

Nicole Lindstrom

YUGONOSTALGIA: RESTORATIVE AND REFLECTIVE NOSTALGIA IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Abstract: Drawing on Svetlana Boym's distinction between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia, the essay maps two broad, and often overlapping, ideal types of Yugonostalgia expressed in and through contemporary former Yugoslav film, popular music, and multi-media. The first expresses reconstructive longing for an essential Yugoslav past; the second offers self-consciously ambivalent and critical frames in indulging fantasies of this past. What different forms of Yugonostalgia share in common is challenging symbolic geographies of disunity that have dominated political discourse in former Yugoslavia for the last two decades. The two types can be differentiated by their stance toward the present-past and the future: while both types are based on fantasies of the past, the "restorative" Yugonostalgic looks backward towards a seemingly fixed time and space while "reflective" nostalgic restlessly grapples with the dislocation so palpable in the former Yugoslavia to imagine alternative futures.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2004 Macedonian public television launched a new reality program, "*Toa sum jas/To sam ja/To sem jaz*," or "That's me" in Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, and Slovenian respectively. Pitched as the "first multinational reality show," cast members from across the former Yugoslavia—one woman and one man from each of the six republics—were filmed living together for 90 days in a house outside Skopje.¹ The show, broadcast five nights a week across the former

East Central Europe/ECE, vol. 32, part 1-2, pp. 7-55

¹ Press Release Newswire. 2004. "That's me: First Multinational Reality Show." Accessed at: <http://ca.prweb.com/releases/2004/12/prweb185588.htm>. The show itself lasts 15 minutes, followed by an hour-long program hosted by a team of commentators from all former republics. The Croatian *Novi List* suggests in a sidebar titled "Balkan Mix" that the nationalities of the contestants are not clear cut, e.g. one Bosnian contestant, Edin, was

Yugoslavia, offered the typical reality show fare of romantic intrigue and popularity contests. The show also generated its share of controversy. Three weeks after it first aired, a Bosnian NGO, the Bosniac League, denounced the program as a “live feed of erotic, nearly pornographic pictures from a house in Skopje.”² Macedonian media critics argued that by failing to translate non-Macedonian dialogue (the show contained no subtitles) it violated Macedonian media language laws.³ Yet the biggest controversy erupted when the show’s owner decided to make changes to the show’s set—adding three large portraits of Tito, a red star, and images from the Yugoslav prison colony, Goli Otok. He also requested that the show’s hosts don white shirts and red handkerchiefs of Partisan Youth. Bosnian, Croatian, and Slovenian television stations promptly pulled the show from the air, claiming that this level of Yugonostalgia raised too many sensitive and provocative political issues.⁴ The Yugoslav iconography was immediately removed and stations returned the show to the airwaves the next day.

With its clumsy political provocations and its Noah’s Ark-like selection of candidates from all former Yugoslav republics, the “multinational” reality show was clearly intended to be a *Yugoslav* production. Such a pan-Yugoslav show would have been unthinkable ten years ago, during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. The program’s popularity might be attributed precisely to its sensational premise. Yet with thousands of viewers tuning in daily from Ljubljana to Priština, we might attribute the show’s appeal to bottom-up demand as much as clever marketing.⁵

The show’s title itself implies that this experiment in multicultural cohabitation was one with which the viewer could identify. Opposition to the inclusion of Yugoslav symbols suggests that, while cross-cultural productions like these are increasingly accepted, representations of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) itself still spark political controversy. The program might be interpreted as a sign of the increasingly popular appeal of Yugonostalgia, albeit in a highly commercial and ambivalent form.

born in Montenegro, is half Croatian and half Serbia. “Sutra reality show ‘To sam ja’ napušta četvero stanara,” *Novi List*, 3 January 2005.

2 “Balkanski reality show zbog ‘pornografije’ na udaru roditelja,” *Index.hr*. 30 November 2004. The Bosnian League also filed a lawsuit on behalf of a Bosnian contestant’s mother who argued that broadcasting a communal hot-tub scene was an attack on her daughter’s “moral integrity.”

3 Vesna Šopar. “The Big Brother of the Balkans,” *Media Online*, 23 February 2005.

4 “Zbog sporne ‘tioidne’ scenografije regionalne TV odbile prikazati show,” *Večernji List*, 20 January 2005.

5 Andrew Roberts describes a similar “bottom up” appeal of the Czech nostalgia, from reruns of the *Major Zeman* detective series to “eighties parties.” See Andrew Roberts, “The Politics and Anti-Politics of Nostalgia,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16 (2003) 3, 764–809.

Yugonostalgia can be broadly defined as nostalgia for the fantasies associated with a country, the SFRY, which existed from 1945 to 1991.⁶ Fantasy is a crucial qualifier here. No necessary relationship exists between the temporally and spatially fragmented memories of a Yugoslav past and the present desires, expressed by and through Yugonostalgic representations of this past. Yugonostalgia can be experienced culturally or individually, directly or indirectly; it can be politically conservative or progressive, or in Svetlana Boym's useful distinction, "reconstructive" or "reflexive."⁷ What different forms of Yugonostalgia share in common is a critical engagement, either implicitly or explicitly, with the symbolic geography of *disunity* that has dominated political discourse in former Yugoslavia for the last two decades.

The "significant overlapping of territories, languages and customs that granted the continuity of mutual relations in SFRY," Bakić-Hayden and Hayden write, has been "systematically neglected, underestimated, or outright denied."⁸ The Yugoslav ideology of "brotherhood and unity" was replaced with exclusionary ideologies that sought to divide former inhabitants of SFRY along cultural, linguistic, religious, and economic lines. Throughout the 1990s we can also witness an endless chain of internal differentiation whereby national leaders construed their nation as more civilized (or European) in contrast to the more primitive (or Balkan) groups to its south and east—what Bakić-Hayden and Hayden term "nesting orientalisms."⁹ The process serves two goals: elites could portray the SFRY as an impossible union of incompatible parts, and could frame their quests for independence as a necessary "emancipation" from the Balkans and the first step towards "rejoining" Europe.

Bakić-Hayden and Hayden conclude their sanguine 1992 essay with a rejoinder to the dominance of divisive symbolic geography in early 1990s Yugoslav cultural politics: that it is precisely this experience of, and from, the overlapping areas of life that is relevant for any re-definition of Yugoslavia and its constituent parts.¹⁰ This essay examines one means of re-defining Yugoslavia and its constituent parts today: the various Yugonostalgic cultural productions and representations.

Drawing on Svetlana Boym's distinction between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia, the essay seeks to map two broad, and often overlapping, ideal

6 Or Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija in Serbian and Croatian. The etymology of nostalgia—*nostos* (return) and *algos* (sorrow)—is illuminating, for nostalgia is a romantic longing for a past that cannot exist. See Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* (1966) 54, 81–103.

7 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

8 Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, "Orientalist Variations on the Theme 'Balkans': Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics," *Slavic Review* 51 (1992) 1, 15.

9 *Ibid.*, 4.

10 *Ibid.*, 15. See also Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54 (1995) 4, 917–931.

types of Yugonostalgia expressed in and through contemporary former Yugoslav film, popular music, and multi-media. The first is an expression of reconstructive longing for an essential Yugoslav past; the second relies on a self-consciously ambivalent, politically engaged, and critical frame in indulging fantasies of this past. The two types can also be differentiated by their stance toward the present-past and the future: while both types are based on fantasies of the past, the “restorative” Yugonostalgic looks backward towards a seemingly fixed time and space while “reflective” nostalgic restlessly grapples with the dislocation so palpable in the former Yugoslavia in order to imagine creative possibilities for the future.

RESTORATIVE YUGONOSTALGIA

If restorative Yugonostalgia is the longing for fantasies of an essential Yugoslav past, it is worth beginning with a brief outline of the well-known tenets of Yugoslavism.¹¹ A dominant ideological principle of socialist Yugoslavia was that the differences between the constituent Yugoslav peoples were not significant. Differences were not denied; on the contrary, SFRY was a federal state, comprised of republics defined in terms of their dominant national group. Yet “Brotherhood and unity” was based on the formal policy of equality among its constituent republics and nationalities.

This equality was institutionalized by granting each language equal constitutional status, rotating federal leadership positions among each constituent group, and allocating government posts proportionately—all of which operated in tandem with the centralized power of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia (or LCY) in Belgrade. Yet keeping such an ethnically diverse state as SFRY in tact also required that people develop a common identity as citizens of the Yugoslav state. Yugoslavism, according to Perica, was the “Yugoslav civil religion of brotherhood and unity.”¹² Symbolism and pageantry was central not only to the Yugoslav state building process but to create an affective loyalty to the Yugoslav state.¹³

11 See Dejan Djokić, ed., *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (London: C. Hurst, 2003).

12 Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

13 SFRY leaders relied on the same kinds of socialist iconography and slogans that all socialist states used to legitimize and sustain their rule. One ritual, the “Stafeta Mladosti” (or “Day of Youth”) captures some unique features of Yugoslav socialism. The annual event, which was first held on the 25 May 1944, commemorated Josip Broz Tito’s birthday. Youngsters from each Yugoslav republic participated in a three week relay in which a “stafeta,” or ceremonial baton stuffed with birthday wishes for Tito, was carried across all the Yugoslav republics on the way to its final destination in Belgrade. The event culminated in the Yugoslav People’s Army Stadium, where the final runner would present the baton to Tito while an enormous white balloon shaped as Tito’s head would descend from above the

Restorative Yugonostalgia is linked to both the formal and ritualistic features of Yugoslavism. Yet perhaps the most common form of Yugonostalgia is the most ordinary: nostalgia for a past that appears better than the present. For many former Yugoslavs—faced with the present-day realities of rampant unemployment, social dislocation, and weak states marked by widespread corruption—any existence might appear better than the present. As Teofil Pančič, political commentator for the Serbian weekly *Vreme*, argues, former Yugoslavs live in societies “stuck between ethnic wars and mafocracy. It is no longer socialism and not capitalism either. No one knows what it is, but everyone knows that it stinks.”¹⁴ Pančič also points out the qualitative differences in former-Yugoslavs experiences and other post-socialist states: “For East Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, etc. a lot was worse before 1989: they lived poorly, had no freedoms, and could not leave their country without special permission. We, on the other hand, traveled wherever we wanted—where now we have to get a visa for almost everywhere. Concerning living standards, we used to say that we had everything—whereas *they* basically had nothing. Then *we* had this war—whereas *they* experienced a kind of normalization of their lives...[For them] very year since 1989 has been better than the previous, while every year for people in the former Yugoslavia, apart perhaps from Slovenes, has been worse.”

Pančič argues that such conditions can help explain why people long for “good old Socialist Yugoslavia.” But he is careful to add that people must avoid undefined nostalgia and sort out what was good and bad about Yugoslavia, to avoid falling victim to the next demagoguery. Yugoslavia was a safe place not because it was a *socialist* country, according to Pančič, but because it was a *country*.

This leads to the second form of Yugonostalgia: nostalgia for the fantasy of the Yugoslav state itself. The Yugoslavs, Ugrešić writes in the preface of *SFRJ za ponavljače* (loosely translated as “Yugoslavia 101”) believed that “their country was the most beautiful, the Adriatic Sea was the bluest, the fish was the freshest, the people were the warmest, the self-management was the most efficient, the brotherhood and unity were the strong, and the army was the most courageous.”¹⁵ The violent dissolution of SFRY undoubtedly undermined any legitimacy Yugoslavism might have enjoyed as a means of preventing the centrifugal forces of nationalism. However, as a more popular phenomenon, the multicultural history of Yugoslavia encapsulated in “brotherhood and unity” is viewed by many as a positive legacy, rather than as a burden to be overcome. In 1994, for instance, Slovenian poet and essayist Aleš Debeljak published a melancholic and nostalgic parting tribute to

stadium. The event, the last of which was held in 1987, is a vivid example of the centrality of Tito’s cult of personality to Yugoslavism as well as the rituals that reinforced “brotherhood and unity.” Most Yugoslavs had actively participated in the ritual throughout its 43 years of existence, from writing birthday messages, to carrying the baton, or cheering the runners along their route to Belgrade.

14 Uffe Anderson, “Resurrecting Yugoslavia,” *Transitions Online*, 17 February 2005, 1.

15 *Ibid.*, 2.

Yugoslavia titled *Twilight of the Idols*. In the following passage Debeljak laments the loss of the multicultural diversity, the “many-colored carpet” of Yugoslavia: “For me, popular slogans about the “celebration of diversity” were never mere philosophical speculation. As far back as I recall these differences were the crux of my experience of life at a crossroads of various cultures... Yugoslavia was like a many-colored carpet that allowed me to maintain contact with lands that were dramatically different from the baroque Central European town where I grew up yet was still part of the same country.”¹⁶

Noteworthy in the passage is the care Debeljak takes to differentiate his “baroque Central European town” from the “crossroads of various cultures” further south, thereby both repudiating and reproducing the symbolic politics of “nesting Orientalisms.”¹⁷

Restorative Yugonostalgia can also be animated by a longing for the fantasies of international recognition that came with Yugoslav citizenship. Yugoslavia, a leader of the non-aligned movement, was neither communist nor capitalist, neither Western nor Eastern. As Bakić-Hayden and Hayden argue, non-alignment was not only meant to counter Western military and economic dominance; it was also an indirect rejection of Eurocentrism—a legacy that has been lost with the overarching desire to join Euro-Atlantic institutions.¹⁸

The strategic importance of Tito’s Yugoslavia in Cold War affairs brought some tangible benefits to Yugoslav citizens, such as a Yugoslav passport that encountered few restrictions, as well as more intangible ones. The sense of recognition that came with being associated with an important global actor was another casualty of SFRY’s dissolution. Vanja Alič, lead singer of the Slovenian Yugonostalgic rock band “Zaklonski Prepeva,” remarks: “We all had a certain pride. We were raised to believe that Yugoslavia was a powerful country, a big country, and a beautiful country. That was a great feeling...now there is none of that. Slovenia is now an unimportant, peripheral and parochial country, often confused with Slovakia.”¹⁹

Nostalgia for the fantasy of the Yugoslav state itself, however, is most often expressed towards the charismatic leader who personified it: Josip Broz Tito. Tito nostalgia is simultaneously kitsch and solemnity. For example, each year

16 Aleš Debeljak, *Twilight of the Idols: Recollections of a Lost Yugoslavia* (New York: White Pine Press, 1994), 35. Andreas Huyssen writes: “Without memory, without reading the traces of the past, there can be no recognition of difference (Adorno called it non-identity), no tolerance for the rich complexities and instabilities of personal and cultural, political and national identities.” Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 252.

17 For an extended discussion see Nicole Lindstrom, “Between Europe and the Balkans: Mapping Slovenia and Croatia’s ‘Return to Europe’ in the 1990s,” *Dialectical Anthropology* (2003) 27, 313–329.

18 Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans,’” 2.

19 Personal interview, 13 July 1999, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

thousands of former Yugoslavs visit Tito's birthplace in Kumrovec and his grave in Belgrade. Undoubtedly many visitors visit the sites with ironic detachment. But for many older visitors the pilgrimage is a solemn time to reflect on a homeland lost.²⁰ On 25 May 2005 hundreds of people made the pilgrimage to Tito's grave. A 65-year old grandmother remarked to a journalist: "He died. But while we still live, so does he. Everything I achieved in life, I achieved in this time."²¹ Paging through guest books in Kumrovec, his Croatian birthplace, and his Belgrade grave, what is striking is that so many messages are written *to* Tito. An example from the Kumrovec guest book: "Comrade Tito! They took your photo down from the walls of our classrooms, but not because fascism died or the people found freedom. Your photo is gone, but your memories remain."²²

The personality cult of Tito is also memorialized with statues and named streets around the former Yugoslavia. When the Sarajevo city council proposed to rename a section of the main avenue after the late Alija Izetbegović in 2004, it prompted a public outcry, eventually forcing the city to keep its previous name: "Titova." While the Slovenian industrial town of Velenija dropped the "Titova" from its name, a prominent Tito statue remains standing in the city square. Cafés and bars throughout Bosnia, such as Café Broz or Tito Prijedor, evoke his name. Tito also appears frequently as a character in films. Željimir Žilnik's 1994 documentary film *Tito po drugi put među Srbima* ("Tito among the Serbs for the second time"), for example, follows a Tito impersonator around the streets of Belgrade. The film documents the deluge of emotions to Tito's reappearance ranging from anger to gratitude. The specter of Tito is also the focus of Vinko Brešan's 1999 comedy "Marsal" (or "Marshall Tito's Spirit"). When an apparition of Tito appears on a Croatian island, the town's mayor organizes Partisan veterans to help capitalize on Tito's return by turning the island into a Yugonostalgic theme park.²³

Yugonostalgic productions are also prevalent in cyberspace. "Tito's Home Page," which bears the heading "Kumrovec 1892—Ljubljana 1980 [where he died]—Internet 1994 [where he rose again]," provides an archive of communist party songs, rare pictures of Tito, and the opportunity to send Tito electronic mail messages.²⁴ The Slovenian creator of Tito's home page confessed that his initial

20 Milovan Mracevich, "Remembering the Days of Youth," *Transitions Online*, 2 June 2005.

21 Ibid.

22 Kumrovec guest book, accessed by the author, in person, on 13 January 1999.

23 The film's premise could also be an allusion to the marketing of Međugorje, the town in Hercegovina where two boys saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary in the 1980s and which subsequently became a destination for Catholics all over the world.

24 Accessed at <http://www.titoville.com>. For local coverage of the site see Branislav Milosević, "Sta (da) se radi," *Naša Borba*, 29 May 1998; Gordana Susa, "Internetu of Josipu Brozu," *Naša Borba*, 4 May 1997.

motive for creating the site in 1994 had been “as a joke.”²⁵ But once the e-mail messages to Tito came flooding in, many emotional, he realized he had tapped into something more serious.²⁶ On “Cyberslavia.com,” meanwhile, anyone who enters the site is eligible for Cyberslavia citizenship, as long as they do not bring “hatred towards anyone else,” and citizens can apply for ministerial and ambassadorial posts.²⁷ If print capitalism, according to Benedict Anderson, was instrumental in the construction of the modern nation, electronic capitalism provides a new means of constructing *virtual* nation-states like these.²⁸

25 Chris Hedges, “Tito on Internet: Yearning for Socialism’s ‘Good Old Days,’” *New York Times*, 2 December 1997.

26 The following sample of messages illustrates the diverse responses, ranging from hostile to sentimental. (1) “Contrary to those you fooled, I wasn’t. You were nothing but a puppet dictator backed by western dollars and Russian rubles. You were responsible for butchering hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians at Bleiburg. You conveniently whitewashed and covered up the whole mess and inflated Jasenovac to catastrophic proportions” (posted on 28 January 1998); (2) “Okay you Slovenian bastard, enough of your dogging Tito. Sure, he was not angel and he made mistakes. But remember that if it wasn’t for him, *Janez* would be called *Johann* and “*Lahko prihajamo*” would be “*guten tag*.” So have some god damn gratitude along with your criticism and erase all the sarcasm from the homepage. Sincerely, a Yugoslav” (posted on 24 March 1996); (3) “Thank you for reminding me of my childhood. It was great to hear Zdravko Čolič’s songs and see pictures of Tito again... I almost feel like crying. I suddenly remembered that I lived a completely different life and that I was happy...Still, thank you so very much. You brought something that I thought I did not even have” (posted on 27 July 1997). Accessed at <http://www.titoville.com>.

27 First accessed at <http://capita.wustl.edu/sasha/CyberSlavia/CyberSlavia.html>. Cyberslavia can now be accessed at the “Former Yugoslavia in Cyberspace” page at <http://balkansnet.org/web2.html> under YUQUEST. The creators state, “Cyberslavia claims no territorial possessions and it takes just a few kilowatts of electricity to survive.”

28 It is worth differentiating between two very different types of former Yugoslav virtual communities on the web: multinational ones like Cyberslavia that link former Yugoslavs within and beyond the borders of the former Yugoslavia and the far more prevalent national virtual communities that are exclusive to one particular Yugoslav national group. While cultural products of Yugonostalgia and nationalist nostalgia differ fundamentally in their aims—the latter to construct a homogenous identity and historical tradition and the other to resist this nationalist project by memorializing the multinational tenets of Yugoslavia—what unites “restorative” forms of nostalgia in the former Yugoslavia are essentialist fantasies of a particular past. See Paul Stubbs, “Imagining Croatia? Exploring Computer-mediated Diasporic Public Spheres,” in M. Povrzanovic Frykman, ed., *Beyond Integration: Challenges of Belonging in Diaspora and Exile*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2001, 195–224.

REFLEXIVE YUGONOSTALGIA

Reflective Yugonostalgia can be seen as a reaction to the destructive forces of nationalist nostalgia as well as to Yugonostalgia as a pejorative marker in contemporary former Yugoslav political discourse. Like restorative Yugonostalgia, reflective varieties are a political reaction to what Ugrešić refers to as “the terror of forgetting” (in which one is forced to forget the Yugoslav past that one remembers) and the “terror by remembering” (where one is forced to remember a national past that one does not remember) that dominated Yugoslav politics in the 1990s.²⁹ Instead of remembering some essential Yugoslav past, however, reflective Yugonostalgia is self-consciously ambivalent and critical, recognizing the always elusive, inconclusive, and fragmentary nature of memories and fantasies of the Yugoslav past. While some examples of reflexive Yugonostalgia might qualify as “nostalgia of style,” what Ivy defines as a “glib evocation of vanished commodity forms,” other types appear to have a more self-consciously political and progressive motivations.³⁰

The *Lexicon of Yugoslav Mythology* is illustrative of reflexive Yugonostalgia. The *Lexicon*, edited by a team of Serbian and Croatians, is a 500-page collection of various artifacts of Yugoslav culture and everyday life. The *Lexicon* includes entries from 50 different contributors on Yugoslav rock bands, Party slogans, consumer products, films, and other topics. It took 15 years to complete. The *Lexicon's* creators aim to amend the rewriting or erasing of Yugoslav history that took place over the 1990s, as indicated by the question they pose in the preface: “How can you just cross these things out and claim that they were never part of your life?”³¹ The volume is thus a political project. Yet it is also playful in its embrace of the impossibility and ambiguities of remembering. For example, on the entry on Jajce, the town in Northern Bosnia where in 1943 Tito and the Partisans founded Yugoslavia, the famous Jajce waterfall is listed as 45 meters high, when in actuality it is 15 meters shorter. The contributor justifies this inaccuracy based on his recollection as a child of the waterfall being “huge.”³² And, he adds, the *Lexicon* is, after all “precisely about mythology and not about facts.”³³ The following entry on Eurokrem highlights the *Lexicon's* simultaneously political and playful tone:

29 Dubravka Ugrešić, *Culture of Lies*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 70.

30 Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 56. See, for a more critical view, Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

31 Vladimir Arsenijević, Iris Andrić and Djordje Matić, eds., *Leksikon YU mitologije* [Lexicon of Yugoslav Mythology] (Belgrade: Rende, 2005). Reviewed by Uffe Anderson, “Resurrecting Yugoslavia,” *Transitions Online*, 17 February 2005, 1.

32 *Ibid.*, 2.

33 *Ibid.*, 2.

Eurokrem: The first Yugoslav chocolate spread, made on Italian license and followed by bombastic marketing... It was spread on bread or swallowed with a spoon, it was black, white or mixed, and all the Kinderlade and Nutellas of this world will never so much as approach this Mount Everest of gastronomical joy. The only question we ask ourselves is, do you know anyone who managed to spread it the way it looks in the ad: half white, half black?

The reference to marketing ploys is a sardonic wink to the reader that this was a mythology to which all Yugoslav youngsters could joyfully relate. By declaring Eurokrem (admittedly made on Italian license) to be far superior to its German and Italian equivalents, the authors also contest the dichotomous privileging of Western products over Eastern ones—or vice versa.³⁴

Music is another common site of Yugonostalgia as remembering everyday culture. The appeal of Yugonostalgic music is particularly resistant to strict distinctions between restorative and reflective nostalgia. For instance, Đorđe Balašević and Zdravko Čolić, two of the most famous and popular Yugoslav balladeers from the 1970s and 1980s, continue to sell-out stadiums around the former Yugoslavia, singing Čolić's classic "Druže Tito, mi ti se kunemo" (Comrade Tito, we pledge ourselves to you) or Balašević's 1970's pop anthem "Računajte na nas" (You can count on us). Yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the intentions of these balladeers or the different ways in which the audience interprets the music.

Other artists exhibit a more reflexive type of Yugonostalgia, with songs that embrace the ambivalence of Yugo-mythology yet are clearly politically engaged. Rambo Amadeus's song "Who Wants to be a German in a Partisan Film," evokes the ideological power of Partisan films of the 1970s—such as Veljko Bulajić's 1969 *Bitka na Neretva* (Battle of the Neretva), starring Yul Brynner as Tito, or Stipe Delić's 1971 *Sutjeska*—as well as the lost fantasies of anti-fascist struggle on which Yugoslavism was built. Rambo Amadeus, of the same generation as the *Lexicon* editors, is also evoking the lived memories of many Yugoslav youngsters, when German and Partisan games were a popular pastime. An interview with Vanja Alič of Zaklonišče Prepeva highlights the blurred distinction between these two types of nostalgia. Alič remarks that when he first started playing old Partisan songs in 1994 it was designed to "shock" people. "We did it in an ironic way," he states. "We did it to provoke, to make people nervous, to get on their nerves." But Alič

³⁴ Bach describes a similar phenomenon in East German marketing campaigns: e.g. for Kathi baked goods, "Der Osten hat gewählt" (The East has chosen) or "Club Cola: *unsere* Cola" (Club Cola, *our* Cola). One might argue that in the former Yugoslavia, unlike in East Germany and other countries, Yugoslav products never lost their appeal. Today Coktka, a popular former-Yugoslav brand, is advertised today around the former Yugoslavia, with the slogan: "Drink the Yugoslav Coca-Cola." Yet the marketing of Yugonostalgia as a commodity falls closer to a restorative conception than a reflective one. Jonathan Bach, "'The Taste Remains': Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany," *Public Culture* 14 (2002) 3, 538–550.

adds: "When I listen to old Yugoslav records or see an old Yugoslav film or see an old music video, it really touches me. So there is real nostalgia expressed through my music."³⁵ Only six years old when Tito died, Alič remarks that he "didn't see the problems, the problems that older people saw" and stresses that his nostalgia is not about a longing for "some old regime" or the wish for some "new official association of Yugoslavs."

The audience for these more reflexive incarnations of Yugonostalgia is largely made up of young people; a generation like Alič's who came of age when Yugoslavia was disintegrating. The emergence of "Balkan parties" in the alternative scene in Ljubljana in the early 1990s, where students gathered to listen to old Yugoslav rock songs or sing Partisan ballads, could be attributed to a subversive desire to undermine nationalist discourses so dominant at the time. As one participant remarked, the emergence of Balkan parties was "a case of the forbidden fruit is always sweetest. Songs that were once forbidden or condemned by the new regime now became hip and progressive."³⁶ Svetlana Slapšak suggests that young people might be best positioned to live the recent past and to remember. She writes that "Yugoslav rock music has become the symbolic utopia, a non-space and non-time in which young people enjoy the freedom of meeting each other, speaking each other's languages, having fun and ridiculing their parents' readiness to do what they are told."³⁷ Balkan or Yugoslav parties were one limited to alternative or underground scenes in the early 1990s. Since the mid-1990s, however, Yugonostalgic cultural productions, from music to movies, have become more widely popular and commercialized.³⁸

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Yugonostalgia exists in the former Yugoslavia today in multiple forms, from restorative incarnations that long for fantasies of an essential Yugoslav past to more reflective varieties that embrace the elusive and ambiguous nature of this past. From "Toa sum jas/To sam ja/To sem jaz," to Tito pilgrimages, to lexicons of Yugoslav mythology, Yugonostalgia is experienced culturally and individually, directly and indirectly, by elites and masses alike. Yugonostalgia also illuminates one of the many countervailing cultural and political forces in the region that seek to

35 Personal interview, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 17 August 1999.

36 Personal interview, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 23 July 1999.

37 Svetlana Slapšak, "Yugonostalgia in Optima Forma," 1995. Unpublished manuscript.

38 See Mitja Velikonja, "Drugo in drugačno: Subkulture in subkulturne scene devetdesetih" [Other and Others: Subculture and the 1990s Subculture Scene] in Peter Stanković, Gregor Tomc and Mitja Velikonja, eds., *Urbana Plemena: Subkulture v Sloveniji v devetdesetih* [Urban Tribes: Subculture in Slovenia in the 1990s]. (Ljubljana: Študentska založba [Student Publishing House], 1999), 14-22.

curb the power of hegemonic nationalist discourses dominant in the 1990s and 2000s.³⁹ A recent incident at Tito's birthplace in Kumrovec suggests that the political stakes are still high. In December 2004 a local neo-fascist group bombed, and literally decapitated, a Tito statue that has long stood outside his birthplace home. While this was one of more than 3,000 Yugoslav monuments throughout the former Yugoslavia destroyed since 1990, the destruction in Kumrovec sparked counter-demonstrations throughout the former Yugoslavia condemning neo-fascist violence. Yugonostalgia must thus be understood in the context of ongoing political and societal struggles over the symbolic meanings of the former Yugoslavia.

³⁹ Patrick Hyder Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason: The Boundaries of Balkanism in Slovenian, Austrian, and Italian Discourse," *Slavic Review* 62 (2003) 1, 141.