, Agwe, Erzulie Dantor, and Damballah) as well as Catholic spiritual figures (such as Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Saint James, and Saint Patrick) were among the different religious Voodoo images found within the temple.

Figure 4. Veve for Papa Legba, the loa who serves as an intermediary between humanity and the loa, high up on the temple wall behind the main altar.

In addition, some religious Voodoo items were layered behind non-voodoo items, almost as if constructing a buffer between them and the non-practitioners and/or tourists. For example,
accouterments symbolizing Papa Legba (his straw hat, broom, cane, and pipe) were placed in a far corner of the temple behind Priestess Miriam’s chair. Her chair (in addition to a drum and a long table alongside the wall), created a small area effectively cut off from the rest of the space open to non-practitioners. The Papa Legba accoutrements were also effectively screened by multiple candelabra, statuettes, and layers of draperies as if to minimize their importance or mask their presence. Layers of items, layers of meaning… Whether the observer is in the presence of the true back room or the false back room is difficult to determine; yet it seems indisputable that they are in the presence of a version of Voodoo authenticity. (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. In the upper right of this photo, behind Priestess Miriam’s chair (she is seated in it), note the hanging straw hat (brim visible only) and broom. Behind the author (standing) was a cane tucked in amongst draperies and a pipe hidden under a shell. The straw hat, broom, cane and pipe are artefacts which are sacred and concrete symbols/accoutrements for Papa Legba in the temple and were removed from the casual observer’s points of view in the centre temple space.

Finally, non-voodoo statues and figurines were the third most commonly found item in the temple. Again, while all items in the temple may be considered religious items, any statue or
A figurine that did not represent a recognizable figure in the Voodoo religion was coded separately from recognizable Voodoo figurines and statues. The non-voodoo figures were eclectic and diverse. A hasty glance through the photographs revealed a porcelain Native American maiden with a grey wolf for an escort, a red-cheeked gnome holding a lantern, a brass Mongol warrior on his horse with his sword upraised, and a skeletal interpretation of Marilyn Monroe complete with her iconic white dress in full updraft.

**Figure 6.** A gnome figurine holding a lantern, amidst cigarettes, a beer, a bell, a feather, beads, scarves, money, and other items.

Voodoo has a capacity to absorb diverse influence without losing its essential mystique. It has had an ecumenical evolution which has been widely inclusive and tolerant of other faiths: “It has been noted that Voodoo has always been able to ‘ingest great quantities of alien cultural material’ without losing any of the basic patterns and values of the religion” (Wilmeth and Wilmeth 1977, 34).

In Voodoo, the loa are supplicated to intercede on the participants’ behalves so that through their intercessions, the participants may be better able to deal with or change matters of their lives, such as family, love or justice. The loa have distinct personalities with specific likes and dislikes, preferred attire, food and drink, and favored symbols, songs, dances, phrases, and actions: “Almost every detail is specified for the aspects of the loa, and these serve both to identify him and to guide his ritual service. Postures, voice level, attitudes, epithets, expressions, etc., are formalized for each aspect; and each has specific colors, days of the week, dress, beverages, diet, etc., sacred to him” (Deren 1970, 95). Viewed objectively, they do not appear so
very different from the participants themselves or humanity in general: “Vodou spirits are not models of the well-lived life; rather, they mirror the full range of possibilities inherent in the particular slice of life over which they preside…Vodou spirits are larger than life but not other than life” (McCarthy Brown 1991, 6). Because Vodou is not about attaining perfection but about living (in all its complexities), it is often maligned by being described as a religion without morality where its participants serve demons. Maintaining an honest and giving relationship with the loa helps its participants “deal with the suffering that is life…minimize pain, avoid disaster, cushion loss, and strengthen survivors and survival instincts” (McCarthy Brown 1991, 10).

These elements make the Vodoo religion one that is eminently practical and grounded, easily understandable because its focus is on ameliorating the very real and common trials and tribulations of life. Perhaps the reason that these three types of items (money, religious items, non-religious items) were the most numerous in the temple space was because in their authenticity of function, they best served the Vodoo faith and its participants: “In Haiti, all relationships are exchange relationships. They are defined in terms of gifts and counter-gifts of tangibles (food, service, shelter) and intangibles (respect, love, fidelity). In Vodou, healing begins by repairing and reactivating the exchange networks between the living and the spirits. Then the spirits are properly fed and honored, they will bestow protection and good luck on their children” (McCarthy Brown 1987, 69). The items share the quality of functional practicality that directly relates to the basic premise underlying the Vodoo religion: application, in whatever formulation is deemed appropriate, to spiritual intermediaries to preserve and/or change aspects of the participants’ everyday lives and problems.

Thus, it is relatively easy to comprehend the practicality of money in such a practice. Whether it is given to appease particular loa or to support the Vodoo practice, practitioners, and community, it is a practical necessity in modern life. Its preponderance amongst the varied items in the temple certainly belies its significance, but also its ordinariness. The religious Vodoo images likewise serve a practical function. As in other faiths, religious images provide a visual focus for participants’ energy, requests, and supplications. They are a means by which to attempt to represent that which is intangible, mysterious, and supernatural. They are human interpretations of the divine, as well as attempts to harness the divine in a manner that can be
humanly understood. While the religious Voodoo images served to focus and crystallize the sacred, the non-voodoo figurines and statues can be understood as reflections and magnifications of the participants. The figurines appeared to be as varied and diverse as humanity itself, yet at the same time conveyed a familiarity and ordinariness that made them approachable and accessible. While the figures were varied, overall most were easily recognizable. They may convey a sense of understanding and belonging, especially to participants who are already steeped in the icons and images of popular culture. Their presence in the temple could be interpreted as a means by which to create a space in the temple for the practitioners and thus bring them closer to the practice. By making space for the everyday things, it grounds the Voodoo religion closer to the everyday lives of its participants. It ties the practical to the practiced, the mundane to the mysterious. It authenticates the ordinary.

**Discussion**

In contrast to the position of practitioners, Voodoo “has been imbued with overtly negative imagery by white Europeans and Americans for the better part of the last several centuries” (Bartkowski 1998, 559). Historically, many authentic elements of Voodoo have been forgotten or subsumed because they were not recorded in some durable format, not publicly or willingly shared (especially amongst non-practitioners) or not valued by European colonists who witnessed them (Leyburn 1966). For example, 18th century African slaves (in the colonial settlements that would eventually become Louisiana) practiced medicine, but only the material/kinesthetic aspects of their practices were collected or recorded by scientifically-minded Europeans at the time. Although Europeans were cognizant of the placebo effect, they were not interested in the spiritual or cultural aspects of the African cures they recorded: “What they diagnosed as ‘imagination’ in Europeans they judged as ‘superstition’ in Africans. Europeans did not collect the cultural practices that came to be called the *Obeah*, or in the French holdings what came to be called *voudou*” (Sponsel 2011, 103). Thus, inauthenticity of a sort (in the form of missing elements, guesses, and suppositions) or a simulation of authenticity, has been and is part of Voodoo’s history and evolution. This simulation, regardless of whether or not what is
presented is truly authentic, can provide a simulacrum of reality authentic enough for most non-practitioners and/or tourists. Because this simulacrum is presented as authentic Voodoo so repeatedly in so many different guises (museums, shops, souvenirs, etc.) actual religious Voodoo practices and accoutrements may seem inauthentic or deficient because of their scarcity and suppression. The tourist voodoo simulacrum (presentation and representation) thus becomes the real and in some ways, is real enough for its observers.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the varied understandings of the religion, both practitioners and non-practitioners implicitly express (in their descriptions) an inherent tension surrounding Voodoo. Gelder’s analyses of postcolonial voodoo trace approaches to the faith that “produce an unstable combination of enchantment and disenchantment, belief and skepticism” (Gelder 2000, 93). Voodoo seems to traverse different categories, fall in between categories or create unlikely connections between things seemingly unrelated. There appears to be a layering of opposites (whether intentional or not) that puts the practitioner in a position to consider both as present and viable in the same space. This position can be an uneasy one, as it conjures up questions such as how to assert the nature of authenticity, how to sketch the lines between reality and necessary fictions, “how to articulate the point at which skepticism and enchantment touch and affect each other, how to figure the place of the fatal in the midst of the banal and vice versa” (Gelder 2000, 97).

If we consider one of the semiotic functions of the grotesque as being able to serve as sign bordering disparate things, then understandings of Voodoo can be likened to the grotesque because they too seem to serve as symbols that bridge incongruences. It is likely that many tourists visiting New Orleans hope to witness something that straddles two seemingly disparate sensations simultaneously—frightening and humorous, devout and kitschy, authentic and inauthentic—when they choose to go on a voodoo city tour, browse through museums and shops dedicated to voodoo or enter The Voodoo Spiritual Temple. Tourism too is then grotesque, as it balances the need for a reproduction of a cultural experience in a safe environment with the search for the exotic where the “native…serve[s] the needs of the tourist; he is himself ‘on show’ a living spectacle to be scrutinized, photographed, tape recoded and interacted with in some particular ways” (Van den Berghe and Keyes 1984, 345). In the tourist’s search for authenticity
Exploring Contortions of the Authentic: Voodoo in New Orleans by Elvira K. Katić

(MacCannell 1999) it is often hard to distinguish between what is authentic and what is merely part of the show, as peddlers of culture know what tourists are seeking and produce products that promise to be well worth the money spent: “Most of the new Voodoo entrepreneurs are white, cashing in on the desire of outsiders to experience what they consider exotic, titillatingly sinful, or comical” (Long 2002, 95). It is also difficult to determine which part of the false experience is merely the perpetuation of stereotypes in the effort to show tourists what they came to see.

To the tourist, the word voodoo may seem a type of advertisement for the city of New Orleans itself, as it is easily found emblazoned on all manner of souvenirs, in shop names, on beers and dishes served in restaurants: “It is through symbols and meanings that tourists develop a particular perspective…that is fundamentally different form the way non-tourists see them” (Graburn 1983, 26). There are voodoo tours and museums, novelty shops and supply shops. These latter two are particularly intriguing with regards to the question of authenticity. The voodoo novelty shop sells items that can be found in almost any American souvenir shop—shot glasses, keychain rings, mugs—in addition to items that are particularly associated with the city of New Orleans—masks, strings of beads, voodoo dolls. The Voodoo supply shop purportedly sells items that are related to the practice of the religion and often have altars set up in the shop as well as specialists to help you with your purchases. What is intriguing is that many of the exact same wares that are sold in the novelty shops can be found in the supply shops (and vice versa). Bags of gris-gris, statues of loas, and ceremonial candles from the same manufacturers in China grace the shelves of both shops with an apparent lack of self-consciousness. Using semiotic analysis, tourism is a system “whereby a set of signs marks the object as authentic, both with respect to the markers themselves and to the outside world (Harkin 1995, 653). These markers (i.e., the word “voodoo,” gris-gris bags, statues of loas) are more important however than the sights themselves because “the tourist’s first contact with a sight is often not the sight itself, but a representation of it, a marker” (MacCannell 1999, 110). And this first contact determines the tourist gaze—the particular perspective with which tourists characterize people, places, and things.

Thus, in the search for authentic Voodoo, it’s not unlikely that designed tourist voodoo might satisfy the same need. If one expects to see black hen sacrifices in a Voodoo ceremony and
does (or if one does not expect to see a snake dance but then does), then they may very well believe that they have had an authentic Voodoo experience and have been privy to the view from the true back room (whether or not the experience was actually an authentic one). If they do not, then whatever one does see (whether simulated or authentic) does not satisfy and consequently is not real but merely another grotesque voodoo incarnation, poised between inviolability and entertainment. It would be interesting to learn how many tourists are disappointed when first confronted by the presentation of Priestess Miriam: A cheerful woman in a flowered muumuu may not likely be quite what they expect in their encounter with an “authentic” Voodoo priestess. Tourists may also be seeking a kind of fashionable spirituality in exploring Voodoo and if so, they have chosen well as Voodoo lends itself to fashion with its religious symbols, glittering candles, and magic potions. But the sophistication of the faith is effectively dampened and transformed by the tourist gaze and expectations to satisfy a desire for an authentic experience with an exotic cult.

The Voodoo Spiritual Temple presents its version of authentic Voodoo and whether this version is the front room, false back room or the true back room remains impossible to determine, even with semiotic and interview analyses that seem to suggest elements of authentic religious space, in accordance with what is known about the Voodoo religion: “Present day New Orleans priests and priestesses are indisputably genuine in their devotion to Voodoo. They are also compelled to make a living, and here the line between Voodoo as entertainment and Voodoo as religion becomes blurred” (Long 2002, 98). Whether the temple is perceived as authentic Voodoo by an observer however, seems to remain in the domain of the beholder and whatever each beholder’s eye wishes to believe and expects to see. Some observers perhaps expect a measure of the grotesque from Voodoo given its contumacious nonconformity to some stable definition or practice. Consequently, they cannot “un-see” their self-sanctioned filter of the grotesque and may laud or seek out such manifestations as being signifiers of the authentic. Designed tourist voodoo strengthens and may further develop these perceptions for it does not attempt to reeducate the observer (as to authentic Voodoo), but rather fulfills and actualizes the role that has been written for it by the desires of the observers and their expectations.
New Orleans Voodoo at least, cannot be so easily positioned along either “authentic” or “inauthentic continuums” and it would seem its practitioners are in accord with this lack of alignment. Flexibility and interpretation seem critical to each practitioner’s authentic practice: “Voodoo chic is spiritual duende [magic]. It’s accessible to those who go out to meet it on its own turf, within the framework of its own mythology and the peculiar outlines of its own sacred history” (Consentino 1987, 73). Some believe that New Orleans Voodoo cannot be known; that is owned by those with a birthright to it, whereupon it cannot be understood by or spoken about by those who are not already within the faith: “We who are natives of this City and count ourselves among the Faithful cannot talk with you, the outsider, about Voodoo” (Osbey 2011, 1). And perhaps that is true. Perhaps we cannot know anything about Voodoo or any other religion unless we are somehow part of its initiate or ancestry. However, what I think is also true is that authenticity is at the heart of such arguments, and authenticity is very personal and therefore largely untenable. Perhaps these very idiosyncrasies, these inconstant multiplicities of belief/s resonate with the heart of authentic Voodoo moreso than we are initially led to believe. The search for authentication may be the mirror of the heart and transformations of the Voodoo faith:

Over these years, what has made this practice more genuine, is the people from all over the world that come for different purposes. The unfixed state of your mind, that there can be different diverse activities or actions of people that can flow and make better meaning, is what the service is about. Because if you, in yourself, feel that you have structured a perfect one, you have just made a big flop of yourself. Because it’s better to not have any over-fixed, set notions to decide you have made and have all the right symbols…because the Earth is not guaranteed to prove it as steady or as perfect-set as we would have wanted to be…And it’s those things that are not so well-put together, that brings us out to serve it” (M. Chamani, personal communication, 2015).

“Myth is the facts of the mind made manifest in a fiction of matter.”

*(Maya Deren)*
References


Notes

The spelling of voodoo terminology may sometimes vary from what the reader may be accustomed to when reading research about Voodoo. Wherever possible, I used the spellings I encountered in New Orleans to try and authentically represent elements of the New Orleans Voodoo religion. For example, I use the spelling “voodoo” as opposed to “vodou” in this essay. Although the latter is the proper Haitian spelling, the former is how the word is spelled in New Orleans and by the Voodoo Spiritual Temple. Erzuli was spelled as “Erzulie,” Danbala as “Damballah,” and so forth. Wherever I felt an alternate spelling or translation would be helpful, I inserted it in parenthesis following the term, as with the New Orleans spelling of loa, followed by the Haitian spelling “lwa,” and the translation “spirits.” I use the capitalized “Voodoo” to indicate the proper noun as associated with the religion and its practices: the Voodoo religion. I use the lower-case “voodoo” to indicate either a descriptor or common noun as associated with the concept of voodoo as a motif or theme: a voodoo tour.

Interviews were conducted with the Priestess Miriam Chamani (on April 4th, 2011 and April 14th, 2015), Jerry Gandolfo (owner of The New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum, in March 2011), and a few random, willing tourists visiting the French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana (early April, 2015).
The Performativity of the Archive from a semiotic perspective

The Performativity of the Archive from a semiotic perspective

By Martin Acebai, Claudio Guerri, Cristina Voto

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Abstract: The paper proposes a Peircean semiotics approach to the Archives Studies based on the notion of performativity. In this context, the study of discourses shifts from the representational verification to their effectiveness; the question is no longer about what they represent, but about what discourses are capable of producing in a time and a community. The objective of the paper is to challenge the cultural practice of archiving with these notions. To do this, a semiotic methodology is used to allow the investigation of the ways in which the archives make sense, as well as the aspects that are involved in that production of meaning. Three major interrelated fields of research will thus be defined: the archive as construction of a memory; the archive as the storage and constitution of objects and documents; the archive as the systematization of the archive material.

Keywords: semiotics, archive, performativity, cultural semiotics, methodology.

1. Introduction

This article arises in response to an effective demand which emerged during the teaching of “Semiotics” at the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero -UNTREF-, as part of the Electronic Arts Degree. The subject “Semiotics” develops a methodology for the study of the dimensions involved in the production of meaning carried out by contemporary artistic practices, in this case, especially those related to Electronic Arts. During the semester, students must analyze artworks they are developing—or have already produced—for other subjects. What we have identified is the increasing use of what is generally called archival materials by students. The term is used in a slightly imprecise way and, at the same time, collects a miscellany of diverse elements: from sound records ordered and cataloged by recognized institutions, to found footage, images or audiovisuals belonging to the private sphere and recently found or exhumed, etcetera.
As it is a “material”, an input or a raw material for the production of artworks, we consider that it is necessary to study the practice of archiving from a semiotic perspective. We are interested in understanding the potential of these materials to produce and transform meanings. Within the Research Project entitled “Semiotics of performativity: epistemological lens, event and performative effect”, we have elaborated some semiotic reflections about the complex theme of the “archive”, its emergence and its uses. Our methodological framework is the *Semiotic Nonagon* (Guerri, 1984 [1988]: 353-354; 2003: 157-174; 2014 [2016]: 3-40), an operative model for qualitative research based on the semiotic postulates of Charles Sanders Peirce.

2. State of the Art on Archive Studies

Since the last decade of the 20th century, production in relation to Archive Studies has increased exponentially. The result is an endless amount of bibliography production if we do not have some tools to select and organize relevant studies for specific research. To carry out this selection and organization, this article proposes a Peircean reading of Archive Studies in a performative key. In this way, we can group these studies into three large areas: institutional archive policies; the materiality of the archive; and the artistic-poetic reworkings of the archive. Louis Althusser (1965 [1973]: 132-159) recognizes, within *Social Practice*, three classes of practices: 1. theoretical or ideological practice; 2. economic practice; and 3. political practice. Each of these social practices can be related to the Peircean categories of *Firstness, Secondness* and *Thirdness*, respectively. In the following sections, we organize the state of the art according to these three kinds of practices, but inverting the sequence—for explanatory purposes—by following the Peircean statement of “Symbols grow” (CP 2.302, 1895): institutional archive policies—*political practice*—; the materiality of the archive—*economic practice*—; and the artistic-poetic reworkings of the archive—*theoretical-ideological practice*.

2.1 Institutional archive policies

This area is related to the archives’ *political strategies*. It brings together a series of works that have focused on the epistemological, democratizing and visualizing possibilities of the archive.
In relation to the first aspect—the *epistemological* possibilities—, archives have usually been understood as places of “selection, classification and storage of textual, visual and sound objects of knowledge” (Göbel and Müller, 2017: 19). From this perspective, Foster (2004: 4) points out that “[the archive] seeks to physically present historical information, often lost or displaced”. Both Stoler (2010) and Göbel and Müller (2017) question this somewhat idealized image and point out the colonizing nature of archives in the central nodes of Europe and the United States, since they allow their researchers “the possibility to compare diversity from one single place” (Göbel and Müller, 2017: 20).

This last proposal introduces us to the second aspect that we have already mentioned: *democratization*. For Giunta, (2010: 23) archive policies in Latin America:

“are based on a key word: democratization. The term has the power to tie wills immediately, almost as if it were a popular front or a letter to gather signatures in favor of a just cause. (…) But declassifying archives does not necessarily imply declassifying knowledge policies.”

For Taylor (2019: 39), the fetishization of the archive is capable of rendering its economic and political interests invisible:

“like a fetish, [the archive] spreads over various contradictory and irreconcilable power mechanisms. However, one must understand the power and control behind the archive to assess the political and economic implications of what is kept and what is forgotten.” (our emphasis)

Finally, archives have been studied, especially in Latin America, for their political capacity to denounce and make visible repressive practices, censorship and exploitation (Markarian, 2016; Ferraz Fernandes, 2007; Da Silva Catela, 2002), which transforms their status from that of “mere deposits” into that of “places in dispute” (Balé, 2018; Tello, 2015).
2.2 The materiality of the archive

This area concerns the economical strategies of archives. It is constituted by the problems arising from their materialization. Every archive consists of a certain accumulation of materials and requires a space where these materials are protected. In relation to this point, some studies emphasize the way in which archives are able to give value to materials that have usually been considered minor (Foster, 2004; Giunta, 2010). Other authors have studied the way in which certain documents function, in museums, as substitutes for works that can no longer be recreated (Groys, 2008).

But the subject with the greatest interest today is the “digitization” or “digital transformation” of archives. For some authors, digitization makes institutional and disciplinary spaces more permeable (Hui, 2016) and allows the creation of “digital ecosystems of knowledge”. Göbel and Müller (2017), on the other hand, point out that digitization implies a loss of the sensory and haptic experiences that arise from interaction with the object. Digitization, for these authors, can also generate new hierarchies or the loss of visibility of non-digital, non-digitized or non-digitizable objects.

These considerations on the materiality of the archive also include its modes of circulation. In one sense, digitization recovers the ideal of democratization and free access. In another sense, it questions the authority of institutions to legitimize and manage these materialities. From this perspective, Göbel and Müller (2017: 23) suggest the emptying of archives, what they call “digital extractivism”.

2.3 The artistic-poetic reworkings of the archive

This area is related to the theoretical strategies of archives, and is the most frequent aspect of the archive found in discussions about contemporary art and Latin American art in particular. Guasch (2011) places the “archive” as the third paradigm within the art studies that started with the first avant-gardes. For this author, the perspective of the archive abandons the idea of the artistic object and gives creation an “aesthetic of the legal-administrative organization”.

For Osthoff (2009), the archive is no longer a material for the work of art; rather, it itself becomes a work of art. Barriendos (2012) calls this the “archival turn” of contemporary art.
Rolnik (2010) investigates the different poetics that artistic practices of the archive have generated, from the historical perspective of Benjamin. For this author, as for Tello (2015), art must “stir, activate, revulse” the archive to find in it marks of a future, and not just the testimony of the past.

3. The descriptive fallacy of languages

Based on what has been stated above, we propose an approach to the phenomenon of the archive based on the notion of “performativity”. The term is understood, at least in a first instance, as characterized by John Austin (1962) and his disciple John Searle (1969) in their Theory of Speech Acts. What Austin (1962: 42) proposes in his lectures is a review of what he calls the “descriptive fallacy of language”. In accordance with an informational, representational approach to language, all verbal statements—and we can also extend the affirmation to other languages—are conceived, in a first approximation, as “verifications”, representations, registers of a reality or of an extra-discursive experience. The analysis of these statements would consist of a contrast with that reality, either to show their truth or falsehood—in a more modern approach—or to show their partial, arbitrary and biased nature—in a more contemporary approach.

In opposition, the notion of performativity postulates that discourses are not limited to verifying or describing a reality, but actually produce or transform it. In this way, Austin argues that certain statements, in certain circumstances, do not “register” the name of an object or a person, but rather “name” it—for example, at baptism;—they do not simply describe a social relationship between two subjects, but construct it by the very act of speech that involves them—for example, when a marriage takes place. In this perspective, the study of statements or discourses moves from “representational verification” to “the conditions of effectiveness” of those statements. That is, what conditions are necessary for a discourse to operate, and act on reality and experience?

4. The fallacy of the archive

Following on from the previous section, we can infer that an approach to the archive from the perspective of performativity requires investigating the informational or representational
“fallacy” of the archive. For this we can recover the first formulations made by Guasch (2011: 13) in her text Arte y archivos, 1920-2010. Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades, where the author proposes a first characterization of the archive “as a mnemonic supplement that preserves memory and rescues from oblivion, amnesia, destruction, annihilation, to the point of becoming a true memorandum”. For this author, the archive is a “mnemonic supplement” because it articulates the mnéme—the living memory resulting from internal experience—with the hypomnema—the act of remembering. The act of remembering would have its limitations—memory capacity, survival of the person who remembers—, so it would require a supplement. But this supplement is also “mnemonic” because it proposes a technique for memory organization. This allows Guasch (2011) to differentiate “storing” or “collecting” from “archiving”.

Storing “consists of ‘assigning’ a place or depositing something—a thing, an object, an image—in a specific place” (Guasch 2011: 10; emphasis in the text); on the other hand, archiving implies a “grouping”, but it [also] demands to unify, identify, classify, its way of proceeding is not amorphous or indeterminate but is born with the purpose of coordinating a “corpus” within a system or a synchrony of elements previously selected” (Guasch 2011: 10).

The key to beginning to clarify the fallacy of the archive can be traced at the end of the last quote: “previously selected elements”. The archive, from this point of view, maintains a subsidiary relationship with that “prior selection”, just as the descriptive-constative conception of language maintains a subsidiary relationship between a statement and the reality or experience it represents, although such a representation is made in a more or less precise way, capturing certain aspects and discarding others. Briefly, in this approach, the archive is made up of three elements:

- an organization or classification;
- a memory resulting from experience—or a substitute: image, object, verbal speech, etcetera—; and
- a criterion of selection.
These three elements are linked to each other to achieve the objective of “preserving memory and rescuing from oblivion”. Certain experiences that are considered memorable are organized in a particular way to be remembered in a certain way. For this reason, Guasch affirms that the “paradigm of the archive” makes a passage from the object—artistic, auratic—to the support of information. The object becomes a support for information insofar as it constitutes a support for a memory resulting from “previously selected” experiences.

What is the fallacy of the archive? To answer this question, it is necessary to investigate the subsidiary nature of the connection that arises between the archive and organized memorable memories. This is precisely the approach that allows the notion of performativity. Within the Austinian framework, we could say that the archive does not preserve a memory, but constitutes it at the moment in which it is safeguarded; or rather, that it makes a memory memorable in the very act of displaying a mnemonic to remember it. This is what Derrida (1995: 17) refers to when he says:

the archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. *The archivization produces as much as it records the event.* [first emphasis in original, second ours].

This first identification of the fallacy of the archive—“the archivization produces as much as it records the event”—needs or can be complemented by the contributions of the triadic and logic-based semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce and the methodology of the Semiotic Nonagon. The first of the projections of this fallacy that Peircian semiotics affords us is to identify which are the aspects involved in the production of meaning carried out by the archive. This means thinking about the archive as a sign.
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We have already said that the archive is constituted by three aspects. Each of these elements refers to the aspects that constitute one of the definitions of the sign (CP 2.228, 1897) in Peirce (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An archive is constituted by</th>
<th>A sign is something</th>
<th>Terminological reformulation for the SN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Guasch 2011)</td>
<td>(Peirce)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- an organization [that</td>
<td>- in some respect…</td>
<td>- Ground / Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordinates]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- memory/objets memorables</td>
<td>- for something</td>
<td>- Object / Existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[according to]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a selection criterion</td>
<td>- to somebody</td>
<td>- Interpretant / Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Relationships of the constituent elements of the archive for Guasch (2011) with the aspects of Pierce's triadic sign (CP 2.228, 1897). The last column introduces the terminological reformulation proposed by Guerri (1988, 2003; 2014 [2016]).

The archive, as a sign, is something which stands to somebody—a certain criterion that postulates a “selective memory” of events—, for something—a concrete memory forged in an experience, or an object, an image, a document, etc. that operates as a substitute—, in some respect or capacity—according to a certain organization and classification.

In this semiotic approach, the memory or the memorable object—the Existent, the “archive material”—only makes sense when it takes a Form that organizes and systematizes it, removes it from pure “amorphous storage”; and when the object takes a Value—a social and artistic interpretant—that makes it a substitute or testimony of a past event. The memory or the object, then, ceases to be “the individual fact that insists on being here regardless of any [quality and] reason” (CP 1.434), to enter as Existent in the semiotic process.
This first approach allows us to identify areas of investigation of the archive with specific and articulated problems at the same time. On the other hand, it permits us to expand the study of the performativity of the archive and recognize the dimensions involved in its effectiveness. An effectiveness capable —according to Derrida— of producing the event that it records.

5. The performativities of the archive

In a previous work (Acebal et al., 2014) we showed that the traditional approach to performativity—from the Philosophy of Language—placed all the emphasis on the role that conventions played in the effectiveness of a discourse. The attention to the fulfillment of certain steps, in the conditions of legitimacy of the producers, among other elements, built an image of performativity focused only on those aspects that Peircean semiotics calls symbolic. The objective of that article was to show how the analysis of the size and location of the images allowed us to recognize specific effectiveness of the images that was not limited to their symbolic and valuative aspects. We stated that the performativity of the images also involved their formal-iconic and material-indexical features, producing what we called contingent performativity. As the Gestalt demonstrates, the formal qualities of images can operate on other images, altering the perception of size, continuity, etcetera. The same can be said about the material characteristics and the location of the images: these features are also capable of affecting and involving bodies and transforming spaces.

In this way, the triadic approach to performativity broadens the original postulates and allows us to speak of a symbolic performativity, an indexical performativity and an iconic performativity, depending on whether the effectiveness is attributed—predominantly—to its valuative, material or formal aspects, respectively.

Within the framework of this article, the identification of three particular dimensions of effectiveness in the study of performativity requires recovering the three aspects operating in the archive. We said that the archive was constituted by “a certain organization and systematization; a group of objects, documents, images, etc. that operated as substitutes for the event; and a selection criterion, which guides and gives the reasons which make the event memorable”.
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The hypothesis that we want to propose in this work affirms that each of these constitutive aspects has its specific effectiveness in the construction of the performativity of the archive. At the same time, it can be argued that, in each conjuncture or curatorial proposal, some of these elements can acquire a greater role and make their effectiveness dominate over that of the others.

5.1 The symbolic performativity of the archive

The symbolic performativity of the archive investigates the capacity of archives, institutions, groups, and states to build a memory, to inscribe the present in struggles, in conquests, but also in traumas and losses. Symbolic performativity is what makes certain events memorable; it is able to highlight certain episodes that are considered relevant to the present times from the undifferentiated continuum of history. Here we can find those studies, especially in Latin America, that show the political capacity of the archive to denounce and make visible repressive practices, censorship and exploitation (Da Silva Catela, 2002; Ferraz Fernandes, 2007; Markarian, 2016). It is from these studies that the archives are no longer seen as “mere deposits”, but understood as “places in dispute” (Balé, 2018; Tello, 2015). At this point, the archive exhibits what Derrida (1996: 77) calls “archontic power”: the power that magistrates possessed to safeguard documents and, at the same time, to interpret them.

5.2 The indexical performativity of the archive

The indexical performativity of the archive reflects on the capacity of objects and documents to constitute an event, and not only to materialize a memory established in a different instance—the symbolic one. This is relevant for those cases in which, as Osthoff (2009) argues, the archive ceases to be mere material for a work of art, and transforms itself into a work of art. In a curatorial proposal that began in May 2018—and ended the same month in 2019—the Provincial Museum “Rosa Galisteo de Rodríguez” in the city of Santa Fe, Argentina, used all its exhibition rooms to display the 2700 artworks that constitute the museum’s heritage. The works were arranged, almost stacked, without any acknowledgment of traditional grouping criteria or the criteria proposed by a room text or a catalog. The exhibition was called “Taken
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Museum”—“Museo tomado”, in Spanish—and the exhibited artworks did not remain for long, because they were replaced, week after week, by new heritage works, whose storage was also part of the exhibition. At the same time, visitors could see the process of restoration of the works, which was taking place in nearby rooms. The exhibition space tried to contain these restoration activities and the excess of the archived heritage.

In cases like these, it is the very materiality and excess of the archive that prevails over the selection criteria—symbolic—and the organization criteria—iconic. The documents, objects and artworks involved in these proposals do not admit a conventional understanding of the archive. They are not conceived or experienced as material instantiations of a memory, as “symbolized singularities”. Materials become operative, capable themselves of forging an event or the experience of that event. These materials do not necessarily require a discursive scaffolding that inscribes them in a narrative or a politics of memory.

Archives that seek to recreate the experience of the event can also be considered within this group. These are archives that offer the visitor a much more somatic than cognitive relationship with the historical event being remembered. This is what happens at the Jewish Museum in Berlin and its Holocaust Tower; or the high granite walls next to the entrance ramp in the Parque de la Memoria de Buenos Aires. Issues related to the domiciliation of the files and their digitization are also grouped here. This last phenomenon—digitization—becomes relevant for the study of indexical performativity insofar as it implies, as Göbel and Müller (2017) point out, a loss of the sensory and haptic experiences that arise from the interaction with archival materials.

5.3 The iconic performativity of the archive

The iconic performativity of the archive explores the effectiveness of the archive to project onto the materials a form that functions as a selection criterion for future objects, documents, etc. They will be “archive material” insofar as they correspond to the features organized and systematized by the archive. Buchloh (1999: 32) affirms that in contemporary art we find an
“aesthetic of legal-administrative organization” of the archive. What is of interest here is the way in which this aesthetic operates as a device for cataloging, but also as a device for the intellection of archive material. The performative character is recognized when the organizational criteria no longer offer a technique—mnemotechnies—to classify and order what is available, and become agents of selection of what is considered classifiable, that is, iconically archivable. On the other hand, a part of this iconic performativity of the archive would consist in producing its own indivisible remainder, a kind of asylum ignorantiae where unclassifiable materials can be located.

But the iconic character of this performativity does not only refer to the formal— theoretical—characteristics of the archive. The iconic performativity of the archive also alludes to visual representations with mnemonic purposes, such as the so-called “memory palace” referred to by Saint Augustine in his Confessions (Book X, 8-26) or the more contemporary developments of data visualization (Dondero, 2016).

6. Conclusions

In this article we aimed to demonstrate that the archive can be understood as an epistemological lens—another of the meanings attributed by Diana Taylor (Taylor y Fuentes, 2011) to the notion of “performance”. This epistemological lens operates on phenomena, discourses and documents to recognize in them their “archival” character. The archive recognizes in phenomena, discourses and documents the capacity to construct a memory, recreate an event and organize and classify memories.

The study on the performativity of the archive invites us to think about its own hypertrophy. An example is the phenomenon that leads to the conservation of objects and documents without being able to specify exactly what the event is that is being remembered, what Foster (2004) described as the “archiving impulse” and then Suely Rolnik (2010) called “archiving fury”. The performativity of the archive also denounces the fossilization of the classification criteria that render invisible those elements that do not respond to the features stipulated for cataloging and systematization.
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The students’ “archive materials” can now be analyzed from these three different areas of performativity to inquire into their formal, material and value conditions of constitution and also their specific effectiveness, in order to be able to operate on them in the production process of a work of art.

7. Bibliography


The Performativity of the Archive from a Semiotic Perspective


The Performativity of the Archive from a Semiotic Perspective


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Postcolonial Memorabilities and Transforming Performativity in Dispersion

Fatima Festić

(Amsterdam/Chicago/Sarajevo)

Abstract

This text discusses the Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural circles comparatively, on the background of the remaining interactive traces of three empires, Habsburg, Ottoman, and Yugoslav, which permeated these cultures in the past, on the one side. On the other side, the text discusses the more recent intellectual/artistic dispersions from these national cultures across the Central European territorial and cultural domains. I reconsider the concept of postcolonial in reference to that, as relative to the concepts of both post-imperial and re-national, and as tuned in to my major analytic frameworks of gender and cultural performativity.

On that ground, I attend to the questions of domination and continuity as the shifting patterns and political variables affecting the processes of the present identifications involved in personal, group, ethnic figurations. My analysis evolves around two points: 1. the postcolonial as manifested in the mnemonic work in the cultural production in dispersive moving trajectories 2. the transforming performativity of a creative singular acting that reinscribes these mnemonic traces with the newly produced quality in rhizomatic cultural interactions. Therefore, I expose domination and continuity as pulsating in the rewritten challenges to the previous or existing structures, providing the mnemonic also with dialogical traits in dissolving the compulsory group memorabilities – as seeing in the examples of literature, art, and theory made in dispersion.

Key words: postcolonialism, memorability, trauma, singular performativity, dispersion
Introduction

I start this text by delineating my own position to the wider topic of the current state of the literary studies in Central Europe, on the one hand. On the other hand, by delineating my position to the terms that I have announced in the text’s title. That is: 1. my understanding of the current Central European postcolonial 2. my use of the terms: memorability and performativity in this context, and 3. the term: dispersion that I innovatively introduce and theorize as a distinct social phenomenon.

My background is in comparative literature, philosophy, and arts, my national and formal civic affiliations are Croatian, Bosnian, and American. My work has been evolving through multicontinental trajectories, variously determined by the effects of the former-Yugoslav wars and the prewar/postwar developments in these territories. Recently, my research interests have again involved the area of the Central Europe, as I have started applying my longtime experience and methodologies to the cultural circles that have shaped my early education, cognition, and viewpoints, while thinking also of wider global bearings. Currently, I explore the Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural circles comparatively. On the one hand, on the background of the interactive remaining traces of indeed three empires, Habsburg, Ottoman, and Socialist Yugoslav, that permeated these cultures in the past. On the other hand, on the background of the more recent intellectual and artistic dispersions from these two entirely differently structured national cultures, Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian – across the European territorial and cultural domains. From this, it also follows that I deem movement as a major determinant of our time, a major potential, and a major critical force. Especially in the wake of collective traumatic events that I have observed in the processes of individual disconnecting from ethnic groups –

1 Related to memory processes, I use the term “memorability” as ability to memorize and select actively from the memory, and also as the quality/state of being prone to remembering; and the term “mnemonic” as relating to the practice of aiding the memory.

2 “Performativity” is first used by the philosopher of language John Austin referring to the capacity of speech/communication to act or to consummate an action – as beyond iterability, as the unique occurrence of an act in the here and now, between singular subjects, thus potentially radicalizing the meanings that can emerge. Performativity theory is most notably developed by Judith Butler referring to gender as socially constructed through commonplace speech acts and a nonverbal symbolic communication that are performative and serve to define/maintain identities – which are hence continuously being redefined.

3 Unlike in natural sciences, in social sciences/humanities the term “dispersion” is neither defined in itself nor differentiated from the term “diaspora”. I am describing this concept innovatively and elaborating a theory of dispersion as a movement that also refers to cognition/memory/knowledge-production/-dissemination.
which has been widely substantiated in crucial cultural, art, and scientific production in dispersion.

In this text, I discuss the term postcolonial in reference to what I have just described, as relative to the concepts of both post-imperial and re-national, and as tuned in to the analytic frameworks of gender and cultural performativity that I have been using throughout my work. On that ground, I attend to the questions of domination and continuity as shifting patterns and political variables that affect the processes of the present identifications° involved in personal, group, or ethnic figurations. My discussion evolves around two points:

1. the postcolonial as manifested in the mnemonic work in the cultural production in dispersive moving trajectories, and

2. the transforming performativity of a creative singular acting that re-inscribes these mnemonic traces with a newly produced quality in rhizomatic cultural interactions.

Therefore, I display domination and continuity as pulsating in the rewritten challenges (to both previous structures and existing structures), which provide the mnemonic also with dialogical traits in thawing compulsory group memorabilities. They also contest the prospects of the ethnic cohesiveness based largely on ethnic trauma-heritage (from three 20th century wars). Further, I argue for the internationalization of the experience of ethnic injury – by a dispersive plurimedial semioticization in cultural production – that has a political dimension of creative interaction. I will also delineate the main points of my current project that elaborates a novel theory of dispersion.

**The Postcolonial Revisited**

The basic definition of postcolonialism, as inaugurated by Edward Said (1978)°, renders it as a cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of the colonized, as a critical-theory-analysis of that specific history-politics-culture-discourse-literature-art. As such, postcolonial-ism is a response to the dogmatic

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° The composite units within any concrete ethnicity, nation, or state all exact a variety of identifications in their personal and collective identity building.

belief-system of colonialist thought, and has taken sway across the planet in demonstrating the
ever-invasive power-practices of empires. Yet also, in interpretations, such power-practices are
observed as extended to or permeating those of nations and re-nations alike, which has more
recently been translated into the key concerns of the post-imperial studies and the studies in re-
nationalization or nation-building. Historically analogically, however, I understand the
postcolonial thought also as comparable to the 1990s rise of trauma studies that have explored
the impact of trauma on society and literature. The theorization of cultural trauma has ranged
from the by-the-Freudian-thought-backed un-representability of extreme suffering as challenging
the limits of language, even rupturing all meaning (Shoshana Felman 1992, Cathy Caruth 1996)
on the one hand. And on the other hand, to some more critical, present-reality-based stances
(inaugurated by Dominick LaCapra 1994, 2004, or Juliet Mitchell 2000), alongside the
simultaneous decisive re-inscription of trauma experiences with gender performativity or

This analogy displayed – between the studies of the effects of colonization and the studies of
the effects of trauma – I take as the platform for my research of the layered mnemonic traces in
the current Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural production comparatively. Yet, even
more prolific research-ground is offered by the cultural production that manifests the
(post-)1990s dispersive migratory movements from these two countries (forced or voluntary),
which is the focus of this text, and one of the references for my current elaboration of a wider,
globally applicable framework of dispersion theory. Alongside that, I aim to point out to the
dead-alleys of the recent or still domineering processes of (what I observe as) a “competitive
trauma management”. That is, what is specifically related to various forms of colonization, and
undertaken both internally from within and between these two national cultures, or also any other
related national cultures.

6 On post-imperial studies see e.g. Judson 2016, Kozuchowski 2013, Osterhammel 2009, Howe 2009, Spencer 2008, Münkler

7 I have opened the dialogue between the memories of the Holocaust and postcolonialism already in the 1990s in my congress
presentations/publications and my doctoral dissertation. See some titles by Festić in the bibliography. The comprehensive
theoretical work on that topic is more recently provided by Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the
Writing about the post-Yugoslav theory, literatures, and arts, in some way all related to the ex-Yugoslav grounds, it is indicative to say that even the very word “(ex-)Yugoslav” was hurtful, difficult, and problematic for me to use it in my subsequent-to-the-war scholarship. I was very much affected by the violence of the pre-war/war 1990s developments, like many others, who were affected in equal or much worse ways. Until recently, when I have pressed myself to contemplate thoroughly about multiple contexts that had produced Yugoslavia (in its positive and negative aspects), alongside the horrific “side-effects” of the crash of that – what is by now often called – historically constructed “mistake”. The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia had various features in common with the previous Imperial reigns on the same territories. It has already commonly been apprehended as the last multiethnic Empire, and its dissolution only “the final stage in the breakdown of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires”. Whether we denote the succeeding 1990s’- and post-processes of the political reconfigurations as postcolonial or post-imperial, relative to these three empires, they all come down to be read as discharging of the beleaguered ethnic memorabilities. For me, that has clearly indicated the need for specifying, analyzing and theorizing the prospects of the individual and personal memory of the lives lived


there as differing from their strictly ethnic bases, and of the dispersive movement of the subjects of such memory. And also, I look in the individualized post-memory\textsuperscript{11} of the various, previously often interlocked and/or reactionary cultural (ethnic) traumas preserved through generations – throughout the aftermath of these three Empires.

Very useful for my discussion is 2014 book \textit{Do the Balkans Begin in Vienna? The Geopolitical and Imaginary Borders between the Balkans and the Europe}, by a younger Macedonian scholar Anna Foteva. She writes that only historically delayed until the 1990s was the “enforcement of national identities and state building through violent exclusion of those who did not belong to the own group”, the processes typical for postcolonial states.\textsuperscript{12} Foteva’s detailed analyses of the political and religiously-fed currents – that have indeed concerned also the Central Europe as the extension of the Balkans, if one reads the book’s title\textsuperscript{13} the other way around, i.e. pertaining to migratory routes (from the East to the West) – indicate and foster the relationship between the postcolonial and post-imperial studies. As I read this relationship, the historical analogy/coinidence of the postcolonial studies with trauma studies is replicated by the historical analogy/coinidence of the post-imperialist studies with the rise of performativity studies (also transmuted into nomadism thought) in the past two decades of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. And further: a new perspective has opened on the inherent “dialogue between the concepts of nationhood and the ideas of the empire” (for example, by Pieter Judson 2016)\textsuperscript{14} at the level of the socio-political analysis in social sciences. And, also a new perspective has opened on rewriting a trauma with performativity at the (also gender) levels of the linguistic, philosophic, and artistic in the studies of humanities.

Within such a widened range of understanding and research – with its deeply contrasting, often exclusionary assembled memorabilities – postcolonialism is opening up to re-inscriptions

\textsuperscript{11} Post-memory is a term introduced by Marianne Hirsch/Leo Spitzer to describe the relationship that the “generation(s) after” bears to the personal/collective/cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories/images/behaviors among which they grew up. These experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Post-memory’s connection to the past is thus mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment/projection/creation.

\textsuperscript{12} Foteva, ibid, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{13} In the 19th c. the Austrian chancellor Metternich was quoted to have said that “the Balkans start at the Rennweg” (Wien).

of both the rooted mnemonic traces and the emerging quality of the rhizomatic cultural interactions. The European Union’s *Weltanschauung* itself can be taken as the most progressive step\(^\text{15}\) in comparison to the previous political formats of the member-states (imperial, colonial, national-ist, socialist[-federative]); or, rather critically as yet another exploitatively envisioned practice of the mainstream ideology of progress of those in rule. In both cases, however, the currently produced thought, literatures and arts in the European Union’s territories decisively tend to work through dogmatic canons of the past and present alike. The mainstream and migratory cultures are merging inevitably, also in the Central European territories (more or less extended to the European West or East), as I will exemplify in my comparative approaches to some of the Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian migratory cultural production.

**Heterogenous Memorabilities**

The three calamities of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century Europe – 1. the Great War (ending the reign of several empires) 2. (its “nationalized” extension to) the WWII and 3. the (ex-)Yugoslav wars (their belated replica) – prompted the series of severely critical academic reconsiderations of the meaning of ethnicity, nation, statehood, migrations. Also, of the value of human life, memory, and enterprise, throughout the past hundred years. That is how some new scientific disciplines are generated, alongside various cultural/academic testimonies and artistic production. The grounds of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were immensely affected by all these calamities. However, in the 1990s’ wars, these two countries (their statehoods stemming from the medieval times), were exposed to the devious, horrific military aggressions by their (own) Yugoslav-preserving Serbian-co-nationals both from the outside and within the country-borders. These aggressions clearly endorsed the Imperialist character of Yugoslavia, that in its third format\(^\text{16}\) failed and crashed at last. The pre-Yugoslav imperial reigns on their territories, Habsburg and Ottoman, in various ways through centuries inscribed the colonial beings of the ethnicities, their

\(^{15}\) For example, see Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (2007); or Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration* (2000).

\(^{16}\) There were three formats of Yugoslavia 1. the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians 1918-1929 2. Kingdom of Yugoslavia 3. from 1945 Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, with the later changed name Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia through 1991, when the Serbian led Yugoslav Army forces violently tried to stop the state’s peaceful disintegration into separate republics.
faiths, local rules, destinies, and individual human psychologies alike. The imprints of the colonial yoke of the foreign regulative and ruling structures were preserved in the symbolic forms in folklore, mythologies, literatures, arts\textsuperscript{17} – often mutually very contrarily within each of the ethnicities. That was especially the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina with its formatively and constitutionally more complex and variegated populations than in Croatia, as religion was the determinant factor of each of the ethnicities.

The “Muslimness” as imported imperially from the Turks into the majority-population introduced Oriental scripts and languages in the service of the Ottoman reigns. That shaped the population with a thoroughly new cultural-civilizational codification that has persisted through today, modified/adjusted variably in/to the subsequent systems. Traumatic in the historical experience and in the imagination of the neighboring Catholic and Orthodox Christians, this Oriental dimension then became the target of both Croatian and Serbian 19\textsuperscript{th} century nationalizing movements. Both claimed the naturalized Muslim Bosnian population to be their own – yet mostly through the requirement of the disowning of their religiously-informed-Muslim-identity.\textsuperscript{18} Subsequently, in all three 20\textsuperscript{th} century wars, the so called “phantom Muslim population”\textsuperscript{19} was threatened to be eradicated. Croatian nationals rooted in Croatian Catholicism were firmly shielded by the Austro-Hungarian structures (the Serbian nationals by the orthodoxy ties to the Russian-Empire, later its-communist-USSR-extension, and Russian-Federation through today). Hence, certainly, Croatian official postcolonial responses to their largely accepted or integrated Austrian/Habsburg legacy (and somewhat more menacing Hungarian one) differed from their postcolonial responses to the Ottoman structures in their repulsion of the most of the Turkish traits and remains. Bosnia-Herzegovina has indeed been largely multiply indebted to the short period of the Austro-Hungarian rule (1875-1914), in the economic, industrial, cultural, urban, and civic sense. Although, paradoxically, the country produced and

\textsuperscript{17} The admirable canon of Croatian literature through centuries was largely produced also as the depiction of the resistance to foreign invaders and/or rulers: Turks, Venetians, Hungarians, Italians, etc. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the literary production since the medieval times followed multiple paths pertaining to contrary religious-group-nation identifications, so the contrary depictions of the Ottomans, Habsburgs, Russian Empire, and the subsequent political formats such as (ex-)Yugoslavia.

\textsuperscript{18} See Edin Hajdarpa\textsuperscript{š}i\textsuperscript{ć}, Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and the Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2015).

\textsuperscript{19} Such have been the persistent claims e.g. of Alain Badiou or Slavoj Žižek throughout their work until today.
accommodated the assassinator-cell of the much beneficial Empire (the cell influenced by the radical-left Russians). However, the 1990s’ wars and their aftermath marked out both Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian postcolonial memory layers and spaces with the shared or common severe responses to the preceding, ex-Yugoslav centralized, military internal-colonization of “its own” constitutional ethnicities. Yet, also to the procedures of each other’s – Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian – painfully differently won independencies.20

In my approach to the current dialogue between the memorabilities of the various colonial traces that have largely effectuated and shaped Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian national beings, I am looking into dissenting memories of the critical creative cultural subjects in their singular moving, or – dispersion. That is, I am tracing the ability for mnemonic acting in individuals departing not only from their “autochthonous” groups or lands, but also from an immersion in the realm of the solely own group traumas and recollections of violence, or also the conventional formats of testimony and witnessing. And further, I am tracing a deeper theoretical, cultural and artistic understanding of the continuing dynamics of the effects of imperialization, (post-)colonization, and nationalization alike – indeed in any of the subsequent political formats. I indicate that such activities contribute to resolving the “states of injury”21 and renegotiating of identities, community borders, and layers of memory, which is the core of the contemporary European project (as defined, for example, by Ann Rigney22). I explore the routes of the individual interactions with the plurimediality of the imaginary and artscapes as found and cognized in migration.

In a comparative recontextualization of socio-cultural dispersiveness from Croatia and from Bosnia-Herzegovina, I reexamine the work of the prominent European cultural performers from two generations whose work is distinguished by major (EU/world) awards. The first notable

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20 The Croatian War of Independence was fought 1991-1995 between Croat forces on behalf of the government of Croatia that had declared independence from the SFRY/the Serb-controlled Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA). The Bosnian-Muslim population in Croatia fought on the side of the Croatian liberators. Unlike that, in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), after the initial cooperation of the Bosnian-Croatian/Bosnian-Muslim forces in defending the country from the JNA/Serbian para-military, various internal/external factors separated them, turning the sides against each other, which also produced considerable casualties. BiH reached the end of the war only after the very compromising American brokered Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, which legally/administratively separated the country internally between the three ethnic groups into two loosely functioning entities.


common feature of their work is the ability to transgress the point of “origin,” with the contemporary awareness that, starting with language, there is no notion of original that holds. Among others, these are Vladimir Biti (theorist, comparatist Vienna), Jasna Šamić (Orientalist, writer, theatre-producer Paris), Dubravka Ugrešić (Russist, writer Amsterdam), Dževad Karahasan (writer, theatrologist Graz), Ena Sendijarević (filmmaker Amsterdam), Danis Tanović (filmmaker Paris), Ivana Franke (visual artist Berlin). They all are prominent negotiators of the interactive cultural domains, although with a complex, or sometimes mutually contrary argumentation, reflecting their views of the various forms of the former colonization, as I exemplify in this text. In my cross-reading of their production, I display how they rework the obligatory points of their ethnic memorability, and weigh their composite mnemonic practices with the matters of their newly embraced settings/environments, and contemplate the global in their composite yet affirmative ethico-political moves.

An esteemed Croatian theorist, himself a mixed product of several cultural and ethnic settings from the former Yugoslav territories (Croatian, Jewish, Yugoslav [partly Muslim in-laws]), Vladimir Biti has recently ventured in “tracing global democracy” (2017). On the background of his understanding of the structure and effects of trauma as generative for cosmopolitan ideas of literature and their impact on wider political configurations, he speaks out from the current paradigm of the global. Integrating the late 20th/21st European and American theoretical, cultural, and socio-political perspectives on the dialectics of various conceptions of otherness, Biti analyzes the sources of the supposedly universalizing projects – as stemming from 18th/19th century (e.g. French or German) authors’ own “disconcertedness”. Widely utilizing Said’s very materialist term “dispossession”, Biti “diagnoses” the (that time) prominent “injured subjects” as reactionary narrating self-healers from their various losses – which further debates the political impact of the very meaning of cosmopolitanism. In the similar manner, the other authors that I discuss offer critical understandings of the cultural consequences of nationalization, regionalization, Europeanization alike.

Coming from the same Croatian academic milieu as Biti does, also of a complex background (Croatian, Bulgarian, Yugoslav), a successful writer already in the pre-war time, Dubravka

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23 Vladimir Biti, Tracing Global Democracy: Literature, Theory, and the Politics of Trauma (2017).
Ugrešić has been very ambiguously read in her 1990s/and-post essayistic and fictional Yugoslav lamentation. For example, in her 1996 depiction of “The Culture of Lies”, her discussion of the ethical duty of the anti-nationalist dimension of intellectualism in the most challenging times in the “ex-Yugoslav” territories was subverted by her failure to criticize the Yugoslav dystopia. That is, the powerfully ideological, catastrophically failed “Yugoslav” construction that allowed for Ugrešić’s one-sided criticism of nationalism in her nationally-revived homeland of Croatia. Ambiguously read was also her skilfully written 2004 novel “The Ministry of Pain”\(^\text{24}\), bringing to light the existential and psychological hardship of the youth refugees in Amsterdam after the breakup of the common socialist state, while also revitalizing that very Yugoslav state from Ugrešić’s own personal rather soothing memories. Indeed, the narrative displays her quite idealized/privileged memories of Yugoslavia as a destroyed “common” constellation, which was not common at all. That very constellation in reality led to such imponderable casualties during its breakup precisely because of its persistent neglect of the much wider historical, social, and cultural structures, complexities, contexts, languages, and knowledges.

Much criticized was also Ugrešić’s academic/theoretical neglect of the historical sources and effects of the mass-sexual violence committed in the 1990s’s wars on the ethnic/religious bases. That is what I reproach to Ugrešić’s work, as for me that has remained the most critical topic pertaining to the fall /breakup of Yugoslavia, and where I see her own feminist insufficiency. Precisely because those crimes have forcefully revitalized biology as the key element of the ethnic, while largely leaving unprosecuted that specific ethnic-genocidal-mass-crime-program and its-devisers/perpetrators, and also leaving the specific ethnic-gender basis of the crime scholarly under-theorized. Ugrešić pursues the much-needed societal-leftist topics, yet always rooted in her former privileged Serbo-Croat structures of the world she lost. It is necessary to say that alongside some Croatian (Catholic) victims, particularly notorious crimes were committed mostly over (50 000) thousands of Bosnian Muslim girls and women. They were seen as the symbolic remnants of the alien body of the pre-Yugoslav Ottoman Empire, the assumed

“purity” (allegedly “repressed” woman’s sexuality) of a neighboring-yet-foreign, internally-regulative religious script.

Nevertheless, Ugrešić’s later narrative production provides her “personalized” ex-Yugoslav experience (or nostalgic fixation)25 with another backdrop with her further disillusioned Europeanness’ expectations. In her novel “Europe in Sepia”, further she probs the current omni-present phenomenon of various nostalgias), as well as in her reconsideration of the Croat-ness as “homeness” in her most recent novel “Fox” (as yet another common uncanny “emblem” inhabiting any homeness today). The way I read Ugrešić’s later work, it shows how the writer’s maturity in her longer-time dispersed condition reintegrates the previous phases in which her narrative healing of her own trauma (of the “departed” Yugoslav state) prevented her understanding of the causes of the others’ simultaneous much harsher immediate traumas, personal or collective. Also, prevented was the understanding of the Yugoslav state as being yet another merciless political empire, succeeding the previous realms of the Habsburgs and Ottomans, although in the left-wing direction.

That again is one of the key Biti’s claims about the ideology of trauma-politics in general. And that is where I see the necessity for introducing intersectionality as the most apt analytic framework pertaining to complex issues of gender, ethnicity, class, race, etc., that itself only further variegates in a consideration of the multiple and shifting postcolonial/post-imperial memory layers. Such intersectionality also further elucidates the double-bind of the class and ethnic concerns or their clashes in one’s script or production. That is applicable to the work of Biti and Ugrešić, who both have considerably maintained their leftist orientation of the kind which was formatted by their socialist Yugoslav years. However, that political orientation was not enough considerate of its various differently internally structured cultural-body-entities and their societal concerns. At a more recent point in their production, both of these authors come to realize and thematize the importance of the dynamics (and politics) of the alien to them cultural or ethnic flows after years of their own work in dispersion, and that is what is noteworthy in their work.

25 See, e.g. Slaven Letica’ criticism of Ugrešić (and several other feminists) as overtly betraying Croatia in his flagrant text “Croatian Feminists are Raping Croatia”, in: Globus (12.11.1992), p. 41–42.
Shifting Patterns, Political Variables

Proposing a theory of dispersion, I define the concept of social dispersion as distinct from diaspora since it describes the movement of individuals rather than groups. As such, dispersion refers to both movement and knowledge production/dissemination; it implies the transforming function of memory and its political materialization. I employ the insights of nomadic philosophy at the intersection of the studies of moving and studies of memory – exploring the relation of dispersion to memory production in literature, other art-media, and theory. I start with the focus on the dispersions that are close to my experience and knowledge: from the here discussed two (post-)war departure-points, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These have connected yet composite “origins”, very different conceptions of nation, historically/politically mutable forms of cultural memory, and currently diverging paths in the European political configurations. After the bloody wars of disentanglement from Yugoslavia, Croatia has gained independence, and it was awarded the European Union membership in 2013. At the same time, the fully-legally-dissected (by the American-brokered Peace Agreement) Bosnia-Herzegovina still cannot envision even the opening of the initial chapters in the talks of joining the European Union. Hence, these two provide excellent cases of parallel dispersion processes with contrarily informed individual practices composed through axes of movement that involve reactions to three main causes of the 20th century European ordeals. Such singular acting is not searched meticulously, considering that there have been abundant discussions of memory’s collective features, especially in terms of traumatic histories, recently implied in the restored

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significance of nations and borders. That is why I am focusing on the dispersive movement of a critical creative cultural subject that uses memory as a transforming political (inter)action. It is particularly challenging to search this process comparatively in dispersions from the above specified two countries, locating the similarities and differences in the stratum of the mnemonic and the performing embodiment of thought in the authors that I discuss. The “spoken departures” from two post-socialist yet also multiply post-imperialist countries point to the articulation of the individual capacities in challenging the prevailing patterns of simplified cohesive group or ethnic narratives and canons. Further, they illuminate the critical part of dispersion in empowering and demarcating transnational paths within a workable European integrity, particularly in supporting the complementarity of the elements of the regional and global, rhizomatic and rooted.

If looking from this angle, the questions of domination and continuity in the contemporary European spaces are posed not only from the side of the (post)colonial/(post-)imperial or the nation-state/national-ethnic or the post-national European Union entities. More significantly, they are posed in the format of the political variables that travel and mutate through all of these entities and as such affect the processes of the present identifications involved in personal, group, or ethnic figurations from within each entity. As I show on some studied examples, the authors also tend to work through a specific trauma heritage that belongs to one ethnicity with their conceptual, artistic, or theoretical tools, so as to introduce empathetic inter-ethnic dialogues into most painful group memories.

A younger Croatian/Berliner artist, Ivana Franke’s stunning installation “Srebrenica 1995–2015” – the light-and-sound performance commemorating the genocide committed in Bosnia – unwaveringly reintroduces in the public space the effect of a primordial uncanniness inherent in any ethnicity. The performance reintroduces the uncanniness into-the-darkened-then-by-the-flashing-sparkles-growing-noise-infused-audience, facing the image of a forest on the stage, as well as the real forest both surrounding them and awakened in themselves. The question with


30 On July 11/12 July, (so far identified) 8700 Muslim men were killed by the Serbian soldiers in the protected enclave zone guarded by the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion.
which all the spectators cannot but terrify themselves is how it is to be executed in their own
holding their human *irresponsibility* for that particular mass-execution having been committed at
all (particularly as themselves they were related to the same-war-events and the Yugoslav-army-
terror). Originally, the 2015 performance is shown in the outdoor Zagreb theatre Tuškanac,
produced with the assistance of Sena Kulebić (Bosnian/Croatian, text) and Carl Michael von
Hausswolff (German, sound). Franke sets up a ghostly apparition of the mass-crime of
imponderable dimensions, with the performers’-torchlights-on-the-move that gradually enlighten
as well as blind the audience. There is no spectators’ catharsis, each of them unearthing one’s
own inner forest as reflecting the outside forest of the numbing disappearance (of the memory)
of the human element. One has to take/ internalize the thus produced disquiet as one’s own
inextinguishable torch. *Which one is one’s ethnos in the flame of the sparkle?* – that is what I
read as an eternal question which has only got sharper as reminding of all wild political rotations
throughout the past century in Europe, and elsewhere.

Artworks like this clearly labor for the internationalization of the experience of ethnic injury,
crucially working through the concept of ethnos towards the concept of *ethos*, and clearly
intervening in dubious political operations of the current “ethnic trauma managements”. In
developing a theory of dispersion, my main objective is to describe the role of a dispersive
singular intervention into the prevalence of horrifying, hurtful, grieving mnemonic referents as
performing a cultural (and political) change, alongside wider heritage preservation. I claim that
*there is no identity that is not identification* – this simple insight can indicate the continuation of
the European idea and European heritage perhaps more thoroughly than any idea of nation. That
is how dispersive cultural plurimedial semioticization re-inscribes the national bodies that in the
South Eastern Europe have only appeared as the “violent reminder of the contradictions of (the
European) modernity”31 – in their belatedly undertaken “final working out of long European
tradition of a violent ethnic homogenization driven by the formations of nation-state”.32 Hence,


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they have gravely faced the contemporary Europe (and its Union) with its own responsibility for still repressing the memory of the various violent stages of its own near past.

Another example is Danis Tanović’s 2001 film “No Man’s Land”, a critical parable of the disgraceful role of the international community in the Bosnian (or any other) war developments on the backdrop of the non-sense of the (nevertheless in the centuries rooted) inter-ethnic hatred, based on one’s group “identity”. The hatred which, as having been trapped amidst the filmic murdering in the battlefield, at the end extinguishes also itself. Tanović probes the issue of roots, departing in his artwork from the demands of (re)constituting his own Bosnian-Muslim identity as a basic ethnic-national concern in rebuilding the Bosnian state-texture out of its tormented and repressed ethnic-history layers. He opens the palette of interethnic questions that point to the ethical necessity also of self-alienation toward comprehending the (ethnic and human) other in the immediate post-violence time.

This is also why in my theoretical approach nomadic philosophy and its rhizomatic structures are crucial to understanding and developing the current political configurations in Europe, with all its bitterly complex national-political legacies. Nomadic philosophy has its best bet in its proposal of affirmative ethics, based on nomadic affectedness, taken from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and further developed by Rosi Braidotti. As Braidotti says, “affirmative ethics is not about the avoidance of pain, but rather about transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost, and dispossessed. One has to become ethical, as opposed to applying moral rules and protocols as a form of self-protection.”

I myself have always understood ethics as a laboring process, often a hard, painful movement toward a productive solution that includes reworking of memories. As we all confront multiple limitations, nomadic affirmative ethics helps with its emphasis on complex ethical interrelations to various

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34 Launched by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari; further developed particularly by Rosi Braidotti.

35 Rhizome is a philosophical concept by Deleuze/Guattari, see A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1972–1980). Deleuze calls it an “image of thought”, based on the botanical rhizome, apprehending multiplicities. As a mode of knowledge, model for society, the terms “rhizome” and “rhizomatic” describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry/exit-points in data representation/interpretation. That is, opposite to an arborescent (hierarchic, tree-like) conception of knowledge, which works with dualist categories and binary choices.

others as encouraged by motion, change, and transformation. Likewise, nomadic affectivity helps memory detach from negativity in the rerouted creative drive, as Braidotti’s concept of “nomadic memory” takes on. It is from this theoretical platform that I approach the intellectual and artistic production specified in this text so as to discern the political figurations of dispersiveness. That is, the affirmative powers and qualitative modifications in creative transference as crystalizing out of two historically riven South East European contexts that – altered in new settings, as a result (and capacity) – can still endorse “sameness”. Since in transcultural memory studies the immediate post-violence foci are still largely on trauma or commemoration, it is important to point to a more critical understanding of memory as provided by a dispersive cultural production as I define it. That is, memory as always striving to flow into a transformation. Departing from “moral registers” of suffering, victimhood, and mourning as primary constituents of memorability, the discussed authors offer rewritten challenges to both previous structures and existing structures of domination and continuity. Hence their work supports also my theoretical elaboration of dispersion.

**Performativity in Dispersion**

A crucial issue related to the post-Yugoslav literatures, theory, and arts produced in migration from Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina in various foreign languages also is the authors’ national language memory (of the very similar Croatian and Bosnian, yet also Serbian). Indeed, that is the language memory both separate and shared, as that has been variably determined by political, state, and religious frameworks in various periods in these territories as well as by internally diversified cultural/gender potencies and susceptibilities-to-belonging-and-ways-of-expression. Based in Paris, the (ex-)Bosnian scholar in Oriental cultures, expert in Turkish literature, Jasna Šamić writes books and produces plays (such as *Trois histoires un destin*) in French, the language of her adopted, post-Yugoslav locality, which is also a very apt/involved analytic

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37 See Aleida Assman, Andreas Huyssen, Ann Rigney, Astrid Erl, Rosanne Kennedy.

language for the orientalist fields and topics. Alongside that, she has been revisiting her native Bosnian language in her simultaneous Sarajevo-based production that relates to her rich pre-war academic and artistic endeavors in that town. Notable are Šamić’s 2006 *L’Amoureux des oiseaux*, a collection of poetry and short stories, for example. Or, her autobiographic novel, 2013 *L’Empire des ombres*, in which she reflects on her own intimate past family bonds in Sarajevo, the wider Yugoslav political dimensions, the war in the 1990s, and the motives from her new Parisian habitus.

Being of the same generation and quite a close Western European habitation, Dubravka Ugrešić has kept writing in Croatian with gradually disappearing Serbian tinge/nuances throughout the course of her narrative production. Ugrešić’s Amsterdam fellow, and significantly of the Bosnian background, Ena Sendijarević represents the forcefully displaced subsequent generation, hence artistically she articulates the post-memory of the 1990s developments. Now integrated/educated in the European Union, Sendijarević probes its burning issues in collaboration with her Dutch and other colleagues, writing scripts and shooting documentaries in Western European languages. Renowned is her short film “Fernweh” (2014), on the topic of the child’s homelessness/foster-home/home, and the topic of the share in wider human traumas of illnesses and social (non-)adaptations. Or, her “Reizigers in de Nacht” (2013) that delves into a parable of a woman’s fragility in the hardship of her night-shift work exposure (at a gas-station). In her 2019 coming-of-age feature movie “Take me Somewhere Nice,” Sendijarević connects her “adopted” languages to her “native” language(s), topics, and perspectives, depicting a Dutch girl of a Bosnian descendent who travels to her ailing father she never met, to her troubled past “homeland”, where she connects to the local coevals in a road escapade. The film revisits the cluster of migration-identity-belonging alongside the cultural and social differences between Northern/Southeast Europe, telling of all those of complicated and mixed backgrounds who are uprooted while also unsafe in their new localities. It is indicative that these three women authors display the question of (ethnic) heterogeneity also on some other scales, pertaining to imperialisms on another paradigm – where gender features creatively rhizomatically also as a critical means for weighing language issues.

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On the other hand, symptomatic is Vladimir Biti’s outstanding production in English in the past decade (much less he wrote in German, although he has lived/worked in Vienna as the Chair in South Slavistics). Previously, for three decades his mainstream publishing was in Croatian language (as he was the Chair in Literary Theory at the Croatistics in Zagreb, where he introduced most of the contemporary world literary and theoretical streams, including psychoanalysis, feminism, trauma, postcolonialism). Also, Biti’s 2014 “Reexamining the National-Philological Legacy: Quest for a New Paradigm?”\(^{40}\) announces most topics of his subsequent books on the effects/modes of dispossession.\(^{41}\) Simultaneously, this work decisively marks out new horizons for studying literatures in not only post-national but also post-multinational European spaces. Furthermore, unlike the major stream of Croatian intellectuals, Biti symptomatically reconnects Croatia to the Balkans as his postcolonial reflection on the common background of the various colonial pasts of the region, alongside his grateful academic recognition of Croatia’s current European Union profile.

For a comparison, Biti’s ex-Yugoslav, and “Austrian” fellow, a successful writer Dževad Karahasan,\(^ {42}\) writing in Bosnian, spreads out an entirely different sheet of the post-imperial legacy, with his heavy load of the Turkish and Oriental motives and their roots and rhizomes. These also entail their “re-imperializing” benefits, including the marketing of Karahasan’s work in the Western Europe. Gender-wise, he offers a very problematic/conservative treatment of this legacy as ignorant of the basic causes, concerns, postulates, claims of the half a century of the development of women’s studies in the world academia. Nevertheless, Karahasan’s literary enterprises show his narrative mastery in interrogating, for example, the elements of the rigid ruling Ottoman structures in the Middle East in his 2015 novel “The Solace of the Night Sky”. In his 2015 collection of stories “A House of the Wearied,” Karahasan also skillfully interrogates the end of the Habsburg reign in the prospect of yet another incoming rigid structures of the radical European left, influenced by the Russians, In these two male producers, their preferred

\(^{40}\) Vladimir Biti, *Reexamining the National-Philological Legacy: Quest for a New Paradigm?* (2014)


working languages, Croatian/ English and Bosnian/German indeed work against the grain of also each other’s production – as the linguistic means of their raising and breaking the rules in favor of or against various contemporary political or cultural ideologies. Hence, their linguistic options make the cross-dialogue of their readings particularly telling of the multiply traumatic legacies of the previous reigning regimes and these authors’ quite contrary yet constructive attempts at healing them.

The dynamics of the processes of intellectual, artistic, and linguistic identifications hence points to what from today’s perspective most crucially structures heterogeneous memorabilities. It makes possible the active swapping of the various streams of the memorized colonial traces: those pertaining to the post-memory of the Habsburg, or Ottoman, or Yugoslav (or other) Empires. These evolving dynamic interactive platforms enable what in my current work I conceptualize as “dispersive mediated witnessing”. That is, the cultural subjects’ singular creative ability of speaking from one’s both recent and deeper mnemonic layers, while also integrating and signifying the encountered-in-migration symbolic, artwork, and topics. Hence, they are dissolving the inherited or experienced compulsiveness to perpetuate what is indeed a hurtful group memorability – in documenting the hurts only of one’s own ethnic “origin”. An intrinsic feature of performativity is such transforming, engaged act with the effect of social change that in nomadic subjects only gets more intensified. Such mediated witnessing also advances the emerging ideas on witnessing-testimony-authenticity-mediation produced in culture (for example, in Sarah Jones 2018, or Katherine Roseau 2017, and other scholars around the recently launched journal “New History”)

History comes with its hurts (of its equally or unequally targeted subjects). However, it is the ability to transform history’s troubled legacies that distinguishes a critical, creative human subject out of the darkness of the history’s forests that otherwise threaten to evolve into everyone’s inner dark forest, too. Or, at best, to get frozen in yet another “Angelus Novus” (Walter Benjamin’s pre-WWII 1940 description of Paul Klee’s post-WWI 1920 pictured “dead-alley of progress”)⁴⁴. In my interpretation, Ivana Franke

⁴³ For example, see Sara Jones, “Mediated Immediacy: Constructing Authentic Testimony in Audio-visual Media” in the journal “Rethinking History”. Volume 21 2017.

suggestively reminds us that that was the case of Srebrenica: a belated symptom of the European modernity’s repetitive negligence of the multiplied-through-centuries-effects of its drives into its own “heart of darkness”.

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Bionote
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On the Issue of Performativity of Hymns

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Abstract: The article indicates that the study of the semantic-communicative component of hymns makes it possible to identify performative frameworks - “pillows”, on which the foundation of speech activity rests. Thus, the obligatory semantic-communicative component of the hymns is informing the deity about his/her qualities, in other words, it is praising. The article reviewed three hymns written in Old English (“The Kentish Hymn”, “The Cædmon’s Hymn”) and Early Middle English (“The Godric’s Hymn”). The author focuses on paganism in Old English hymns. Thus, the work emphasizes that at the dawn of Christianity, for a smooth transition from paganism to Christianity, the image of Jesus Christ was presented as the image of a leader (Cyning - Leader), while believers were represented as His warriors. The cross as the main Christian symbol often appears made of wood and is identified with the cosmic world tree growing right into heaven.

Key words: Performativity, “The Kentish Hymn”, “The Cædmon’s Hymn”, “The Godric’s Hymn”.

Calming down in prayer a person finds more and more followers even now, in the 21st century, and the glorification of the names of Saints, in particular Jesus Christ, is reflected in many liturgical practices. One of the most important elements in the prayer of a person with a higher being is the consistent observance of fasting, and sometimes even a complete rejection of food and drink. Edward Burnett Tylor, the father of the evolutionary theory of cultural development, in his work "Primitive Culture" describes the meaning of a religious rite, the consequence of which is painful exaltation. He points out that the connection between fasting and communication with spirits is considered so close by the Zulus that they have a saying: “A
person, who is constantly full, cannot see secret things.” They will never believe in a fat prophet. Belief in these expected or achieved results of fasting is preserved among comparatively cultural peoples. Therefore, it is not surprising that in a Hindu tale, King Vasavadatta with his queen after solemn repentance and a three-day fast saw Shiva in a dream, graciously talking with them. It is not surprising that Hindu yogis still bring themselves to fasting to a state in which they are supposedly able to see the gods with bodily eyes. Among the Greeks, the oracle priests recognized fasting as a means of evoking prophetic dreams and knowledge. The Delphic Pythia itself fasted for inspiration. Galen observes that fasting dreams are most clear. Centuries later, this custom passed into Christianity. So, the archangel Michael appears with a sword in his right hand and with scales in his left to a certain priest in Spont, who had been posturing and praying for a whole year. The priest asked him, if he would like to have a temple built in his honor (Taylor, 2010). It is the observance of these spiritual and ascetic practices that contribute to the indispensable (bilateral) communication of believers with the supreme forces.

In addition to prayer calls, divine songs praising and glorifying the Lord and saints also occupy an important place in the life of a believer, especially on days of abstinence from food and drink. Such songs are called hymns. What are divine hymns?

M.Yu. Lotman sees the hymn as a communicative act of emphatic nature, and praising the higher powers in it is (semi) performative verbs, since praise is primarily the utterance of divine qualities aloud. The researcher emphasizes the mnemonic component of such texts in time, thanks to the enumeration of divine deeds. So, for example, hymns contain an extended list of qualities of the Lord God, but why, if the all-knowing God knows this already? Consequently, the obligatory semantic-communicative component of the hymn is to inform the deity of his own qualities, in other words, his praise, while prayer is the request of something from higher powers, and the psalms are to inform God about what human beings are. Thus, the illocutionary goal of the hymn is hidden declarative and performative (Lotman, 2013).
S.G. Proskurin analyzes the semiotic basis for the study of spiritual culture. So, he notices that “languages and culture appear in the form of a networked formation containing a performative core as a value that can generate meta descriptions, which, in turn, can be considered by subjects as second-order values. Performatives are at the center of language and culture are explicit and transform into meta-operators of rituals. For instance, performative I swear, but the meta-operator is constative He swears. Ritual matrices of culture, as a rule, contain performative complexes, described at one time by John Austin. Such performative kernels are neither true nor false, i.e. they cannot be denied; they have constitutive power: biblical performative “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Proskurin, 2011, p.237). Émile Benveniste points out that the social order is supported by performative statements in a speech act, which is a consequence of self-reference, or self-reference, i.e. ability to relate, as with its referent, to the reality that it creates itself, due to the fact that it is pronounced under the conditions that make it action (Benveniste, 1974, p. 308). Returning to the illocutionary function of the utterance (the pragmatic component of the meaning of the saying), we note the following: the concept of illocution was proposed by J. Austin in the scientific work “How to Do Things with Words” [Austin, 1962], where it was shown that the speech act can be analyzed through phonetic (locative) act – utterance of the utterance, fatic (illocutionary) act – actualization of the intentional aspect of utterance, retic (perlocutionary) act - the utterance's impact on the addressee.

J. Austin is the founder of not only the concept of illocution, but also performative. In his understanding (Austin, 1966) the performative acts as a statement, acting as a cross of a word and a deed (an act appears behind the statement), and looks like a statement, but not meaningless, i.e. it can be neither true nor false. These statements include active verbs of the indicative mood in the first person singular (I call this ship Queen Elizabeth), or verbs in the form of passive voice (in the return form) in the second or third person (you are ... authorized). A person uttering such a statement does not just say something, but does something. J. Austin gives an example of a wedding ceremony when the groom says “yes,” thereby confirming that he really takes this woman to be his legal wife. However, performing performative utterances is not
always appropriate; as there are situations in which certain conditions are not met that violate the
transparent rules for the performance of the performatif. Such situations in the theory of J.
Austin are called unsuccessful (*infelicitous*). For example, continuing the situation with the
legalization of marriage, J. Austin notes that the divorce procedure requires certain formalities,
and the public statement “I am divorcing you” is not a sufficient act to terminate the marriage
immediately. Therefore, in this case, the convention does not exist. Unsuccessful performatif
statements are also those that were uttered by a person against his/her will, i.e. being in the grip
of any other circumstances by virtue of which the speaker is not fully responsible for what (s)he
is doing.

Performatives are common in religious practices. As examples of divine songs praising and
glorifying the Lord and saints, we consider three hymns recorded in Old English and Early
Middle English (the original text is presented in: (Old English Shorter Poems, 2012). *The
Kentish Hymn* is a periphery (recorded in the Kent dialect) of the ancient hymn *Gloria in excelsis
deo*, which is based on the Gospel of Luke (2:14), which was performed on Saturday masses, as
well as on major holidays. *The Caedmon’s Hymn* is an ancient work from *Historia ecclesiastica
genris Anglorum*. *The Godric’s Hymn* is an anthem dating back to the Early Middle English
period, as well as the final rhyme of the lines.

**The Kentish Hymn**

Wutan wuldrian weorada dryhten
halgan hlīôðor-cwidum, hīofen-rices weard,
lufian liofwendum lifēs agend,
and him simle sio sigefēþt wuldor
5 uppe mid ænglum, and on eordan sibb gumena gehwilcum goodes willan.

We þe heriæð halgum stefnum
and þe blætsiað, bile-wit fëder,
and ðe þanciað, þioda walden,
10 ðñes weorðlican wuldor-dreames
and ðinra mielan mægena gerena,
ðe ðu, God dryhten, gastes mæhtum
hafest on gewealdum hiofen and eorðan,
an ece fæder, ælmehtig God.

15 Du eart cyninga cyninges cwicera gehwilces,
ðu eart sigefest sunu and soð hælend
ofe æalle gesceðt angla and manna.
Du, dryhten God, on dreamum wunast
on ðære upplican æðelan ceastre,

20 frea folca gehwæs, swa ðu æt fruman wære efen-eadig bearn agenum fæder.

Du eart heofenlic lioth and ðæt halige lamb, ðe ðu man-scilde middan-geardes
for þinre arfestnesse æalle towurpe,
25 fiond geflæmdest, folc generedes,
blode gebohtest bearn Israel, ða ðu ahofe ðurh ðæt halige triow
ðinre ðrowunga ðriostre senna,
ðæt ðu on hæah-setle heafena rices
30 sitest sige-hræmig on ða swiðran hand ðinum God-fæder, gasta gemyndig.
Mildsa nu, meahtig, manna cynne,
and of leahtrum ales ðöne ða liofan gesceðt,
and us hale gedo, heleða sceppend,
35 niða nergend, for ðines naman are.
The Kentish Hymn is listed in the X-XI centuries, MS Cotton Vespasian D.vi at the British Library. “The Complete Old English Poems” (Williamson, 2017) tells the following about this hymn: The Kentish Hymn is more likely a poem praising the Triune God, with a reference to Te Deum, The Apostles' Creed, and Agnus Dei, rather than the Old English version of the Latin hymn of worship. Probably, the author of the hymn was a monk / nun, as evidenced by the presentation of the divine idea in the text itself. The hymn, presumably, refers to the end of the 10th century, being written under the influence of the rules of St. Benedict.

This hymn is interesting from a linguistic point of view. Thus, the Trinity of God is described, as well as purely Christian concepts (hiofen-rices wears — Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven; lifes agend — Creator of life; bile-wit feder — the immaculate Father; ðiða walden — Lord of man; ece feder — the eternal Father; sigefest sunu — victorious Son; soð hełend — true Savior; heofenlic liht — divine light; halige lamb — Lamb of God; God-feder — God the Father; Mildsa - Almighty; heleða sceppend — Creator; niða nergend — Human Savior; dema — Judge; Crist nergende — Christ the Savior), as well as tokens reflecting the pagan idea of faith (weorada dryhten — Lord of hosts; God dryhten (dryhten God) — Lord God; ælmehtig God — Lord Almighty; cyninga cyningc — King of kings; dryhten — Lord, hiofena heah-cyninc — Almighty of the Kingdom of Heaven). It is worth noting that at the dawn of Christianity, for the smooth transition from paganism to Christianity, the image of Jesus Christ was presented as the image of the leader (Cyning — Leader), while believers represented themselves as His warriors. Êmile Benveniste notes the following: in Germanic languages this type of word formation is presented
in several important derivatives: Gothic Piudans (from * teuta-nos)“ king, head of the community”, kindins (from * genti-nos)“ head ”(“gens”) - they are parallel to lat. tribūnus from tribus. In the old English dryhten “Lord” (in the Christian texts “Lord”) the form * druki-nos “leader druki” is reflected. Such a hierarchy was characteristic of ancient German society (Benviniste, 1995, p. 88–89). These examples indicate that, perhaps, to introduce and consolidate the Christian faith among the ancient Germans, Christ appeared to them as the leader of the tribe. Over time, on the island of Britain, the image of Christ came to the fore, while maintaining a pagan connotation.

The lexemes middan-geardes (middle world) and halige triow (holy tree) also act as a characteristic trace of pagan beliefs in this hymn. The center of the world (* midjan-gardaz — Middle fenced place), the center of the world of ancient Germans is marked by the world ash tree Yggdrasill in North German (Scandinavian) mythology, the pillar of Irminsul in Central German mythology, a high mountain (where Asgardr gods live) in Scandinavian mythology. S.G. Proskurin notes the German word *midjan-gardaz with the meaning "middle world" (which is literally read according to him as "center", "middle of the world"), as it correlates more with the "horizontal" view of the world, where the middle part, inhabited by people (midgard), separate and frightening worlds, the abodes of gods and demons (utgard) are opposed (Stepanov, 2004, p. 93).

The cross, as the main Christian symbol, often appears made of wood and is identified with the cosmic world tree growing directly into heaven. Most liturgical texts compare the cross with a pillar, mountain, or staircase. Thus, the center of the world is part of the Christian picture of the world. In the Middle Ages, the concept of a world tree was often referred to as an “inverted tree” (lat. Arbor inversa), growing from heaven to earth: “Its roots are in heaven, and its branches are on earth.” This is a striking example of a semiotic evolutionary series (i.e., replacing one object with another, while the second object copies the functions and forms of the first object). It is worth noting that the image of the cross in early Christian literature was presented as follows: four branches of the cross were associated with four dimensions of world...
space (width, longitude, height, depth (Lat. Latitudo, longitudo, altitudo, profundum)). The cross itself was represented by the image of the crucified Christ, and its measurements were associated with the position of the head, hands and body of the Savior. Mostly stable associations formed between the span of the hands of Christ and the width (latitudo) of the cross (Proskurin, 2013, p. 51, 59).

Therefore, considering the semiotic aspect of communication, it can be assumed that the communicative task was based on the fact that new information was understood through its transmission in the framework of the old image, already known to native speakers. Communication was based on a sociocultural base thanks to interindividual psychology. Thus, replacing the central cosmic symbol of the world tree with a cross that retains the features of a pagan symbol is an example of accessible communication. The task of transmitting information over time is to transmit information on an important Christian element of culture - the cross as a symbol of Christianity. The pagan image of the world tree is completely unimportant from the point of view of the semiotic aspect of information transfer, but it is important from the point of view of communication in the generation of Germans who have just adopted Christianity.

John Searle, speaking about speech acts, notes that by performing an illocutionary act, the speaker intends to get a certain result, forcing the listener to recognize his intention to get this result, and then, if he uses the words in the literal sense, he wants this knowledge was realized due to the fact that the rules for the use of the expressions pronounced by him connect these expressions with obtaining this result (Searl, 1986). In this hymn, the prayer’s illocutionary act consists in asking for the remission of sins, in salvation and forgiveness (see lines 33-35). Performative verbs glorify, thank, praise, and love (see lines 2, 4, 7, 8), along with praise of the divine essence, only strengthen the requestor's intention.

Let's move on to the second hymn — *The Caedmon's Hymn*.

**The Caedmon's Hymn**

Nu scylun hergan hefaen-ricaes uard,
The wonderful story of the English poet, who received his gift to compose verses according to the command of God, is narrated by the tradition set forth by Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (XXIV (XXII) (see: (Beda Venerable, 2001)). Legend has it that the illiterate Cadmon, serving as a shepherd in the abbess’s monastery, he couldn’t compose frivolous empty poems for fun at feasts, and when he was given a harp for entertaining drinkers, he got up and went home. One day he also left the feast in embarrassment and went to the crib to guard the crib, a stranger who asked to sing about the beginning of creation, and Cadmon praised the Lord with verses never heard before. In the morning, a shepherd excited by divine vision, went to his ruler to tell about his gift, after which the master took him to the abbess. Scientists gathered to listen to the retelling of the vision and a divine hymn revealed in a dream. It became clear to everyone that it was the Lord who bestowed heavenly mercy on him to compose verses. Then they read the passage from that Scripture, inviting him to expound what he heard in verse. The next morning, Cadmon presented a retelling, successfully cast in the form of marvelous poems. The abbess, recognizing God's blessing in the literary gift of an illiterate shepherd, prompted him to abandon worldly life and take a monastic vow.

According to the legend of Cadmon, the divine hymn contains eight revolutions of the Lord's naming, traditional for the Old English period: hefaen-ricaes uard — Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven, metudæs — Creator, uuldur-fadur — Father of Glory, eci dryctin — eternal Lord, holy saint Creator, mon-cynnæs uard — Guardian of men, frea allmectig — omnipotent Ruler. The
Cædmon’s Hymn, like the Kentish Hymn, introduces the token middan-geardes, the middle world, indicating a pagan view of people about space. S.G. Proskurin, discussing the image of the world in early traditions, notes the following: it is the sacred nature of the central point of the world that allows us to understand the metonymic transfer of this term to the designation of the world in general — and thus combine the two named concepts. The restored picture of the preliterate period thus testifies: the center of the ancient Germanic world coincides with the center of sacred objects inscribed into each other (center, fenced place, etc.), demonstrating the heterogeneity and non-isotropy of the archaic cosmos (cf. the typological scheme of the mythopoetic space of various cultures: a sacrifice on the altar in the center - the temple - its own settlement - its own country, etc.) (Proskurin, Tsentner, 2009, p. 46-47).

In this hymn, as you can see, a performative statement is presented - Nu scylun hergan (Now we must thank) as a call to action, which is the complex on which the whole narration of the hymn stands, the main semantic and communicative component of which is the praise of the Lord God. This performative statement is neither true nor false from the standpoint of rational logic.

Consider the third anthem — The Godric’s Hymn.

The Godric’s Hymn
Sainte Marie uirgine,
moder Iesu Cristes Nazarene,
onfo, scild, help þin Godric,
onfang, bring hehlic wið þe in Godest ric.
5 Sainte Marie, Cristes bur,
maidens clenhand, moderes flur,
dilie mine sinne, rixe in min mod,
bring me to winne wið self God.

In “The Complete Old English Poems” (Williamson, 2017, p. 1108) about The Godric’s Hymn the following is said: this work also has a second name - Godric’s Prayers, it is included in the
collection MS Royal 5 F. vii, with a musical note, stored in the British Library, in London. Saint Godric led a diverse life before finally deciding to become a hermit: he was a merchant, a pilgrim traveler, and a ship captain. In the collection Old English shorter poems (Old English Shorter Poems, 2012, p. xxi) The Godric’s Hymn and The Cædmon’s Hymn are compared. It is indicated that both hymns are written in the native language of the poets, therefore, it seems extremely difficult for the researcher to differentiate hymns into liturgical texts and into solitary prayer, which in themselves are formally and chronologically diametrically opposed to higher powers. The author of The Godric’s Hymn is considered to be the holy hermit Godric of Finchale, a native of northern England who was born on the eve of the Norman conquest and lived in the Anglo-Norman period. Saint Godric of Finchale, who was never canonized, but was considered holy, died in 1170. Consequently, the text of the hymn is most correctly attributed to the Early Middle English period, rather than to the Old English one, especially since rhymed lines in the form of aabb, characteristic of Latin and Norman-French versification, indicate this. Yet Godric’s similarity with Cadmon’s story is striking: the earliest copies of this hymn are found in stories about his life, otherwise written in Latin, and these narratives describe the poem as a supernatural gift given to the saint in a vision.

It is noteworthy, that this hymn does not praise the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Mother of God, thereby being one of the earliest appeals to the Virgin Mary. Due to the fact that The Godric’s Hymn is chronologically a later hymn (compared to The Kentish Hymn and The Cædmon’s Hymn), it does not represent the pace with pagan connotations. Moreover, the anthem is dotted with appeals to the Madonna typical of the medieval Christian period: Sainte Marie uirgine, moder Iesu Cristes Nazarene — St. Mary, the Immaculate, mother of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, Sainte Marie, Cristes bur; maidens clenhand, moderes flur — St. Mary, refuge Christ, virgin of integrity, the color of motherhood. And compared to The Kentish Hymn, the kingdom of God is referred to as Godest ric, not hiofena heah-cyninc. Unlike the Old English divine hymns, this Early English Anthem does not include pronounced performative expressions; however, the author’s prayer appeal is clearly illocutionary in the form of directives and declarations.
Thus, divine hymns are built on voice performative utterances dictating the further development of the text. So, in the work of S.G. Proskurin and V.V. Feshchenko “Voice and bodily deixis as manifestation of performativity in written texts” notes the following: cultures rest on peculiar performative “pillows” that form a layer of cultural practices or transfers free from rational assessment. Old Testament formulas rely on voice performatives, while New Testament formulas are based on the unspoken hidden Word (Proskurin, Feshchenko, 2019). Consequently, the study of the semantic-communicative component of hymns reveals performative frameworks - “pillows” on which the foundation of speech activity rests.

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Dixon, R.M.W. *Australia’s Original Languages*.


Book Review


This is a short book, but that does not prevent it having multiple parts and arguments. In the main it is a linguistic study of several traditional Australian Aboriginal, or indigenous, languages. There have been specialised exhaustive and scholarly studies in the same vein - however this book is selective in examples of grammar, terms of address, lexicons, pronunciation and poetic forms, resulting in a short (182 pages ) readable volume well suited to a popular audience. As such the volume fills a need for a general interest work of its kind. The author is an accomplished senior Australian academic and researcher, who has embedded himself with speakers of old languages to record and restore their legacy. He expertise, developed over decades, informs the authentic, lively and authoritative style of the volume as a whole. It is a good read.

There are contemporary political and cultural reasons for publication of a book of this nature, and in addition to an exposure to linguistics the reader to given a brief archeological argument about the origins of language on the Australian continent, about white/black relations from the first European arrival, about the destruction of the tribes and their 250 languages, and the current need for archival and educational care of remaining language and revival of extant ones. These topics are organised in thirteen different chapters.

Even apparently analytic linguistic are couched in terms of an argument about the complexity of traditional languages. Linguistic data is continually shaped in tables that compare European and traditional languages, as well as one language with another. The books is shaped on the whole as a defence of the status and nature of aboriginal language, against what it sees as their overwhelming denigration by European over the past 200-300 years. This motivation keeps the style and continuing examples of usage and structure of words, extending to valuable account of song and kinship forms. Being a short volume, any argument is in danger of being simplified. There have been a huge array of linguistic studies since the first British arrival ... the author) admits Cook took pains to learn and use key phrases in interaction with bribers he encountered. The book is more positive towards Cook than to an earlier English explorer William Dampier. His description of the first peoples of West Australia as “the miserables people in the worldly” is overly stressed and repeated by the author, who explains how little Dampier knew of the richness of culture or language (and food gathering) of the
people he observed. There has been a plethora of appreciative and educative studies that rebut prejudice like Dampier. Dixon is not alone is arguing his case, and it would take a large and worthwhile to depict the full history - good and bad - of studies of indigenous languages and cultures in last 200 years.

The book unashamedly and fairly locates itself as part of a contemporary apologia for indigenous culture, and that is its strength and finally also is weakness. To defend the complexity indeed modernity of traditional languages to a contemporary general audience would have been enough of an accomplishment. However the book seeks a wider big picture of linguistic anthropology, human evolution and philosophy, speculating on the 50,000 year old origins and history of first language; the diversification of languages over 500 tribes and 250 nations, across the world’s largest island; and speculations of proto (pre human) and typology of languages, when comparative studies join in hypotheses about the diffusion of language from Australasian to North American to Pacific Islands over 30,000 years ago.

These topics are all valuable, and worth asking, but truly require more referencing and articulation, and perhaps less political motivation. Contemporary apologia, however sincere or passionate, for traditional societies cannot ensure the veracity of anthological inquiry - the latter certainly benefits from cultural and indeed political empathy, but finally depends of a high level of scholarship which, in the important areas that the book introduces, needs nuanced study. Indeed, in several matters the book can seem to do itself a disservice, in simplifying or preventing further development of its claims for indigenous peoples.

For example, it strongly rebuts any idea that the diverse linguistic forms are dialects of a main aboriginal language. Dixon sees this reductionism of the true richness of language development as another example of racism which has infected most approaches to traditional languages. However he is happy to accept dialect as a core stage of language diversification - that geographical isolation and separation, and dialect formation, lead to the creation of a new language. This argument presumes quite a lot about why a small population, with abundant food supply and in a relatively short period of time (several millennia) 250 discrete nations/peoples and quite distinct languages could evolve, each one with a separate totemic/fauna identity, with linguistic functions rooted in a intricate structures of kinship, geography, religion, hunting and everyday life. Put simple, the intricate diversification of structures, identified to a large extent by Claude Levi Strauss, in particular of the Arunta people of central Australia, is the next level of “complexity” that Dixon sees in linguistic forms (and kinship), but seems omitted or reported too briefly in this volume.
Further, the author is very blunt about discounting any diffusion of language (along with other social and food innovations) from Australia, to Asia. The Australasian renaissance of language that the author mention begins in Taiwan, independent from the Australian phenomena that preceded it by 30,000 years, and is the main focus of the book. While he admits Indian scholars see linguistic parallels between Australian and ancient their language (parallels that extend to rituals and physical appearance, some claims), Dixon discounts this in a kind of misplaced defence of Australian culture, that because they were isolated first peoples were particularly vulnerable, especially through sickness, to first contact by Europeans. There has been a widespread acceptance of trade occurring to and fro North coast and modern Indonesia for many millennia - yet the author categorically rejects any argument for singular location of birth of languages based on the linguistic accomplishment he observes in indigenous Australian languages. Much is known and can be explained about origins of language of Australia, due to unique environmental conditions. How can multiple origins be explained in historical and contextual terms?

The book reflects the linguistic training and background of its author, and this explains the exclusion of domains of expression that semioticians would want to include in the spectrum of human languages. One is not talking about the horizontally, historical and geographical diversification of primary languages, but the multiform expression contained within each main language - a vertical diversification of languages.

The author provides an invaluable and welcome introduction to poetic and song forms- but does not extend analysis to dance or decorative forms that accompanied rituals, and provided an essential expressive supplement to song and poetry, and also a profound link between human and nature sign systems. There is no mention, for instance of the elaborate gestural systems, including the highly intricate systems of foot markings in dust of inland Arunta and other peoples. Linguists have not always had the tools for study of non verbal expression, such as ephemeral gesture displays. Conceptually, this omission typifies a long prejudice against non verbal languages by linguists - or at least semantic prioritisation of verbal languages. However in the case of an indigenous linguistic anthropology, non verbal expression needs to be included. The exclusion by Dixon of such references allows him to posit the old shibboleth, that traditional languages are oral. The assumption about oral languages risks repeating an implicit racism, that later societies with written system were more advanced.
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In making this assumption, and excluding non verbal material, the book ignores layers of non verbal representation, expression, signifying fields, which extends out to the marking and pages of nature itself. Semiotics, studying signifying and syntactic fields in addition even prior to their signified or semantic sense (pragmatic consequences and function), has no problem attributing a practice of inscription or “writing” in all societies - indeed in arguing more widely, as Derrida would stress in his focus on grammatology, for the true interdependence of written and spoken forms, indeed of all multi forms of language expression.

It would seem that conceptual and analysis grasp of the multiform nature of individual language, achievable using semiotic methods, is an essential toolkit to articulate and address questions about origins and dissemination of languages.

What happened on the Australian continent 60,000 years ago (there is anthropological consensus on date, which if anything is conservative) has enormous potential, both for the development of culture and society on one continent, and arguably for the development and dissemination of language and culture across the entire homo sapien family. The nature of that origins, as the first bridge of the human stage of homo sapiens evolution, is an important question for all cultural anthological study. It throws up ethical, philosophical, historical and semiotic insights even richer than the perspectives directing Dixon’s query. It is potentially a prime case study for semiotics in its promise to provide a fuller contextual picture to language and culture than linguistics alone can provide. Let’s not assume too much, from the perspectives and needs of modern societies, indigenous or otherwise, about the experiences of the first homo sapiens ancestors, coming upon new Australian landscape of vast sea and sky, and natural horizon and abundant foodstuff. Let’s take a more tentative step out of the known into a semiotic phenomenology, that is counter intuitive in terms of the known and familiar constructed world of modern sensibility. Let’s step into the unknown in order not only to recognise complexity and structure in the lives of first peoples - in the tradition of Lévi-Strauss - but to explain the contextual and historical development of complex structures, including the grammatical and lexical features of spoken language, from what went before.

Book is welcomed for its contribution but a popular reader whose intended audience might not be able to discriminate between what is a truly welcome and reliable contribution, and what is postulation, in its presentation.

Geoffrey Syke