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(IM)POSSIBILITIES OF BUILDING COMMUNITY AND NEGOTIATING BELONGING IN INSTITUTIONAL THEATRE DURING THE WARS IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CASES FROM SARAJEVO, ZAGREB AND BELGRADE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how and to what end institutional theatre participates in the process of building community and negotiating belonging from 1991 to 1995 during two major conflicts of the Yugoslav Succession Wars: the War in Croatia and the War in Bosnia. With a focus on institutional theatre as a public phenomenon, in a comparative study of nine cases from Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb, I aim to understand how notions of community and belonging are interpreted in each city and how mainstream cultural establishments negotiate, resist, or conform to the hegemonic political projects of belonging and community during the war years. Theatre is examined as a place for negotiating belonging in the city, particularly that of the urban educated middle class citizens, as well as a site of connection and exchange of urban experiences between Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb.

The comparative study method, underpinned by performance, text, and material analysis of primary and secondary sources from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, affords a critical framework for examining socio-political distinctions and similarities that might lead to new insights about the relationship between theatre and war in these three places. I search for distinct approaches to building community and negotiating belonging in and around institutional theatre in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo and isolate the socio-cultural and political factors that produce conditions that enable such approaches. This is followed by an analysis of nine case studies organized in two chronological stages to encompass the first theatrical responses to the war, followed by examples from the later years of the conflict.

A close examination of institutional theatre reveals within these organizations cohesive and complex processes of negotiating belonging and building community, and sheds light on more nuanced interpretations of these notions among the urban educated middle class citizens in
Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade. By examining institutional theatre in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb, we can learn more about the shared and not-so shared experiences of belonging and community during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. This study contributes to the body of knowledge about wartime culture in the former Yugoslav region, and represents an effort in the understanding and reconciliation of past traumatic experiences in the Balkans. More than twenty years after the war, the processes of reestablishing these connections is still ongoing; the future of the region depends on our understanding of the cultural links between these three urban centers.
To the theatre artists of the former Yugoslavia who fought and continue to fight against divisions and inequalities based on ethnic identity, gender and nationality.
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This dissertation could not have been completed without the great support that I have received from so many people over the years, to whom I wish to offer my most heartfelt thanks.

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Finally, I thank my parents for supporting my decision to move to another continent in pursuit of a better future. Despite dealing with the hardships of letting their only child go to a faraway land, they never once doubted my choices and have encouraged me to choose my own path. Here I also want to thank my American parents, Susan and John, who have graciously welcomed me into their family and treated me like I am one of them.

Finally, there are two individuals who deserve a special place in this acknowledgment. The first is my mom, Nada, the strongest woman I know and my biggest cheerleader. She never stopped encouraging me to finish, and at times even acted as my research assistant. Thanks, Mom, for always being on my side. In the end, I am indebted to Chris, my partner and now husband, for pushing me to finish when I wanted to quit, for engaging me in intellectual debates on every possible topic, and for always allowing me to lean on him. I love you darling.
NOTES ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF PROPER NAMES AND WORDS GIVEN IN ORIGINAL SPELLING

C c = ts as in cats

Č č = ch as in charge

Ć ć = softer ch as in Italian ciao

Dž dž = j as in just

Dj dj = close to dž but softer

J j = y as in boy

Lj lj = ll as in million in British English

Nj nj = n as in onion

Š š = sh as in shine

Ž ž = s as in pleasure

Unless otherwise indicated translations are those of the author.

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1 This chart was borrowed from the volume edited by Radmila Gorup entitled After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE .................................................................................................................................................. ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introducing Yugoslavia: Belongings and Separations ................................................................. 6
  1.2 Definition of Terms and Theoretical Considerations ............................................................... 23
  1.3 Analytical Framework and Methodology ..................................................................................... 39

CHAPTER 2: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS .................................................................................................. 46
  2.1. Frameworks for Analyzing Community and Belonging ........................................................... 47
  2.2. Influential Factors for the Development of Wartime Theatre .................................................. 53

CHAPTER 3: MOBILIZING THEATRICAL FORCES 1991-1993 .............................................................. 93
  3.1. Negotiating New Croatian Belonging in Zagreb ....................................................................... 95
  3.2. Mobilizing Artistic Forces in Besieged Sarajevo ..................................................................... 107
  3.3. Catharsis in Belgrade ................................................................................................................. 119

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY AND BELONGING IN MUNICIPAL THEATRES 1993-1995 ........................................................................................................... 131
  4.1. Rituals of Mourning and Celebrations of Life in Sarajevo ....................................................... 132
  4.2. Negotiating Marginalized and Gendered Belonging in Zagreb .............................................. 147
  4.3. (Im)possibilities of Building Community and Negotiating Belonging in Belgrade .......... 167

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................................................... 185

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................................................................................... 193
I contemplated a long while whether to include a preface to this study. What compelled me to do so is the wish to situate my own bias within the topic of my inquiry. In this preface I am inspired by Silvija Jestrović, a scholar in the UK whose work I hope to build on in this dissertation, and who frames herself in relation to her work as an intimate outsider and an insider-who-has-left. Another source of inspiration for this preface is Maria Todorova’s essay “My Yugoslavia.” As a Balkanologist and distinguished historian she recounts her gaze from the perspective of growing up in Bulgaria, one of Yugoslavia’s neighboring countries. Last but not certainly not least, I am inspired by the writings of incredible Croatian female writers Slavenka Drakulić and Dubravka Ugrešić who, like nobody else out there, write about the experience of living in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cultural sphere.

In my relationship to Belgrade I am definitely assuming the position of the insider-who-has-left, also because much of my work on this topic is built on Western scholarship. From 1991 to 2007 I lived in Belgrade which I still consider my home city. My relationship to Zagreb and Sarajevo should be understood as intimate outsider because, although I feel a close connection with these cities, I have never actually lived in them. Because of my grandmother, herself a Croat-Hungarian, who was born in Zagreb and came of age during the Second World War in this city, I always heard stories about what it was like to live under the pro-Nazi Ustasha regime in Croatia. And we always celebrated both Orthodox and Catholic Easter and Christmas. I was born in Rijeka, a coastal town in northern Croatia (about one hour drive from the Italian border) where I spent the first six years of my life. Then in 1989 my parents took advantage of Canada’s worldwide call for pharmacists. They did not like Canada one bit, and were longing to return to
their beloved Yugoslavia. In about a year and a half we found ourselves in my grandmother’s apartment in downtown Belgrade, Serbia. It was New Years Eve of 1991.

My parents had no intention of staying in Belgrade; after all they chose to live in the Croatian part of Yugoslavia years before I was even born, and owned two houses on the Adriatic Coast. That summer of 1991 we attempted a trip to the Island of Krk where my family had a vacation house for decades. One vivid memory I have from this trip is a discussion that as an eight-year-old I had with my friends – they were explaining to me how my country is wrong and how their country is right. I had no idea what they were saying, and understood even less why they are speaking in terms of Your/Our country when obviously we all lived in the same country. The trip abruptly ended when we left frantically one night to catch the last passenger plane from Pula to Belgrade before the air traffic between Serbia and Croatia came to a complete halt. It became very clear in 1991 that we were not going anywhere - we got stuck in Belgrade.

As residents of Yugoslavia, my family experienced the citizenship conundrum that will be addressed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. I was born in Croatia (where my parents were living at the time), but my republican citizenship was never recorded in Croatia’s territory. At the same time, in the Croatian birth register my nationality was marked as Serbian, albeit without any consultation with my parents. Finally, in 1996, when we were already living in Belgrade, my citizenship was registered in Serbia. My mother’s case was less complex, as she was both born and registered in Serbia. However, my father, who was born in Croatia (Zagreb), and like me not assigned any particular republican citizenship, registered himself as Serbian following the start of the war as we were settling in Belgrade. This was all in the normative realm, because in matters of perceptions, both of my parents were declared Yugoslavs to whom the republican citizenship (Serbian or Croatian) meant very little. While our situation had
somewhat of a happy ending, many others families were caught living in the “wrong” state when the war broke out. The case of my family marks a “discrepancy between the personal and the legal-procedural definitions of the genuine link with a community.”

I consider myself a part of the urban, educated class in Belgrade. My family spent many years in the streets protesting against Milošević’s regime. I have been in theatre since I was sixteen, and I have discovered it during a time of crisis in Belgrade when in 1999 we were bombed by the NATO alliance. To make a long story short, my first encounter with theatre was a workshop organized by the “Blue Theatre” (Plavo Pozorište), a fantastic alternative theatre group that operated from within one of Belgrade’s municipal theatres Bitef Teatar. School was out for the duration of the bombing, so the theatre was a real life saver for me and my parents. I firmly believe theatre provides an experience that no other art form can in extreme situations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Yugoslavia no longer exists, not even as a name, but in a kind of Rorschach test I still see the land of the South Slavs on every map of Europe.

-- Vesna Goldsworthy, 2005

This study is focused on theatre in and about war. It is about the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFR Yugoslavia), a country that has been erased from the map in the final decade of what Elinor Fuchs calls the pure apocalyptic twentieth century. And it is about three cities, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb – epicenters among the corridors of cultural exchange in SFR Yugoslavia. At the start of the 1990s these three urban centers became capital cities of three warring nations - Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, respectively. As life rapidly changed due to the conditions of war, so did notions of community and belonging inside the cities. How does one belong? Who can belong and who is excluded? What constitutes a community? How are these terms understood and mediated? As will be discussed later in this chapter, the answers to these questions were negotiated on a national level even prior to the start of the violent conflict. The media for the most part dutifully followed regime-driven rhetoric that divided the population along ethnic and territorial lines, constructing belonging and community in very simplistic, homogenizing terms. Populations in cities became divided as a result of repression – the most extreme case being Sarajevo, where inhabitants of entire neighborhoods were forcefully redistributed according to ethnicity. At the same time a more nuanced understanding of

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4 In further text SFR Yugoslavia will simply be called Yugoslavia.
belonging and community was being engendered, particularly among the urban educated middle class. Herein lies my interest in this study.

In Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, institutional theatres drew a large number of the urban educated population. While these cultural establishments were not spared in the turmoil of shifting ideals, they often found themselves in tension between the official government-proposed values and oppositional movements that were brewing in the cities during the war. However, unlike the media, institutional theatres found themselves in a marginalized position, which in theory allowed for more freedom. What also makes them interesting subjects for understanding community and belonging is that they form a part of the urban lifestyle where the texture of living and thinking during the war can be explored. In and around institutional theatre we can see the shared efforts to understand what belonging and community mean to the urban educated middle class in this period, and we can see the anxieties, resistance to homogenization, and the tendencies to fall under the influence of hegemonic political projects of belonging. A comparative analysis opens the possibility of a discussion about the intersections and (im)possibilities for building community and negotiating belonging in wartime institutional theatre in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade. For example, it reveals the shared need to respond to the war with humor, to generate new institutions that would serve war-ridden communities at the start of the conflict, and that in the later years of the conflict Belgrade and Zagreb theatre produced powerful works that offered nuanced interpretations of belonging and community. I find that in all three places institutional theatre grapples with notions of belonging and community using a variety of approaches. While there are many intersections, what emerges are anxieties about gender and ideology in Zagreb, preoccupation with notions of civil society in Belgrade, and the need for communion in wartime Sarajevo theatre. Furthermore, the findings
suggest that while in wartime, institutional theatre in Belgrade and Zagreb generated important discourse about belonging and community, cumbersome institutional systems, as well as internal and external politics that prevented institutional theatre from becoming a major part of the discourse. At the same time, the shattering of all structures in Sarajevo afforded theatre a more relevant place in the community, more freedom for experimentation, and a greater role in the peacemaking process.

While there have been attempts to analyze theatre during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, mostly from a single perspective, this is an attempt at a foundational comparative study of wartime institutional theatre that centers on Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo. Such a study is needed in order to understand the shared or not-so shared values that engender particular interpretations of community and belonging during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. It is necessary for dealing with trauma in the region, and for building communities that are not based on exclusion. My goal is to search for, and to isolate distinct approaches of negotiating belonging and community, to demonstrate the cohesion and complexities that characterize them, and to seek for cultural and political factors that might help explain certain tendencies. The chapters herein offer in-depth analyses of nine case studies – three from each city – prior to which the discussion centers on locating approaches to belonging and community, as well as the factors that fuel their development.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the conflict between Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians has been the subject of numerous studies in the fields of history, economy, and political science. Theatre, and culture more broadly remains vastly unexplored, especially in the Western hemisphere. Some excellent studies in English have come from cinema studies, such as those by
Dina Iordanova, Pavle Levi, and Daniel J. Goulding. Post-Yugoslav theatre, however, still has not received much attention. Smaller scale studies, research papers, books and articles about theatre life in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s do exist, however mostly in the Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian language and are virtually inaccessible to those who do not have the knowledge of the language. Furthermore, a comprehensive theatre history of this period and locale has not yet been written. In this dissertation I want to begin a conversation about theatre and performance on a macro level with the hope that it will garner more interest in the future. The future of the region depends on the understanding of connections between Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, in both the strengths and weaknesses of the bond, as well as in the similarities and dissimilarities between these urban cultural centers. For these reasons, in this dissertation I advocate for a comparative study of the region that I believe might reveal fresh perspectives. Because this dissertation centers on urban and largely educated middle class population, it also has the potential to expand the argument about the participation of intellectuals and the middle class in the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Wars of Yugoslav Succession.

For anyone interested in studying the Balkans or the former Yugoslavia from a socio-cultural perspective, this dissertation might be of interest. Therefore, I compose it with hope that it will be read by anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists, war scholars and those in other fields of the arts and humanities beyond theatre history and criticism. Although cultural institutions are at the center of inquiry, my interest in this dissertation is how theatre and performance affects individuals and local communities on the ground, which therefore chronicles

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5 Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media* (London, British Film Institute, 2000).
urban everyday life in war. Finally, this dissertation addresses an issue of global significance - the need to explore theatre as a site for public communication in war and crisis, as well as the role of theatre in a highly mediatized society. There is a questioning of the role of institutional theatre in contemporary society, a concern which has been articulated by Janelle Reinelt. In *Rethinking the Public Sphere for a Global Age*, Reinelt addresses this problem, while indirectly also advocating for comparative studies:

Theatre as an institution has a difficult time showing up within this level of discussion of mass transmission through television, and the role of theatre in the macro-dynamics of society is difficult to assess. Most distribution of performance is pretty local or, alternatively, is exclusively distributed through circuits that are definitely part of the civil society in so far as they are major state-supported arts institutions, international festivals or similar bourgeois institutions. On the other hand, when a particularly effective performance (let us imagine a devised performance by a community based group) makes a performance of critical importance to the local audience that views it, it most often falls below the radar of the official archive. It is not that it cannot be documented but that it will likely still escape wide attention, since it will be considered parochial. Yet what we need is a way of understanding the relationship of various forms of performance to the formation of counterpublics and their ultimate relations to the macrosphere of power and influence where governmentality controls populations or within global media distribution where certain images and characterizations prevail over others. This analysis is needed across the global/national divide.⁸

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This dissertation probes these global concerns in the context of war and across national divides. It investigates the potential of theatre to influence local communities, as well as the impact of theatre in the public sphere and in the macrosphere of political power.

To honor the reader who is not familiar with the region, I will first provide contextual information about Yugoslavia, the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, as well as the reasoning for selecting Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. I will highlight the centrality of the questions of belonging and community in this area, define relevant terms and literature, and discuss methodological considerations.

1.1. Introducing Yugoslavia: Belongings and Separations

“The East in the West and the West in the East” is how Vesna Goldsworthy, a British-based writer of Serbian descent, captures Yugoslavia’s complicated geopolitical position.9 Indeed, by those who came of age in the years after the Second World War, Yugoslavia is remembered both as a country with unique flair that stood out in comparison to other Communist regimes, as well as a country of paradoxes and limited freedoms. In his superb account of Belgrade underground culture in the 1990s, BBC correspondent Mathew Collin writes:

Yugoslavs felt they were never like them, those badly-dressed, ill-fed, wan-faced children of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany in their enforced time warp. Yugoslavs had money (although much of it was borrowed from the West), they could take holidays abroad . . . they watched the latest Western films and bought new rock records. Yes, their country was no paradise, but at the same time it was

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no prison . . . They viewed the other Eastern Bloc states as poor relations: sad, grey and dull.¹⁰

His coarsely worded description actually captures a distinctly urban attitude, and it would not be far from the truth to posit that most city dwellers felt a deep connection with the West. Some aspects of everyday existence enjoyed by average citizens of Yugoslavia made the country stand out in a positive light. For Dubravka Ugrešić, a Croatian writer and member of the postwar generation, those aspects included passports and open borders, which allowed free movement in and out of the country, a better living standard, free education, prospering tourism, numerous local and international cultural manifestations, a lively publishing industry, and a number of cultural centers including Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Ljubljana.¹¹

Despite a seemingly liberal environment, the following quotation from Goldsworthy reveals another side of the coin:

Banned in the Eastern Bloc proper, ‘dangerous’ books by dissident writers, together with Western totalitarian dystopias created by authors such as George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, or Anthony Burgess, were translated into Serbo-Croatian, made freely available in Yugoslav bookshops, and their ideas disseminated further by popular film adaptations. Since there were no age restrictions in Yugoslav cinemas, I was about twelve when I first saw Kubrick’s Clockwork Orange. Cultural products which attacked communism were fine. It was Yugoslavia’s own variant, and of course Tito, which was protected. Paradoxically, while the easy availability of such potentially

subversive works testified loud and clear that Yugoslavia was a different and freer place, those who bothered to read or see them also realized that it might not be entirely different, nor entirely free.\textsuperscript{12} Although subjective in nature, Goldsworthy’s childhood memories of growing up in Yugoslavia betrayed anxieties at the intersection of culture, freedom, and belonging: Yugoslavia’s borders were not entirely penetrable, nor was the system entirely liberal. Sociologist Mladen Lazić frames it as a system of economic, political, and value safety valves that kept the population of the country in check and reduced discontent. Notably, these included the influx of credits from the West, which “enabled household consumption well beyond the country’s production potential,” open borders that “made it possible to ‘cushion’ the economic crisis by simply exporting the unemployed,” a number of employee rights established by the ideology of self-management, such as job security and some increase in wages, and a “sufficient latitude for critical opinion” that was permitted in the intellectual community.\textsuperscript{13}

At the time of its breakup in 1991, SFR Yugoslavia (see figure 1.) consisted of six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo, which later broke off from Serbia and is now an independent state, and Vojvodina, which is still a part of Serbia). Geographically, it was positioned between Italy to the west (today bordering Croatia and Slovenia), Austria and Hungary to the north (today bordering Slovenia, Croatia and Vojvodina), Romania and Bulgaria to the east (nowadays bordering Serbia), Greece and Albania to the south (currently bordering Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia) and the Adriatic sea to the southwest (today bordering

\textsuperscript{12} Goldsworthy, “Yugoslavia A Defeated Argument?,” 40.
\textsuperscript{13} Mladen Lazić, “Introduction: The Emergence of a Democratic Order in Serbia,” \textit{Protest in Belgrade}, ed. Mladen Lazić (Budapest: Central European University, 1999), 5.
Montenegro, Croatia, and a small part of Slovenia). Despite economic and political issues in the 1980s, Yugoslavia was still seen by most eastern Europeans as a place of “relative prosperity” and as a “landscape of multicultural pluralism and contrasts.” In 1989, when the entire Eastern bloc started experiencing radical changes, Yugoslavia was expected to be on the forefront of the transition to a market economy and to the West. As history would have it, events took a sharp turn for the worse.

This dissertation is limited chronologically to the first five years of the 1990s, and it centers on the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. These conflicts are a part of the Wars of Yugoslav

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Succession, a term that refers to the set of conflicts of various durations that took place at multiple locations in Yugoslavia during the final decade of the twentieth century. It is possible to discern the Ten Day War in Slovenia (1991), the War in Croatia (also known in Croatia as the Homeland War or the War of Independence, 1991-1995), the War in Bosnia (1992-1995), and the Kosovo-Serbia conflict (1998-1999, including the NATO bombing of Serbia). For the purpose of this dissertation, I will provide brief descriptions of the Wars in Croatia and Bosnia. The War in Croatia started in the spring of 1991 as a conflict between Serbs and Croats, and it lasted until January 2, 1992 when Serbian president and Slobodan Milošević and Croatian president Franjo Tudjman negotiated a cease-fire. The full-blown conflict lasted over six months and left approximately 20,000 dead, resulted in more than 200,000 refugees, and displaced more than 350,000. This conflict spilled over into the War in Bosnia, which lasted from April 1992 to November 1995. The War in Bosnia was fought between Serbs (religiously Orthodox), Bosniaks (Muslim) and Croats (Catholic); it resulted in a devastating 200,000 deaths, displacing 40-60% of a total prewar population of 4.4 million, with over 1 million people forced out of the republic.

Over the last twenty years, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the ensuing violent conflicts have been explained from a number of different perspectives. Some of the more prominent explanations ascribe it to ancient hatreds, ethnic strife, Serbian aggression, or according to the notion of the Balkans as a “powder keg” that explodes every so often. Naturally, the underlying truth is much more complicated, involving domestic and international politics, as well as economic and geopolitical issues. Susan Woodward, one of the leading authorities on the

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topic, has argued that to explain the conflict as ethnic animosity is to start the story from the wrong end. According to Woodward, the real origin of the conflict can be traced through mutually influenced domestic and international processes that occurred over a longer period of time, and which were all a part of the larger process of transforming socialist Yugoslavia into a market economy and democracy.\textsuperscript{17} Key international factors contributed to the destabilization of Yugoslavia, including the renegotiation of Yugoslavia’s foreign policy and foreign debt following the end of the Cold War. As Woodward explains, “the process that brought the Cold War to an end challenged and undermined that strategic significance, the role of the Yugoslav army, and the country’s alternative markets in the East and in the third world without providing any new bases for security and domestic political and economic viability.”\textsuperscript{18} All this resulted in the intensifying of economic decline and political uncertainty, particularly between 1979 and 1989. As the crisis intensified, domestic government leaders clashed in their attempt to hold on to, and even to expand their political jurisdiction and economic resources within their territories.\textsuperscript{19} Woodward asserts that such instability was a precondition for the creation of new communities based on ethnic ties:

A sense of community under these circumstances is highly prized, but not because of the historical persistence and power of ethnic identities and cultural attachments, as the ethnic conflict school insists, but because the bases of existing communities have collapsed and governments are radically narrowing what they will or can provide in terms of previously guaranteed rights to subsistence, land, public employment and even citizenship.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Woodward, \textit{Balkan Tragedy}, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Woodward, \textit{Balkan Tragedy}, 16.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Woodward, \textit{Balkan Tragedy}, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Woodward, \textit{Balkan Tragedy}, 17.
\end{itemize}
Political opportunism must be added to this equation, as it is well known that politicians of numerous caliber and stature seized the opportunity for personal gain, often resorting to emotional manipulation via demagogic-nationalistic rhetoric. As neighborly mistrust grew, many succumbed to hateful acts, abetting politicians on all sides to drive the country into full-scale war in which the media, as well as the international community, played no small part.

While I agree with Woodward that ethnic hatreds were not the primary cause of the war, the ethnic question in Yugoslavia is not something to be disregarded. Contrary to some beliefs, there was never a time when the territories of Yugoslavia were free from grappling with the national question. More so it was a matter of the intensity and the nature of control over this issue. As Yugoslavia emerged after the Second World War, the ethnic question that later so violently erupted during the wars of Yugoslav succession was carefully negotiated by the Communist elite. Lenard J. Cohen has classified the regime’s ethnic strategies into several categories. Each of the changes in the treatment of the national issue, Cohen notes, were always followed by a change in the inner dynamics of the Party, as it moved away from higher integration towards a less centralized form. For example, in the period immediately following the Second World War, Partisan Yugoslavism enabled the party to promote the idea of a rapid production “all-Yugoslav” consciousness that would surpass any interethnic conflict while relying on post-war enthusiasm. In the early 1950s, the break with Stalin gave way to a more liberal socialism that brought about more changes. However, Cohen asserts, it is not until the 1960s that the strategy of managing ethnic diversity shifted to a greater extent.  

This coincided with the emergence of pluralist socialism that allotted more authority to regional politics, whereby “the regime no longer treated intergroup conflicts as a taboo theme that needed to be

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suppressed or administratively resolved outside public view.”²² This was followed in 1971 by the Croatian Spring, a movement that demanded more rights for Croatia on a national level, which provoked the regime to use drastic measures to suppress nationalism. However, the Yugoslavia Constitution of 1974 redefined and further decentralized authority, permitting to all Yugoslav republics a sort of “theoretical statehood,” which also granted the right to expressing “ethnoregional interests.”²³ Finally, in 1980 upon the death of Tito, a deep economic crisis gripped the region with serious consequences that heavily contributed lead to the demise of Yugoslavia. In terms of the ethnic question, Cohen accurately notes that the new set of politicians abused their power by “directly appealing to the parochial ethic and regional concerns of their local communities.”²⁴ Nowhere was this more apparent than in Serbia during the 1980s, a time in which the future president of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, was climbing up the political ladder.

Alongside the ethno-regional question, which placed a hurdle in Yugoslavia’s path to successful transition, a parallel strand of national identification based on supranational or Yugoslav belonging was concurrently developing. That which the nationalistic regimes of the 1990s tried to erase, is preserved in the works of prominent Yugoslav writers such as Slavenka Drakulić, a renowned feminist and writer from Croatia:

I have to admit that for me, as for many of my friends born after World War II, being Croat had no special meaning. Not only was I educated to believe that the whole territory of ex-Yugoslavia was my homeland, but because we could travel freely abroad (while people of the Eastern-bloc countries couldn’t), I almost believed that borders, as

²² Cohen, Broken Bonds, 29.
²³ Cohen, Broken Bonds, 33.
²⁴ Cohen, Broken Bonds, 50
well as nationalities existed only in people’s heads. Moreover, the youth culture of 1968 brought us even closer to the world through rock music, demonstrations, movies, books and the English language. We had so much in common with the West that in fact we mentally belonged there.\textsuperscript{25}

Drakulić, along with at least 5.4% of Yugoslavia’s population in 1981, defined herself as a Yugoslav, rather than according to her ethnicity.\textsuperscript{26} Yugoslavism was also more prominent in the cities than in the countryside, which constituted the majority of Yugoslav territory. Also, to a certain extent, interethnic marriages brought to life children who, in turn, saw themselves as belonging to the entire country, rather than to a particular republic. What Drakulić’s recollection ultimately pinpoints is that in prewar Yugoslavia, ethnicity was not a dominant topic in everyday life. People went about their business, worked in all parts of the country, and throughout most everyone knew at least one family member or friend who had a summer house on the Croatian Adriatic coast. The space was not only physically shared, but also culturally. And many would agree with Dubravka Ugrešić that Yugoslavia was a shared cultural space in which various cultural and linguistic traditions blended and communicated with one another.\textsuperscript{27} What can be concluded with certainty is that various strands of Yugoslavism existed concurrently with a variety of particularisms since the founding of the country in 1943. This is why belonging and community in Yugoslavia, and subsequently in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, should not be interpreted as a fixed value. During the Wars of Yugoslav succession these particularisms manifested themselves in local nationalisms that were used as the basis for waging war between Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. The images evoked by Goldsworthy, Ugrešić and Drakulić point to

\textsuperscript{25} Slavenka Drakulić, \textit{The Balkan Express: Fragments from, the Other Side} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 50.
\textsuperscript{26} Cohen, \textit{Broken Bonds}, 49.
\textsuperscript{27} Dubravka Ugrešić, \textit{The Culture of Lies} (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 38.
the increased need to think in terms of belonging and community on a personal and national level during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, and throughout the rest of the 1990s.

**Why Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb?**

In its golden years, Yugoslavia took pride in having multiple urban cultural hubs, three of which are the topic of this study. Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb form a triangle on the map, the distance between Belgrade and Zagreb is just shy of 250 miles, with the distance between Sarajevo and Belgrade under 200 miles. Physically speaking, Belgrade and Zagreb were connected by the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity, which ran close to the Bosnian border such that one could easily join another road to reach Sarajevo. Up until the start of the War in 1991, this road connected all of Yugoslavia – from Macedonia in the south, through Serbia, Croatia, and finally Slovenia. Additionally, as Misha Glenny emphasizes, this road was the “main trunk route for traffic travelling from north to south Europe and on to the middle east,” linking together tourists and economies. When the war erupted, these cities became the capitals of the three warring factions, Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia.

It has been argued that the destruction of urban centers was an integral element of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia while sociologists and anthropologists have pondered the connection between the war and the city. For example, Sreten Vujović asserts that from the very beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, negative stereotypes about the city were incorporated in the arsenal of war propaganda, where “on suitable occasions, the warlords and their apologists among national ideologists publicly announced through the media their views on the malignancy and depravity of the city, on the unnaturalness of interethnic coexistence, on the rotten cosmopolitanism of the

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During the course of the war these stereotypes feed the violence and urban destruction “ranging from the renaming of towns, ethnic cleansing, pillaging, blockades and civilian casualties, to urbicide and necropolises.” In fact, the international community has come to know Yugoslavian cities via their destruction: Sarajevo, Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Mostar. In fact, it has been argued that the destruction of urban centers was one of the methods that was consciously applied in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. Cities have become iconic images of suffering to such an extent that performance studies scholar Silvija Jestrović, whose work this dissertation builds upon, was prompted to explain the conflict as “war against cities” in her work.

Anthropologist Ivan Čolović has established the relationship between ethno-nationalist myths that fed the war ideology and a hostile attitude towards cities. In these myths, “towns are accused of betrayals of nature, deformation and artificiality: the coexistence of culture, religions and races, comfort, democracy, cosmopolitanism, pacifism.” According to these myths, which Čolović calls “political naturalism,” cities should be subject to divine punishment because of the “unhealthy” and overly tolerant environments. However, it is not merely the cities that become subjects of this “mythical political naturalism,” but as it can be seen in the passage below, the mechanism applies to the entire Yugoslav construct:

This mythic political naturalism also offered an image of Yugoslavia as an unnatural construction. Unnatural marriages and towns are not only the result of centuries spent

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33 Čolović, Politics of Identity in Serbia, 25.
under foreign rule, but even more, the fateful consequence of the existence of that artificial state creation, that disgusting cocktail of peoples, faiths, languages and scripts. The downfall of Yugoslavia, like the destruction of some of its cities, was simply the fulfillment of the destiny of anti-natural human communities. “To its peoples, gathered around their elites,” writes Olivera Milosavljević, “skillfully antagonized towards one another by a constructed hatred and always ‘righteous anger,’ Yugoslavia was presented as an environment that held them linked in an unnatural communality which was dangerous for each of them.”

On a cultural level, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb were connected by more than just a common language; they were principal centers of cultural exchange in Yugoslavia that allowed for a free flow and collaboration between all comprising nations of the federal republic. This was exceedingly important for the performing arts: co-productions were commonplace, actors travelled easily between all Yugoslavian theatres, and an abundance of festivals and competitions existed where artists could showcase and measure their achievements. Furthermore, as a result of varying censorship standards, a work of art that was banned in one part of the country could easily be transferred to another. For example, a production that was prohibited in Belgrade could pass, and even win a prize in Zagreb, or if a writer had to become a dissident in Zagreb, he would have his books published in Belgrade or Ljubljana.

Cities were headquarters of common Yugoslav culture, a supranational layer of culture, which emerged over seven decades of the country’s existence. According to Zoran Milutinović,

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34 Čolović, Politics of Identity in Serbia, 26.
36 Ugrešić, Culture of Lies, 37.
Slavic culture and literary scholar, it was theatre that “most easily lent itself to commonality, second only to popular culture.”°37 In the realm of performing arts, an often cited example was a theatre company called KPGT (an acronym for Kazalište, Pozorište, Gledališče, Teatar, four words that each mean “theatre” in the different dialects and languages of Yugoslavia), a theatre group that aimed to unify artists from all of Yugoslavia.°38 KPGT brought together professional theatre makers of all ethnic backgrounds to create theatre in communities across the entire country. And, as Naum Panovski pointed out, “in so doing, they expressed Yugoslavia's rich and diverse ethnic community, and focused on the enormous possibilities for intercultural integration in the region as a microcosm of United Europe.”°39 Another great example of common Yugoslav culture can be found in the literary circles. Such was the Praxis school, a philosophy group founded in Belgrade and Zagreb, which brought together intellectuals from Yugoslavia and beyond.

The deep significance of the connections between the Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb is perhaps best reflected in what was lost when the wars erupted. The communication between cities and regions that was so commonplace in Yugoslavia was extinguished, or at least halted for a number of years. Many long standing theatre connections suffered. What was once a repertoire of Yugoslav proportions, meaning that the works of playwrights of each nationality were regularly produced in all theatres around the country, now became a curiosity. Actors and directors used to working throughout the country now became confined to the small spaces of their ethnic territory. A good example is the case of Sterijino Pozorje, a prestigious theatre

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38 Ironically, the director of this group Ljubiša Ristić later became associated with Milosevic and nationalistic politics.
festival held annually in Serbia’s town of Novi Sad, where each year theatres from all over Yugoslavia would be invited to perform and compete. It was previously a festival of Yugoslav drama, but with Yugoslavia now gone the festival struggled to find its sense of purpose.

Perhaps the most iconic image of this loss is found in the example of Croatian actress Mira Furlan, who was a member of the Croatian National Theatre, but also worked extensively in Belgrade. In 1991, a point at which most communication networks were halted, Furlan was performing in a production of *Illusion Comique* in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade. Her engagement provoked the Croatian media to publically shame her and name her a national traitor, but the death threats that followed eventually drove her to emigrate out of Yugoslavia with her husband. Disturbed and deeply affected by what had happened, Furlan wrote a letter that was published in the Zagreb daily *Danas*: “To perform in this moment is to defend our common profession, which cannot and must not come under the service of any political or national idea, which cannot and must not be limited by any political or national borders, because this is against the nature of our profession, which must in the worst of the moments build bridges and connections.”40 From the start of the conflict, Furlan’s case was not an isolated incident, and with the swelling of the war many were left with two choices: to take sides or to emigrate.

In a related fashion, Sarajevo-born-Belgrade-based theatre director Gorčin Stojanović reflects on his first visit to Belgrade as a youth:

It was a time when I felt very free also in Zagreb and Ljubljana too. I travelled as a kid to Ljubljana because they had punk, which Belgrade didn’t have… West Yugoslavia was the place of our pilgrimage. Then I didn’t feel as if Sarajevo was my city… I would always come to Belgrade… But I was more nostalgic when I couldn’t go to

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40 Drakulić, *Balkan Express*, 81.
Zagreb, or Rijeka or Pula, than Belgrade which at that point I didn’t consider as the capital. For me Belgrade was one of the four or five cities that I liked in Yugoslavia. The sentiment that Stojanović expresses was built and cultivated by the post-WWII generations of city youth who were coming of age in the 1960s and 70s in Yugoslavia – surrounded by Western influence, popular culture, music and subcultures. In the 1990s, a Belgrade based DJ stated in an interview: “Ljubljana was a part of my life. Dubrovnik was a part of my life. Sarajevo was a part of my life. What do I have in common with someone in rural Serbia? I have much more in common with someone in Zagreb who has similar interests and with whom I share the same culture.” As an aside, a similar sentiment was registered during the war in Bosnia in which the aggressors were framed as rural and primitive, and unlike city folk. Both of these statements point to a distinctly urban connection between cities of Yugoslavia that was grounded in shared cultural experiences and performative connections. In her analysis of Belgrade multiculturalism, Silvija Jestrović frames the outsider in the city as the “provincial, rural type, who does not understand urban sensibility and metropolitan living – who does not know how to perform (in) the city.” Her argument strongly relates to the ideas of belonging and community in the city: “the outsider is sometimes willing to learn the codes, to adjust, even to blend in, but there will always be something in the way this individual performs the social scenarios of the city that will give him or her away. He or she can never fully belong.” Jestrović therefore illuminates a different kind of insider-outsider dynamic in the city that is based on the

41 Dragan S.V. Babić, Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozoriste Samim Sobom (Beograd: Službeni Glasnik, 2009), 127.  
42 Mathew Collin, This is Serbia Calling. Rock ‘n’ Roll Radio and Belgrade’s Underground Resistance, trans. Oto Oltvanji (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2001), 59.  
44 Jestrović, “Performing Belgrade: Itineraries of Belonging,” need page online version does not provide pg. numbers
performance of class, rather than ethnicity or religion found at the core of nationalistic ideologies during the war.

The concept of theatre as a part of a broader performance culture that connects Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb figures strongly among the urban educated class who come to see themselves perform. I agree with Jen Harvie who argues that theatre is:

…in some ways symptomatic of urban process, demonstrating the structures, social power dynamics, politics and economies also at work more broadly throughout the city. Theatre actually does more than demonstrate urban process, therefore: theatre is a part of urban process, producing urban experience and thereby producing the city itself. In some ways, how theatre does this is implicit and everyday: city people work in, make and go to the theatre; it is their urban experience… Indeed, we might see theatre and performance as exceptional cultural practices through which to understand urban experience because of their long-standing literal centrality to urban life, their longevity as a set of urban cultural and labour practices, and the specific ways they both bring people together in live, shared encounters and offer people opportunities performatively to influence urban life.45

Theatre is a constitutive element of cultural imaginaries through which codes of belonging to the city and in the city have been inscribed in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb, as well as a site of connection and exchange of urban experiences between them. The subjects of this dissertation are those who participate in the making and consumption of theatre in these three places, including administrative and artistic decision makers and theatre artists, as well as the audiences and reviewers. In terms of social stratification, the vast majority of those who surround these

establishments are urban-educated middle class citizens. The middle class is, in itself, an interesting topic for the study of this period because of its twofold role in the Yugoslav crisis – both as opposition to and apologists for the totalitarian regimes in Serbia and Croatia. As Mieczysław Boduszyński argues, “radical populist regimes in Belgrade and Zagreb would not have come to power where it not for a temporary alliance uniting nationalist intellectuals, disaffected middle classes, and communist opportunists who later brought semirural workers into this improbable coalition and adopted various extreme ideologies to replace the now-defunct Titoism.”

During the 1990s, the living standard of the middle class across the region largely deteriorated. In places that were not inside the warzones, such as Belgrade and Zagreb, sociologist Sreten Vujović argues that we can speak of “mass pauperization.” In all important centers of former Yugoslavia, including Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Skopje, Podgorica, and Pristina, a large number of intellectuals more or less actively participated in the process of homogenization of their respective nations. However, another trend among the educated citizens existed in parallel to this one. In Belgrade, for example, it was known as “another Belgrade,” one that was antiwar, pacifist, and cosmopolitan.

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1.2. Definition of Terms and Theoretical Considerations

Belonging and Community

The terms community and belonging became increasingly important during Yugoslavia’s violent disintegration, not only with respect to the political practices of the war governments, but also in matters of social relations and identity politics. One of the principal factors that contributed to the growing importance of these notions, as well as to the transformations in perceptions of belonging and community, was the forced restructuring of citizenship during the war. Prior to the start of the conflict, Yugoslavia was a multinational federal state in which citizenship consisted of two layers, the federal (SFR Yugoslavia) and the republican (Serbia, Croatia, etc.). Since the Second World War, each of the republics had an individual citizenship regime in which citizens would be registered upon birth, as well as distinct civic registers and laws on citizenship. Igor Štiks defines citizenship in socialist Yugoslavia as a complex system comprised of titular nations (single dominant ethnic group within a territory), nationalities, and minorities. The republican citizenship automatically meant federal, however as Jelena Vasiljević argues, the relationship between the two tiers was never quite clear, nor did the republican citizenship contain much meaning since everyone had equal rights. Expanding on this she states, “the lack of any concrete meaning and purpose for republican citizenship resulted in many Yugoslavs migrating from one republic to another, without changing their republican citizenship: they were neither required to, nor they had any practical reasons to do it (not to mention that they were often oblivious of it).” Vasiljević finds that the different levels

51 Igor Štiks, Jo Shaw eds., Citizenship After Yugoslavia, 2.
of imaginaries, emotional or official, do not always intersect, which leads to her conclusion that “belonging is always (like citizenship) both a personal, individual experience and a socially or politically regulated status approved or denied.” While this dissertation is not about citizenship from a legislative perspective, Vasiljević’s concern with how belonging actually plays out in people’s lives is presently a major focus. In the forthcoming pages I will address the terms belonging and community and subsequently explain how evaluating institutional theatre during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia might provide insight into the practices of constructing and negotiating these very notions in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo.

According to gender, sexuality and ethnic studies scholar Nira Yuval-Davis, belonging is understood in relation to various objects of attachment, which “vary from a particular person to the whole humanity, in a concrete or abstract way, by self or other identification, in a stable, contested or transient way.” Furthermore, “belonging is about an emotional (or even ontological) attachment, about feeling ‘at home,’” and only when it somehow becomes endangered, this routine aspect of our daily existence becomes “articulated, formally structured, and politicized.” At this point, she argues, the politics of belonging comes into play, which “comprise specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to particular collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific ways and in very specific boundaries.” Davis’ two categories for analyzing belonging are particularly useful for further discussion – belonging as a social and economic location and as an identification and emotional attachment. Belonging in relation to a particular nation, race, sex, or class relates to

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56 Yuval-Davis, The Politics of Belonging, 10.
57 Yuval-Davis, The Politics of Belonging, 10.

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one’s social and economic loci, where in any given historical moment social and economic factors “would tend to carry with them particular weights in the grids of power relations operating in their society.”  

The corresponding method of contextualizing the idea of belonging is through the lens of identity and emotional attachment, which having to do with individual traits, “often relate, directly or indirectly, to the self and/or others’ perceptions of what being a member of such a grouping or collectivity might mean.”

One of the principal strategies of the politics that fueled the wars of Yugoslav succession was grounded in the manipulation of ethnic, gendered, and territorial belonging. In Serbia, Croatia, as well as in Bosnia, nationalism was the dominant political project of belonging, which determined who belonged, and how one was to belong. Under constraints of nationalism, the inherent qualities of belonging, which Yuval-Davis characterized as a dynamic and multi-layered process, attempted to be made fixed and immobile. Those who attempted to push against these notions were often subjected to condemnation by official media, and even violently attacked. Under such circumstances, the place of cultural institutions, particularly those under the auspices of the government, can often be precarious and very complicated.

For the nationalistic projections of belonging, especially in Serbia and Croatia, the notion of community, which was on a much larger scale than that of a family or a neighborhood, was particularly important. Two phrases that were most frequently heard at political rallies, Greater Serbia and A Thousand Year Old Dream in Croatia, depended on principles in which the nation, defined according to ethnic affiliation, was imagined as the primary community of belonging. These systems demanded that any nuanced, multi-layered definition of community and belonging, as outlined by Yuval-Davis, should be interpreted as opposition. Within the Yugoslav

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scholarly community, there was an awareness of the danger such thinking might beget even before the start of the war. For example, in 1989, Croatian historian Ivo Banac invited Benedict Anderson to a conference in Dubrovnik on the subject of Balkan and Eastern European nationalism. There he met sociologist Silva Mežnarić, who would go on to facilitate the Serbian translation of Anderson’s seminal work *Imagined Communities*, for which she also wrote the introduction. Mežnarić was hopeful that a translation of his book would somehow help in the fight of burgeoning nationalisms among former Yugoslav nations, especially in Serbia and Croatia.60 For Anderson, the term *community*, that is the fraternity it symbolizes, is the most important part of his concept of the nation as an imagined political community:

imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion… It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.61

Anderson’s theory has been helpful to scholars who worked endeavored to understand the mechanisms of nationalism in Serbia and Croatia, particularly from a cultural aspect. Ivan Ćolović, who is known for work on Serbian politics from an ethno-anthropological perspective, has related Anderson’s terms with Yugoslav nationalism by interpreting performative aspects of this ideology. In his work Ćolović highlights storytelling as the main tool for the discussion of the war, nation, and politics in the early 1990s. Stories are useful, according to Ćolović “at a time when there is a need to reconstruct and strengthen, as speedily as possible, the image of the

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nation as an imagined community and to re-establish control over the symbols of political power. Although theatre, as the shrine of storytelling, is a place where such stories could easily be reproduced, the majority of the reconstruction of the nation that Čolović describes took place in the media and at political rallies. And while theatres did not always succumb to nationalistic narratives (some less than others), they did have to exist among a vast array of ethno-nationalistic myths, and had to compete with and function within such discursive practices.

Raymond Williams defines the meaning of community from the 14th century onward, using a variety of sources to trace the history of the word. He finds four different interpretations of the term: 1) community as a social group (such as common people, unlike those of rank), 2) community as an organized society (relatively small in size, like the people of a district), 3) community as a relationship quality (such as a community of interests, the quality of holding something in common, and 4) community in a sense of common identity and characteristics. He finds a distinct shift in the 17th century towards interpreting community as an entity more immediate than society, an idea that feasibly still applies today. This concept is further probed in 1887 by German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies in his influential work Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, in which he elaborates on the notions of community and society. Tonnies uses the following words to describe Community (Gemeinschaft): positive, real organic life, familiar, comfortable, exclusive, a living organism in its own right. This stands in contrast to his explanation of Society (Gesellschaft) as mechanical construction, public sphere, foreign land, mechanical aggregate and artifact. Tonnies ascribes community to rural, peasant society, while society is the creation of modern, cosmopolitan worlds. For Raymond Williams, however, this

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63 Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Routledge, 2011), 65.
contrast between “more total and therefore more significant relationships of community and the more formal, more abstract and more instrumental relationships of state, or of society in its modern sense” signals concern.\(^\text{65}\) He therefore cautions against referring to community as “the warmly persuasive word,” which “unlike all other terms of social organization, such as state, nation, society, it seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term.”\(^\text{66}\)

Gerard Delanty holds the idea of community to be both useful and contemporary. He relates the term to “the search for belonging in the insecure conditions of modern society,” due to major transformations such as those relating to cosmopolitanism, globalization, postmodernism and migration which have “produced a worldwide search for roots, identity and aspirations for belonging.”\(^\text{67}\) Delanty notes a shift in recent times away from interpretations of social interaction based on locality and towards the concern with meaning and identity.\(^\text{68}\) In other words, community has come to be understood as a symbolic structure. Such usage pertains, for example, to Benedict Anderson, who in his study of nationalism interprets community as “shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures that are not underpinned by lived spaces and immediate forms of social intimacy.”\(^\text{69}\) However, Delanty argues that different uses of the term reveal that the term community does in fact designate both an idea about belonging and a particular social phenomenon, such as expressions of longing for community, the search for meaning and solidarity, recognition and collective identities. Community has a transcendent nature and

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\(^{65}\) Williams, *Keywords*, 66.

\(^{66}\) Williams, *Keywords*, 66.

\(^{67}\) Gerard Delanty, *Community* (New York: Routledge, 2009), x.

\(^{68}\) Delanty, *Community*, xi.

\(^{69}\) Delanty, *Community*, xi.
cannot simply be equated with particular groups or a place. Nor it can be reduced to an idea, for ideas do not simply exist outside social relations, socially structured discourses or a historical milieu. To invoke the notion of community is recognize it is an ideal and it is also real; it is both an experience and an interpretation. There is an unavoidable normative dimension to the claim to community.\textsuperscript{70}

Delanty’s notion of community both as an idea about belonging (symbolic) and as a social construct based on locality (normative) is useful for this dissertation and will be used to examine community in relation to institutional theatres during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

How can studying institutional theatre provide insight into the practices of negotiating community and belonging in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia? An examination of community and belonging in this context reveals a struggle in and around institutional theatres to understand and (re)define these notions during the war, which is reflective of a broader struggle in wartime Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. Unlike the national theatres, which were predominantly controlled by the government, or in the least, were guided by values set by governing powers (as was the case in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb or the National Theatre in Belgrade), the position of municipal playhouses and other forms of institutional theatre were much more ambiguous during the war. Besides the lack of strong government control, some components that allowed for more freedom include marginalized status in the eyes of the government, obscure censorship guidelines, strong management and artistic vision, and individual initiatives. This resulted in opportunities within institutional theatres to nurture a polyvocal environment. That is, while the official narratives presented a

\textsuperscript{70} Delanty, \textit{Community}, xi.
closed and inflexible system in which community and belonging ought to be defined, and thereby produced imagery that aimed to negate past renderings of these notions (e.g. any associations with Yugoslavia as a common space), municipal theatres and some alternate institutional forms (such as those discussed in Chapter 3) were able to carve out space for negotiating alternative notions of community and belonging.

**Theatre and War**

The most frequently debated topic in critical studies regarding theatre and war centers around the role of theatre in times of crisis. “What kind of theatre can be made during the cruelest of human enterprises?” inquires Erika Munk, editor of *Theatre* at the time, in her introductory essay for a special issue on war. Her own visits to Sarajevo and Belgrade prompted interest in this topic. In 1994, she was interviewed for the local newspaper stating, “in all borderline situations,” war being the most extreme borderline situation, “theatre returns to its archetype, it becomes a place where people gather to achieve moral and intellectual unity – the ideal of civil society.”71 The crisis in Yugoslavia prompted another scholar, a Serbian exile, Dragan Klaić to pose a similar question: “In the situation of the acute crisis of a society, where there is a major turmoil, natural disaster, economic collapse, epidemics, civil unrest and war – can theatre claim a special role, can it do something very valuable for the society?”72 Klaić believes “there is in theatre an inherent difficulty to shape an immediate adequate response to a social crisis.”73 In the future theatre will be able to respond to the Yugoslav crisis, he argues, but that would require more distance from the conflict. Klaić’s response hails from his own

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disappointment with the theatre during the armed conflict in Yugoslavia, claiming “(it) slid into a vulgar chauvinist cabaret or sought refuge in an artistry that was as much as possible detached from any social reality.”\textsuperscript{74} These disparate views are synthesized by social theatre expert James Thompson and theatre anthropologist Richard Schechner, who uphold that “in times of crisis both rituals and entertainments are important ways of coping with what’s happened and getting away from the daily grind. If remembering is crucial to testimony, accusation, trauma management, and healing, forgetting is necessary for the resumption of everyday life and for long-term social health.”\textsuperscript{75}

In \textit{Digging up Stories: Applied Theatre, Performance and War}, James Thompson has argued against other ideas that place theatre in zones of conflict in binary constructs. For instance, he renders useless the division between “engaged political theatre and escapist aesthetics or the idea of ‘art for arts sake,’” or “Brecht’s theatre for pleasure or theatre for instruction,” and Schechner’s “entertainment and efficacy.”\textsuperscript{76} Continuing this discussion in \textit{Performance in Place of War}, Jenny Hughes, Michael Balfour, and James Thompson assert that it is also not beneficial to think of theatre in war zones in terms of anti-war or pro-war categories, but to understand that it deeply means to acknowledge the complexity in which they exist. Hughes, Thompson, and Balfour practice and study applied theatre in the “epicenters”\textsuperscript{77} of violence, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. They argue for a complex overlapping between elements of war and performance in which culture is “an integrated part of the matrix rather than

\textsuperscript{74} Klaić, “The Crisis of Theatre?” 146.
\textsuperscript{76} Thompson and Schechner, “Why ‘Social Theatre’?,” 28.
\textsuperscript{77} James Thompson, Jenny Hughes and Michael Balfour, \textit{Performance in Place of War} (New York: Seagull, 2009), 14.
a simple reflection or response to war.” 78 The relationship between war and theatre, they contend, “cannot be reduced to a vertical analysis that places cultural acts at the apex with violence at a supposed base,” 79 rather these works “seek in their own terms to counter, resist or cope with war while acknowledging the systems in which they are embedded.” 80 In this dissertation I contend that theatre development during the war in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb must be seen in the same light. Case studies from Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb in this dissertation provide insight into theatre’s potential for creating what Munk calls “civil society” in a place where all societal norms have been shattered, but also point to the limitations of making theatre in war that Klaić has observed. These examples also show that performance during the war was at once a commodity, as well as an intellectual exercise and a bare necessity. In fact, what most cases in this dissertation show is that the lines are blurred, thus to make clear distinctions is not possible or useful.

The work of theatre scholars, critics and practitioners writing about the war from within the walls of Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb, as well as that of former Yugoslavian Western-based scholars, is crucial for this dissertation: the works of Belgrade authors such as Aleksandra Jovićević, Ivan Medenica, Ksenija Radulović, Dubravka Knežević, Silvija Jestrović and Branislav Jakovljević; the works of Croatian scholars including Darko Lukić, Jasen Boko, Dubravka Vrgoč, Boris Senker, Ana Lederer, and Sanja Nikčević; the works of Bosnian authors Davor Diklić, Gradimir Gojer, Ljubica Ostojić and Dževad Karahasan – all are at once testimonies and critical analyses, and are invaluable resources for analysis of theatre in the former Yugoslavia. In general terms, we can divide the works of these scholars into those that

78 Thompson, Hughes and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 12.
79 Thompson, Hughes and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 8.
80 Thompson, Hughes and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 14.
are concerned with the influence of the war on theatre, and those who are interested in exploring the impact of theatre on war.

A number of these scholars have been concerned with the involvement and responsibility of Yugoslavian theatres in the processes of disintegration and the subsequent wars. These are mostly small studies that focus on a singular topic. Naum Panovski is concerned with the process of ethnic nationalism that he finds seeping into theatre during the 1980s, but also acknowledges the existence of a resistance to both national and party ideologies within the walls of Yugoslav theatre.81 Further, Ksenija Radulović has written about the negative impact of Serbian nationalistic plays from the 1980s on shaping the theatre scene in Belgrade.82 The issue of escapist repertoires has been addressed by Aleksandra Jovićević, who criticized Belgrade professional theatres for being out of touch with the social reality during the war.83 In Croatia, Sanja Nikčević compiled the Anthology of Croatian War Drama (1991-1995), which focuses on plays that can be associated with the conflict between Croatia and Serbia, disregarding any plays that address the Bosnian issue. With a focus on trauma, Darko Lukić explores Croatian war drama in a comparative analysis with Vietnam era plays. While this work is a literary analysis that focuses mostly on Croatian plays that were written after the peace agreement in 1995, Lukić’s book offers useful insight into the relationship between the war and theatre in Croatia during the 1990s. Moving away from the narrow focal point of war drama, Croatian authors have also explored the emergence of New Croatian Drama in the 1990s, while acknowledging that some war plays also belong to this movement. The works of Jasen Boko, Ana Lederer, and

81 Panovski, “Prelude to a war,” 2-12.
Dubravka Vrgoč are seminal in the study of this topic. In Bosnia, perhaps the most valuable insight into theatre production during the war is Davor Diklić’s *Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu 1992-1995*. This volume is an incredible resource consisting of forty testimonies by participants in Sarajevo’s theatre life during the siege, including actors, directors, scenic designers, playwrights, and audience members. The testimonies follow a structure based on Diklić’s questions, thus offering more than personal reflections.84 Another author concerned with documenting Sarajevo wartime theatre is theatre director Gradimir Gojer, who served as the head of Kamerni Teatar 55 during the siege. Along with Diklić’s book, Gojer’s work in the field is the most valuable for understanding Sarajevo theatre between 1992 and 1995.

Significant research has also been conducted in the realm of theatricality during day-to-day war reality, as well as the impact of theatre itself on war. Dubravka Knežević has been concerned with para-theatricality in the streets of Belgrade, both from the regime viewpoint as well as that of the opposition. Her idea of a “theatricalized society” informs the work in this dissertation. Branislav Jakovljević, has written about Yugoslavia from a performance studies perspective. In the article “Towards a Dis-reality Principle”, he conceptually ties the war in Bosnia with theatre using the massacre in the Markale green market in Sarajevo as an example. Jakovljević demonstrates the intertwining of politics and theatre during the Yugoslav conflict by pointing to the use of language and images in representations of this atrocity. To illustrate this, he examines the Bosnian-Serbian political rhetoric and media representations that have rendered the incident “staged,” or fake, “stripping it of its real pain and suffering and turning it into an arena in which bodies, images, and words were minced into a gory political spectacle.”85 And yet, the most important book on this topic published in English in recent years, and also the only one written

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as a comparative study, is Silvija Jestrović’s *Performance, Space, Utopia: Cities of War, Cities of Exile*. In this study she examines the performativity of cities, Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Toronto, with a focus on the theatricality of “space and place, community and resistance, and utopian moments that emerge through various kinds of performance – from those belonging to theatre, to those that reside in the spheres of political rituals and performances of everyday life.”

Jestrović’s book offers a broad look into political performances, protests, visual and performance art, film, street spectacles, alternative and “legitimate” theatre. She argues that performance was a mode of existing in the cities of Sarajevo and Belgrade during the 1990s. Jestrović frames Belgrade as a city of spectacle in which its various performances “resisted the official political propaganda that insisted on tradition, normalcy and national homogeneity.” In contrast to that, she argues “performing the city in besieged Sarajevo was a personal and political act of asserting continuity in the face of death and destruction.”

With the focus on institutional theatre in this dissertation, by studying the mechanisms of engagement with the war and organization of theatre life within the confines of war conditions, I intend to expand on Jestrović’s study.

Recent perspectives of Western scholars who study theatre in the context of war also inform this study. Jean Colleran’s book *Theatre and War: Theatrical Responses since 1991* is an insightful study on how changing mediascapes influenced theatre, and more broadly, representation. One of the threads of the argument details how theatre enacts a political/ethical critique during a time when media technologies manage public opinion. Colleran identifies the Persian Gulf War of 1991 as the “key event in ushering an era of media spectacularity that substantially changed the way that information is shared and knowledge produced”

profound change in the media landscape between 1989, when Nicolae Ceausescu’s arrest and execution was broadcast in the evening news over several days, and 2005, when Serbia’s president Slobodan Milošević’s trial began in the Hague Tribunal. During this period, she asserts, “media not only conveyed information about war, but also became an instrument of it”\textsuperscript{90} This change affected theatre as well, since now “few spectators enter a playhouse without bringing some media-produced image of the drama’s subject along with them. Whatever political effect a drama may hope to create, it must first dislodge the images or assumptions the media has already manufactured”\textsuperscript{91} In the analysis of theatre and the Yugoslav crisis, this point in Colleran’s argument should be taken into account. The role of media in the wars of Yugoslav succession has been recognized widely. Media, especially television, was used as a tool of war and a venue for distribution of nationalistic images, especially in Serbia and Croatia. And most are familiar with the media frenzy that surrounded the siege of Sarajevo.

Considering the changed media landscape, Colleran then turns to question the place of theatre in this context. From the examination of British and American plays from 1991 until shortly after the attacks of September 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2001, Colleran concludes that despite the prevailing media hegemony in the contemporary world, “performance can examine war” by offering itself as a “form of political discussion, engagement, and critique,” at times only as “agitation propaganda,” but more often reclaiming its pedagogical function.\textsuperscript{92} Colleran argues that exposure to theatre and performance has the potential to enable “a fuller inquiry into the overlap of politics and aesthetics characteristic of contemporary events,” beyond just enhancing our ability of “aesthetic appreciation,” or providing “content knowledge.”\textsuperscript{93} Furthermore, “theatre’s intimate

\textsuperscript{90} Colleran, \textit{Theatre and War}, 13.
\textsuperscript{91} Colleran, \textit{Theatre and War}, 20.
\textsuperscript{92} Colleran, \textit{Theatre and War}, 14.
\textsuperscript{93} Colleran, \textit{Theatre and War}, 6.
knowledge of the decisive impact of framing, of deploying cultural symbols, and of narrating a scene or performing a role offers an array of critical skills that can enable spectators to make the kind of informed judgments that have become harder to reach because of the cultural shifts brought about by mediatization.”

In Julia Boll’s *The New War Plays: From Kane to Harris*, the Persian Gulf War also marks the beginning of her study, with the acknowledgement that the Yugoslav wars started around the same time and offered new perspectives on contemporary warfare. Leaning on the work of New Wars theorists, such as Mary Caldor, Boll explores the manifestations of the characteristics and structures of New Wars in the “representation of war and conflict on the contemporary stage.” In one aspect of her argument, Boll reads the new war plays in relation to palimpsest. She sees in the new war plays a strategy of uncovering layers to reveal the “‘Persian palimpsest’ on stage and thus demonstrating how the New Wars are underwritten by the Thirty-Years War and ancient warfare.” This aspect of her argument is particularly intriguing when considering the Yugoslav wars, which have so often been seen understood a result of historical animosities. This is especially true for the conflict between Serbia and Croatia, in which the ongoing conflict was seen as a resurrection of World War II conflict between the ustasha leaders of the Croatian Nazi puppet state, NDH) and the Serbian chetniks (a Serbian nationalist guerrilla force that emerged during World War II). On the other hand, the centuries-long Ottoman occupation of Yugoslav territories became revived particularly in relation to the Bosnian war. For Julia Boll, “theatre emerges as the space where the palimpsestic nature of the New Wars is most apparent, because it can synchronize different historical times and spaces as well as merge literary

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archetypes and contemporary characters. In this way, the stage is the space where we attempt to grasp the complexities of contemporary warfare.\textsuperscript{97} It is precisely by means of presenting temporal and spatial simultaneity, of visually and textually combining political, historical and cultural references, that theatre becomes the medium which can reveal the New Wars as palimpsest of old wars.\textsuperscript{98}

Debates from anthropology and ethnography of war demonstrate that there is a place for theatre in extreme situations. In the book \textit{Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology of War}, Ivana Maček, uses the phrases “civilized mode of existence” and “positive aesthetic experiences” to relate the production of art in wartime Sarajevo.\textsuperscript{99} She further deliniates the needs that motivated Sarajevans to engage in cultural production, including “the determination to resist the omnipresence of war, the impulse to deny or forget it, the desire to feel some continuity with prewar life, the drive to express and share experiences, and the need to feel connected with others beyond the limits of the besieged town, the aspiration towards a sense of pan-human belonging.”\textsuperscript{100} In \textit{Fear, Death and Resistance an Ethnography of War: Croatia 1991-1992}, a group of Croatian ethnographers writing about the experience of war in Croatia speak of a “passage from fear to resistance.”\textsuperscript{101} They describe this process as the return to the “experience of culture as the sensemaker,” or “processor of the ongoing chaos of the world,” following the initial experience of shock that is caused by extreme conditions.\textsuperscript{102} They argue that “shock caused by the war can also result in creative responses. In creating their own order, people (at

\textsuperscript{97} Boll, \textit{The New War Plays}, 144.
\textsuperscript{98} Boll, \textit{The New War Plays}, 3.
\textsuperscript{100} Maček, \textit{Sarajevo Under Siege}, 54.
\textsuperscript{102} Feldman, Senjković, Prica, “Poetics of Resistance,” 3.
least subjectively) overcome the chaos which fear causes in them. Universal artistic creativity, as well as full intellectual engagement are thus activities directed against the war.“

Social cohesion is the major means of realization and maintenance of the basic values - family, home, nation. Solidarity is manifested both at the level of personal public actions (signing of petitions, the refugee watch on Zagreb’s central square, lighting of candles, sounding of car horns in protest, writing letters to the newspapers), and mass gatherings (protests against specific events in the war, religious gatherings which often take a political turn). Given the communal aspect of theatre, it has the potential to become a powerful place for social cohesion.

1.3. Analytical Framework and Methodology

In this dissertation, I undertake performance, text, and material analysis to examine primary and secondary sources from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo. Primary sources consist of testimonies, interviews, newspapers and other periodicals, archival documents, play texts, and recorded performances and visual materials. Secondary sources include scholarly writing by former Yugoslavians (these also act as forms of testimonies, as many of those who have critically reflected on the period were also living it), as well as critical writings by theatre directors, managers, and key players in the organization of theatre life during the war. In an attempt to achieve “a more fully contextualized and politicized understanding of how meaning is produced in the theatre,” I am driven in this dissertation by Ric Knowles’ concept of Reading the Material Theatre. According to this method “meaning in theatre is produced at the intersection

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of three shifting and mutually constitutive poles: conditions of production, performance, and conditions of reception.”¹⁰⁶ This method presupposes that theatrical performances are “cultural productions which serve specific cultural and theatrical communities at particular historical moments as sites for the negotiation, transmission, and transformation of cultural values, the products of their own place and time.”¹⁰⁷ I maintain that an examination of theatre during violent conflicts can particularly benefit from this viewpoint, especially because under circumstances of war modes of everyday existence are constantly being challenged and restructured under the influence of various factors, upon which in turn any production of meaning will depend.

The productions selected for this dissertation rely on a mutual agreement with the audience in which both sides, those involved in the making, as well as those that are receiving, are considered participants in the war. Consequently, these productions are relieved of descriptive and explanatory references to the war, but make use of various implicit strategies and symbols. When Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* opened on stages across the Western world in 1995, according to Julia Boll it was among the plays that “chronicle the attempts of a generation largely untouched by the experience of war in their own country to comprehend,”¹⁰⁸ and which “make the experience of war at home accessible for a society that often cannot reflect on their own war experience other than by reflecting on the soldiers it might have sent abroad to fight and on the war refugees it might receive in return.”¹⁰⁹ Croatian scholar Darko Lukić sees the same principle applied to the American drama written about the Vietnam War, arguing that the structure of the plays depends on the presupposition that the viewer has little to no experience in the war. Thus, the American playwright has the need for declarative statements and explanations.

¹⁰⁶ Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre*, 3.
¹⁰⁸ Boll, *New War Plays*, 2.
¹⁰⁹ Boll, *New War Plays*, 7.
In Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, however, if the war was not on the ground, it seeped into all pores of the community, which leads to an assumption that these productions have had tremendous political resonance for its audiences. Lukić asserts that in these cases there is an awareness of the trauma in the entire community, and therefore no need “to tell the story from the beginning, nor to engage in explanations of generalities, but to build into the characters that which is assumed and for which no explanation is needed.”

The analytical framework for each case study in Chapters 3 and 4 grows out of the uniqueness of each project and is based on distinct operating mechanisms of each production (for example text or directing concept), approaches to negotiating community and belonging, and the reception, namely, the public, critical and scholarly dialogues that were prompted by each case study. For example, the analysis of the production of *The Last Link* in Zagreb is heavily based on text because text was used as a tool of negotiating belonging and the very mode in which the production itself was discussed upon reception. Alternately, the analysis of *Lovers* in Sarajevo is focused on the audience-performance relationship, and does not even venture into the world of the text. This manner of ground-up analysis opens up the possibilities of seeing into the particularities of negotiating community and belonging in each case, as well as the ways these notions were being mediated through performance and reception.

Early in my research I realized that I needed to devise a framework for a comparative analysis that would encompass the particularities of each case. As will be laid out in more detail in Chapter 2, I define four analytical frameworks to examine approaches to building community and negotiating belonging in each of the cities, which I define as: 1) feeling (particularly affect and emotion), 2) embodiment and communion, 3) civil society (particularly notions of class,  

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urbanity and civilized society), and 4) hegemonic notions of belonging. Then, to interrogate the shared (or not so shared) socio-political environments that produce conditions for each of the approaches above, I analyze institutional theatre in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade via factors that influenced wartime theatre development. I define the factors as: 1) warzone proximity, 2) culture of restrictive measures, 3) production of ideologies/mythologies/ethnicities, 4) repertory politics, 5) international community, and 6) theatricalized society.

I have chosen to undertake a comparative study of three cities, instead of focusing solely on one, as the comparative study method, underpinned by performance, text, and material analysis of primary and secondary sources from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, affords a critical framework for examining socio-political distinctions and similarities that might lead to new insights about the relationship between theatre and war in these three cities. A comparative juxtaposition of nine case studies from three cities might reveal whose voices were heard or silenced, and gaze into the shared or not so shared attitudes towards war, violence, community and belonging in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

Limitations

This study is temporally limited to the official duration of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995, with the Dayton Peace Agreement (Nov, 1995) as the far end point. While alternative theatre artists and groups are known to have actively participated and contributed to theatre life during the war, this study is limited to professional theatre in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. In some cases these are major theatre institutions, and in others we can speak of professional theatre artists that have sought out new venues in which the intersection of performance and war was possible. Lastly, this study is limited to Sarajevo, Belgrade, and
In Chapter 2 I propose an analytical framework for examining community and belonging in Sarajevo, Belgrade and Zagreb institutional theatre. Throughout my research I found that building community and negotiating belonging is performed from several different angles: 1) feeling (particularly affect and emotion), 2) embodiment and communion, 3) civil society (particularly notions of class, urbanity and civilized society), and 4) hegemonic notions of belonging. I examine each of the frameworks in more detail and anticipate how they relate to the nine case studies that are the subject of Chapters 3 and 4. Then, in order to explore what lead to such interpretations, I propose a comparative study of factors that impacted wartime theatre development which I define as: 1) warzone proximity, 2) culture of restrictive measures, 3) production of ideologies/mythologies/ethnicities, 4) repertory politics, 5) international community, and 6) theatricalized society. This might reveal some of the challenges that shaped and limited the possibilities of building community and negotiating belonging in institutional theatre during the war. Additionally, in this chapter I expand the vantage point to situate the forthcoming nine case studies in a broader socio-cultural context.

In Chapter 3 I set out to examine the first theatrical responses to the war in the context of institutional theatre in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb. I explore how community and belonging is negotiated in these intuitive responses to the conflict and I explore the reach and limitations of institutional theatre in this process. I describe three different approaches to organizing theatrical communities in the face of war, and investigate their strategies for negotiating belonging, as well
as their impact on civilian communities in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade. Frameworks of understanding community and belonging that were outlined in the previous chapter will be appropriately integrated through the discussion of each individual case. Thusly, in Zagreb I discuss how theatre engages with notions of hegemonic belonging, in Sarajevo I evaluate how theatre helps restart paralyzed urban civilian life at the start of the siege, and in Belgrade I investigate how theatre grapples with issues of social structure and affect. Chronologically, this chapter is limited to the years 1991-1993 and encompasses the war in Croatia as well as the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo. I begin with ad HOC theatre in Zagreb and their production of *Divorce Yugoslav Style*, which was created at the very beginning of the War in Croatia. I then go on to examine SARTR’s production of *The Shelter* in Sarajevo, which arose as a reaction to the start of the Sarajevo siege. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Kult Teatar’s production of *Dark is the Night* in Belgrade, which was staged after the War in Croatia had ended and while the conflict in Bosnia was entering its second year. Although chronologically this production came later in the war, it was the first production by an institutional theatre in Belgrade that directly addressed the ongoing conflict.

Having discussed immediate responses to the war, I turn in Chapter 4 to examining how community and belonging are negotiated in major municipal theatres in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo 1993-1995. In Zagreb the focus is on *The Last Link* (Drama Theatre Gavella, 1994) and *Welcome to Blue Hell* (Satirical Theatre Kerempuh, 1994). In Belgrade, *The Last Days of Mankind* (1994) and *The Powder Keg* (1995) highlight the work of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. Finally, the productions of *The City* (Kamerni Teatar 55, 1993) and *Lovers* (Kamerni Teatar 55, 1993) serve as case studies for the examination of Sarajevo theatre. All of the productions selected for this chapter were staged following the cease fire in Croatia and throughout the
duration of the Bosnian war. I continue exploring how each of the case studies relates to the analytical frameworks of interpreting community and belonging as well as to factors of wartime theatre development outlined in Chapter 2.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I will discuss the intersections of building community and negotiating that are illuminated by a comparative study of nine cases from Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb, as well as observe connections based on factors that influenced wartime theatre development. Furthermore, I will discuss the continuities and discontinuities in the early and later years of the war, the (im)possibilities and limitations that are imposed on institutional theatre in this period, and offer suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The goal of this chapter is to seek out and define approaches to negotiating belonging and building community in a comparative analysis of Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade wartime theatre, as well as to explore the reasons behind these trends. My objective – to interrogate how community and belonging are negotiated in nine wartime productions – led me to ask the following questions throughout my research: What do specific engagements with belonging and community say about the dynamics and nature of those who produce and gather around them? What kind of language is used to discuss and frame each case study? How do staging devices contribute to a particular experience of community? How does the audience respond in each case? In this chapter I argue that in wartime Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb there are four discernable frameworks for negotiating community and belonging that are at once layers of interpretation (for example, we might ask how is community and belonging interpreted in each case study by those on the producing and receiving end? What are the concerns that emerge? What drives certain interpretations of community and belonging?), as well as analytical devices for examining these notions (for example, my own investigation was driven by the way community and belonging were understood in each case). Thus, we can discern: 1) feeling (particularly affect and emotion), 2) embodiment and communion, 3) civil society (particularly notions of class, urbanity, and civilized society), and 4) engagement with hegemonic notions of belonging (especially with the nation). This approach to analyzing community and belonging has the potential to reveal points of connection between Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb, as well as to
suggest the differences among them. Numerous overlaps suggest that these four frameworks were used to engage with community and belonging in all three cities. At the same time, there are several discernable patterns that emerge in the comparison of the nine case studies. In Zagreb, the cases proposed in this study point to the need to engage with hegemonic notions of belonging, particularly with notions of gender and the nation. In Belgrade, community is examined through the lens of civil society, where questions of class, and the meaning of civilized society repetitively emerge on the institutional stage. And cases in Sarajevo point toward a strong need for practices of communion and togetherness that build a sense of community among urban citizens in the midst of war.

The frameworks for interpreting community and belonging in institutional theatre do not emerge in a vacuum. In my analysis I identify six factors that had a profound impact on wartime theatre development: 1) warzone proximity, 2) culture of restrictive measures, 3) production of ideologies/mythologies/ethnicities, 4) repertory politics, 5) international community, and 6) theatricalized society. The analysis of spatial, organizational, ideological, and external factors in relation to the nine case studies in this dissertation, as well as in relation to broader cultural trends in each city, might shed light on the challenges institutional theatres faced during the war. Furthermore, it might illuminate why certain communities and belongings were possible in some contexts, while being limited or impossible in others.

2.1. Frameworks for Analyzing Community and Belonging

The term affect is used in scholarship to describe a state of being, while emotion refers to our interpretation and contextualization of affect. For example, the motivation to create and

attend performances in Sarajevo might be attributed to the desire for the direct visceral effect that can be experienced in theatre only in times of crisis, and that is best understood through the lens of affect. Affect is an “immediate, uncontrollable, skin-level registration of a change to our environment.”\textsuperscript{112} The thrill of being in the theatre while the entire city was forgoing destruction was intensified by the notion of a shared destiny, and by the tight theatre spaces in which productions took place. There seems to be something magical about this experience, almost forbidden. Particularly in Sarajevo, where there was a constant feeling of living in between life and death, the possibility of experiencing something other than fear brought people to the theatre. Case studies in this dissertation that most prominently make use of this framework are \textit{Lovers} from Sarajevo, and \textit{Dark is the Night in Belgrade}. In both cases, the audience was brought to “laughter with tears” (or tears with laughter), while the experience on both sides of the proscenium has been described as cathartic. These performances were so intense and shook the audiences to such an extent that words such as “hunger” are used to frame their experiences. As it shall be seen in the forthcoming chapters, both performances were incredibly popular in their respective cities during the war. While affect is considered something uncontrollable, \textit{emotion} comes into play at the very moment when an attempt is made to contextualize the affective response.\textsuperscript{113} Emotion is also something lasting that can be taken away from the performance. For example, it will be discussed in relation to \textit{Lovers} how a shared positive experience in the theatre resulted in an overwhelmingly affirmative response to the production. Shared by word of mouth in the besieged city, it became a massive draw for audiences. The affective and the emotional framework for understanding and negotiating community and belonging are particularly visible

\textsuperscript{113} Hurley, \textit{Theatre and Feeling}, 19.
in Sarajevo, where theatre made conscious efforts to maintain and strengthen the urban community in the midst of destruction and separation.

The notions of *embodiment* and *communion* are equally significant for understanding how community and belonging was negotiated in the besieged city. Bodily practices, such as the use of ritual structure in the production of *The City* discussed in Chapter 4, imparted a sense of holiness and communion, further intensified by the small stage and auditorium packed with many bodies. And during winters, a group of bodies in the theatre produced heat, adding an existential perk to the experience of communion. Additionally, notions of embodiment and communion might be useful for interpreting *The Shelter* which, as it will be seen in the forthcoming chapter, represents a sort of ceremony to jump-start a “normal” urban community, or a theatrical ritual to signal continuation of the pre-war life in the city. In the case of Sarajevo theatre, communion should be interpreted both as an act of sharing strong emotional feelings, and as spiritual fellowship. Ritual is found also in the production of *Welcome to Blue Hell* in Zagreb, where a soccer match as a ritual is transplanted onto the stage, penetrating the very core of the text, as well as the directing concept.

Other examples in this dissertation point to a preoccupation with understanding community and belonging as elements of civil society, and more narrowly as notions of class, urbanity and civilized society. For example, *Dark is the Night* from Belgrade and *The Last Link* from Zagreb are both interested in the issue of middle class during the ongoing war. The first is concerned with exploring the decay of an urban, educated middle class family, while the latter dissects the social status of women within a family from Zagreb. *Welcome to Blue Hell* centers on a group of marginalized citizens in a working class neighborhood in Zagreb. Theatre becomes a space for negotiating urban belonging, not only in *Dark is the Night* and *The Last Link*, but also
in *The Shelter* which becomes an exercise of urban living in besieged Sarajevo. Also, as shall be seen in Chapter 4, *The Last Days of Mankind* conceals rich layers of commentary about civil society, passive citizenship and conformism. Lastly, thinking in the same terms from a different angle, there is a discernible need in the theatre to distinguish civilized society from its barbaric counterpart, which is blamed for the war and destruction. In fact, the very act of producing theatre during the Wars in Croatia and Bosnia becomes an act of affirming civilized society.

Such interpretations are also visible in Sarajevo where practicing and attending theatre is understood as an intellectual exercise in direct opposition to what is considered the rural, uncivilized behavior of the aggressor. This is particularly visible in *The City*, but also in *The Last Days of Mankind*.

The final framework for negotiating community and belonging might be defined as engagement with the hegemonic political project of belonging in the context of the nation. As it shall be seen, this is a component that all three productions discussed in relation to Zagreb have in common. Treated in the third chapter, ad HOC’s *Divorce Yugoslav Style* as a political cabaret explicitly engages with symbols of national belonging, from Europe, Yugoslavia, Serbia and Bosnia, to the very cultural regionalisms within the Croatian territory. Their work largely serves the Croatian national idea and the new Croatian-ness during the war. In Chapter 4, *Welcome to Blue Hell* challenges national belonging from the perspective of soccer fans that fought in the Croatian Homeland War. As staunch Croatian nationalists, the characters in this play feel betrayed by the regime when their favorite symbol of national identification is taken away. Discussed in the same chapter, *The Last Link* is a subtle, and at the time, very unique treatise about gendered belonging in Croatia in which the line between national and personal belonging is least discernible. In the analysis of cases from Zagreb, the issues of ideology and the state
emerge as central to the discussion. Both *Welcome to Blue Hell* and *The Last Link* betray anxieties over the oppressive environment in the new Croatian state. The Croatian case is unique because during the war, Croatia was also in the process of establishing an independent state. Thus, not surprisingly the questions of belonging on a national level, as well as interpretations of the nation as an imagined community take various forms in the Croatian institutional theatre. The engagement with structures of power that are directly responsible for disseminating and maintaining official projects of belonging is visible in most cases that are explored in this dissertation. For example, if by reinforcing hegemonic notions of belonging, Zagreb’s ad HOC is on one side of the pole, then the Belgrade production of *The Powder Keg* is on the opposite. In both cases, imagery of national belonging is being reproduced on stage, however in the case of the latter it becomes an embodiment of the resistant movement. Another example is *The Last Days of Mankind* which attempts to demystify the role of the media as the principal mechanism for disseminating national belonging and waging war.

The chart below (Fig. 2) serves as a visual reminder of the intersections of approaches to negotiating belonging and building community in Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade. Those that were most popular with the audiences are shaded in blue. However, based on my analysis of the nine productions I find several dominant approaches. In Zagreb, there is a strong engagement with hegemonic projects of belonging and community, and in particular, as the later chapters will show, with gender and the nation. What figures prominently in Belgrade is an interest in dissecting questions of belonging and community through the lens of civil society: class, ideas about what it means to live in a civilized society, degradation of civil society and perpetual violence. Finally, what is discernable in the cases from Sarajevo are practices that actively work to strengthen the war-ridden urban community through affect and communion.
Figure 2. Communities and Belongings: Intersections of Approaches

Sarajevo
- "City" civilization
  - society
  - urbanity
  - communion

Sarajevo
- "Shelter"
  - urbanity
  - ritual
  - communion

Zagreb
- Ad HOC Cabaret
  - hegemonic
  - belonging
  - communion

Zagreb
- "Welcome to Blue Hell"
  - class
  - hegemonic
  - belonging
  - ritual
  - communion

Zagreb
- "The Last Link"
  - urbanity
  - hegemonic
  - belonging
  - class

Belgrade
- "Dark is the Night"
  - class
  - feeling
  - society
  - hegemonic
  - belonging
  - urbanity

Belgrade
- "Last Days of Mankind"
  - civilized
  - society
  - hegemonic
  - belonging

Belgrade
- Powder Keg
  - hegemonic
  - belonging
  - communion
  - civilized
  - society

Most popular with audiences
Of the nine productions discussed in this study, those most popular with spectators were *Lovers* in Sarajevo, *Welcome to Blue Hell* in Zagreb, and *Powder Keg* and *Dark is the Night* in Belgrade. The experience of these events is captured as “catharsis,” “pilgrimage,” “cult-play,” where audiences line up in attendance in their respective communities. All of these works are connected to the war reality, even in the case of *Lovers*, which is perhaps the only case in this dissertation where we might detect a longing for old Yugoslavia. What these case studies have in common are the ability to engender affect and communion. The experience at these productions is intense, memorable, visceral, and becomes something that is spread by word of mouth. And in these three Balkan cities, during complete societal moral breakdown, these works enable communion. I strongly believe that we should study these moments in theatre history – this is when theatre becomes more relevant to the community than any other form of art.

### 2.2. Influential Factors for the Development of Wartime Theatre

1) Warzone Proximity

In this section, I propose to examine warzone proximity as a spatial factor that particularly affected the structure of institutional theatre in Sarajevo. According to Jenny Hughes, James Thompson, and Michael Balfour, there is a relationship between performance and the spatial and temporal categories of war – pre-war, post-war, military zone, demilitarized zone, and no man’s land to name a few. Further, these authors and practitioners that have extensive experience with theatre in crisis argue that “shifts in place and time – in place of war, out of the place of war, at a time of bombardment/closure/curfew, in a time of ceasefire, etc. – impact the type of performances that emerge.”

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114 Thompson, Hughes and Balfour, *Performance in Place of War*, 21-22.
theatre in Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade, each occupying a unique location on the spatial and temporal map of the war. Sarajevo thus might be considered the epicenter of war, Belgrade the periphery, and Zagreb somewhere in between. That such categories can be easily challenged is shown in Silvija Jestrović’s study, in which she uses the term “center” when referring to Belgrade in the context of being the center of the war-mongering machinery. By the same token, if we consider the work of Croatian ethnographer Maja Povrzanović, Zagreb emerges as the center of war in the perception of ordinary citizens. Therefore, how war is perceived within a community might not always match reality. Moreover, binaries are not always the most productive analytical tools when it comes to the disorder that accompanies war. Spatial and temporal categories can shift quickly in a war, where the fear of the periphery becoming the center of war looms over the heads of all those who are affected.

While in Belgrade, and to a lesser extent in Zagreb, the theatrical infrastructure was undisrupted by the war, in Sarajevo a substantial reorganization had to take place in the early stages of the siege. Geographically speaking, Sarajevo is located in a valley and was being held hostage by gunmen on the surrounding hills. The city became physically isolated, where the only ways of entering and exiting were through a risky airport runway operation or an underground tunnel – both complicated and life threatening. All of the theatres operating in some shape or form during the siege were located in the city center. However, Sarajevo is comprised of many neighborhoods, some of which were completely cut off due to military tactics. On occasion, performers were able to secure proper sources and protection to reach these most isolated communities. For example, one group of actors traveled in a bullet proof vehicle to perform in Dobrinja, a neighborhood that was completely cut off from the rest of the city. Another group

visited injured children in hospitals, orphanages, or schools that were located in those isolated areas.\textsuperscript{116}

As warzone conditions dictated where performances could be held, theatres became dependent on those artists and managers who remained in the city, and the availability of resources (both material and human) impacted which works could be produced. Shortly after the start of the siege, Sarajevo artists developed the idea of an all-encompassing ensemble that would be comprised of theatre makers from a variety of pre-war institutions. This is how SARTR was born, whose first production \textit{The Shelter} took place in a theatre that doubled as a shelter. As will be seen in the third chapter of this dissertation, the very idea to form SARTR, as well as the script of their first production, was influenced by the nature and role of the space. For the audiences, this resolved a location where they could seek cover while experiencing theatre. SARTR proved to be a temporary solution, and as soon as conditions were optimal, the decision was made to reopen Sarajevo’s legendary municipal theatre Kamerni Teatar 55.

While Kamerni Teatar 55 is located in a somewhat sheltered location in downtown Sarajevo, during the siege it also suffered a shelling, which destroyed the top floor. Nevertheless, it still somehow seemed safer than any other theatre, and as such grew to become the site for the majority of wartime productions. The impact of proximity on Sarajevo theatre might also be seen from a different angle. For example, actors from the National Theatre had trouble projecting their voice in a large auditorium, as the warzone conditions caused exhaustion and hunger. Furthermore, the National theatre sustained damage from shelling and was robbed of a lot of inventory, including scenery, costumes and tools.\textsuperscript{117} Another example is the production of \textit{The Emigrants} in Kamerni Teatar 55, where unexpected limitations can be seen. While working on

\textsuperscript{116} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 184.\textsuperscript{117} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 139.
this play, actor Vlado Jokanović recalls that the roof of the theatre was leaking, providing “naturalistic special effects.” This worked very well for the concept, since it reflected a space in which the characters would have actually lived.\textsuperscript{118}

From materials that were available for creating art, to the locations of performance, and other logistical matters, all elements needed to be adjusted according to the conditions of the siege. For example, as the majority of scenic elements were used as fuel, a major issue was how to create a show with no scenery. Paper and fabric were scarce, wood was a luxury, and the only paint that designers could retrieve were white and yellow. All performances had to be held in the afternoon, before nightfall, in an attempt to preserve as many lives as possible. When electricity was unavailable, artists played under candle light. Therefore, many artistic decisions, as well as those that concerned the choice of content, were made based on availability and adaptability of human and material resources. These examples illustrate that cultural life in the city underwent a total reorganization, whereby the majority of the work in the cultural sphere was in some shape or form restrained by the structure and the conditions of the siege. This, in turn, affected the strategies for building community and negotiating belonging. Merely one example will be shown in the production of \textit{Lovers} in Chapter 4, where dangerous conditions were the reason massive audiences were never turned away, while actors adapted their playing space to accommodate each and every spectator.

During the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia, Belgrade was spared becoming a war zone. But Belgrade experienced all of, so to speak, the second hand effects of the war: a flood of refugees, mass mobilizations, sky-rocketing inflation, increased poverty and a rise in criminal activities, to name a few. Institutional theatres in Belgrade and Zagreb were left mostly

\textsuperscript{118} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 128.
unscathed by the war conditions, surpassing the need for the kind of major spatial and organizational restructuring that was necessary in Sarajevo.

At the start of the war, a wave of preparedness swept across the city, inducing growing fear among the urban civilian population. Images from that period show Zagreb in a state of alertness: shopping windows covered in tape to protect from explosions, sand bags arranged in front of entrances to thousands of makeshift shelters,119 and mandatory power restrictions.120 In March of 1991, two voluntary civil organizations were formed in the city, the national and civil protection units (narodna and civilna zaštita). The first consisted of over sixty thousand people who were instructed to protect hospitals, shelters, and similar buildings, while the other focused on rescue missions and the management of material goods. Although both organizations were initially structured as unarmed forces, the national protection unit later took to arms and was positioned as defense around military assets in Zagreb.121 All of these regime-driven actions contributed to a heightened sense of danger in the city, creating the sense that armed conflict in the city might start any minute. Matters were not helped by a massive influx of refugees into the city, which not only altered its demographics, but also the atmosphere. Zagreb-based ethnographers who wrote from the city during 1991 appropriately captured the cultural experience of war. Maja Povrzanović explains how “a couple of months, disbelief, apprehension, and bitterness in Zagreb have grown into fear, horror and anger.”122 She argues that in Croatia during the war, everyday life was a landscape of fear par excellence.123 Fear, Povrzanović

123 Povrzanović, “Culture and Fear,” 123.
asserts, is the war experience that Zagreb’s citizens share with the inhabitants of the “so-called crisis regions,” and refugees.  

While armed conflict in the form of sporadic fighting did occur in the city, in reality, Zagreb never became a full-scale battlefield like Sarajevo. Air raids in Zagreb began in September of 1991, and through January of 1992 the city experienced 49 emergency warnings. There is some speculation, as Misha Glenny suggests, that “air raid warnings were given in order to promote a war psychosis among Zagreb’s population.” The attacks on Zagreb in 1991 resulted only in minor damage, with the most significant damage occurring on October 7, 1991. On that day, the seat of the Croatian Parliament and the Presidential residence in Upper Town were targeted by the Yugoslav National Army, led by Serbia’s president Milošević. In May of the same year, the mayor of Zagreb called for mass registration into volunteer units, and by August the Croatian army had more applications than could be accepted due to the lack of arms and suitable training conditions.

In Zagreb, the issue was somewhat different in that the war ran concurrently with Croatia’s proclamation of independence. These were the reasons that, Darko Lukić argues, “theatre production was reduced and the repertory in disarray,” while “theatres faced severe financial difficulties and drastic staff reorganization” Still, conditions in neither Belgrade nor Zagreb could rival Sarajevo. In fact, if there were any conditions comparable to the scale of restructuring in theatre amidst war, they might be found in those Croatian cities that were found in the primary regions of armed conflict such as Osijek or Dubrovnik.

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124 Povrzanović, “Culture and Fear,” 125.
126 Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 117.
128 Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, 131.
2) The Culture of Restrictive Measures

While warzone proximity was not a strong formative factor in the shaping of institutional theatre responses to the war in Belgrade and Zagreb, in these cities government and cultural repression significantly determined or limited possibilities of artistic expression. Inherited restrictive practices that characterized the relationship between the state and institutional theatre in the 1990s limited the openness of institutional theatrical space. The level of repression (even the subjective feeling) was dependent on the amount of perceived control, thereby producing different results in each city. While Zagreb and Belgrade were more affected by the culture of restrictive measures, in Sarajevo a more hands-off politics enabled some relative breathing room in the theatres.

Entire volumes could be written on the relationship between cultural institutions and the government in the Yugoslav and the post-Yugoslav context. Here I will point to several different aspects of this relationship that are significant for the 1990s war period. Government control in the realm of theatre manifested itself in more or less different ways across all of Yugoslavia, but always somewhere in the spectrum of repression. When examining the relationship of government and culture in relation to the most recent wars, first we must speak of a common legacy, a shared past that proved to be a heavy burden for many theatres. Antitheatrical practices that developed in the decades following World War II still lingered in the 1990s, especially in the first half of the decade. This trend is particularly visible in Belgrade and Zagreb, where in discussions about censorship scholars go as far as to speak of an “oppressed mentality” that has been passed on through generations of artists. A closer look into the history of cultural repression in Yugoslavia reveals how these practices were able to maintain their hold on theatres in Belgrade and Zagreb during the 1990s.
Serbian and Croatian historians have made attempts to shed more light on the convoluted mechanism of censorship that was exercised within SFR Yugoslavia’s cultural sphere. All agree it was largely an ambiguous system, or in the words of Ivan Medenica, an inexplicit system that was never formally articulated.\(^{130}\) In his study of censorship, theatre historian Petar Marjanović lists four aspects of theatrical censorship in Yugoslavia from 1944 to 1990: 1) no official documents that would serve as proof of censorship, 2) no one definite initiator of bans, 3) a lack of knowledge of who exactly in the art scene served as the messenger, although well-known state artists are severely implicated, and 4) knowledge that the censorship acts most often came from within theatres.\(^{131}\) According to Aleksandra Jovićević, in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1989, only two plays were banned by an actual legal process, while the remaining seventy productions were removed from repertoires via internal censorship.\(^{132}\) She succinctly explains the nature of such antitheatricalism:

But informal political censorship had great power in restricting the intellectual and artistic freedom of Yugoslav theatre artists… Plays and productions were often banned before the opening, or in the midst of rehearsals (an intervention always executed silently and invisibly to the public), but almost no documents or traces survive of these cases… In short, nothing tangible survives, only hints, rumors, indirect proofs, and dubious witnesses that prefer to keep silent or “do not remember well.” Most Yugoslav theatre professionals accepted this invisible censorship as a fact of life, even if it made theatre look tame and conformist, an ally of the state machine.\(^{133}\)

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\(^{132}\) Jovanov, “Razgovor u Bitef teatru.” Jovićević also reminds here that if we take into account rehearsals, play selections and other aspects of that go into preparing a repertoire, there were many more bans to be considered.

\(^{133}\) Aleksandra Jovićević, “Ingenious Dramatic Strategies Reach across the Yugoslav Theatre Space,” 259.
In the decades following the official breakup of Yugoslavia with SSSR and the political and cultural opening towards the West in 1948, particularly in the 1960s the censorship machine became seemingly more liberal. The ideological dictates became less direct and more in the form of “suggestions” that came from a wide network of individuals, government clerks, intellectuals, theatre critics, board members, and even theatre makers themselves. The formula for removing a play was simple, according to theatrologist Slavica Vučković. This was usually done by an unofficial, or perhaps even casual, fashion with control-rehearsals, advising sessions, and impromptu meetings with theatre management. Most of the censorship was neatly wrapped in suggestions that were ultimately left to the theatre to decide. Judging by the amount of plays that never made it onto the repertoire, the theatres often succumbed to the pressure.

This kind of convoluted censorship can be seen in the case of Dark is the Night, a production from Belgrade that is explored in the following chapter. On the other hand, in the examples from the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade, a connection can be made in relation to another kind of practice that began in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Playwrights across Yugoslavia began to use what has been described as the new “key” for escaping authorities – Serbian and Croatian playwrights (Jovan Hristić, Velimir Lukić for example) began to use mythological or pseudo-historic frameworks as a device to avoid censorship, “offering witty allusions to the present,” entering with the audiences in the “exciting intellectual game of cognition and complicity with the performers.” As Aleksandra Jovičević states, “Jovan Hristić’s ‘lively’ reinterpretation of Greek mythology and Velimir Lukić’s invented, grim mythology of cyclic state tyranny and terror created a public space for coded commentaries on

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the Yugoslav society.” As it will be seen in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the “coding” Jovićević speaks off will reemerge in the 1990s, particularly in the examples of certain works that were produced in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre such as *The Last Days of Mankind*. Overall, such practices worked against the ideals of an open community and dulled the knife of those theatre makers who would have, perhaps in other circumstances, fought against hegemonic notions of belonging.

In a similar vein, Croatian scholars have written about a repressive mechanism that sometimes openly, or at other times quite obscurely attempted to stir theatres in ideologically suitable directions. Since the middle of the 19th century until the end of the 20th century, regimes in power typically showed some degree of interest in theatre and supported it financially. In return, more or less control was exerted over institutional theatres. For example, during the period of World War II, when the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was created as a puppet state of Italy and Germany, theatres were used for affirmation of new state consciousness. Ante Pavelić, the Croatian fascist leader of NDH, sought culture as a means of awakening the Croatian spirit. Zagreb’s theatre was immediately renamed Croatian State Theatre (Hrvatsko Državno Kazalište) and was placed under total control of NDH and the Ustasha government. Croatian theatre historian Snežana Banović argues that theatre in the Independent State of Croatia during World War II was as central to the government as the Croatian national television was for President Franjo Tudjman in 1991. Alongside the state media, the Croatian National Theatre, as well as some other institutions such as the state publishing editor Matica Hrvatska, were invited to ideologically support the government. Boris Senker notes that in the 1990s “relatively little –

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137 For further discussion about the role of theatre in Croatia during WWII see Snezana Banovic, *Država i njezino kazalište: Hrvatsko državno kazalište 1941.-1945* (Zagreb: Profil, 2012).
apart from ideology – has changed in the official institutions, because of the inherited authoritarian stance of the state and party leadership, and also because of the inherited servile stance of theatre administrators towards any form of authority.” The most extreme case of this preventative self-censorship is found in the case of Croatian playwright and exile Slobodan Šnajder, whose plays were never explicitly banned, and yet were not staged by a single theatre during the 1990s. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this also indicates why the government did not oppose the work of “ad HOC” theatre, moreover, it congratulated them on being exemplary citizens and disseminating the very ideas of belonging and community in relation to the newly independent Croatian state.

Overall, during the 1990s, Croatia’s president seemed far more interested in theatre than Serbia’s head of the state. In fact, Slobodan Milošević was never once seen in any theatre in Belgrade. President Tudjman was slightly more involved, and even celebrated his birthday in the National Theatre in Zagreb in 1997. Still, at the end of the day, both Milosevic and Tudjman were far more interested in maintaining control over local television, newspapers, and radio. Theatre, literature, and other arts ultimately had far more freedom, which suggests why it was even conceivable for productions that spoke against the regime, such as Welcome to Blue Hell in Zagreb, or The Powder Keg in Belgrade, to pass without much trouble. The preoccupation with the restrictive relationship between the individual and the state is particularly felt in The Last Link, which is evaluated in Chapter 4. A sense of being suffocated by the state permeates the entire production – the state which penetrates every aspect of the private realm striving to impose fixed values of identity.

139 Dragan Jovanov, “Razgovor u Bitef teatru o ‘Traumi i katarzi u srpskom pozorištu.'”
While the government exerted more or less control in Belgrade and Zagreb, the situation in Sarajevo was quite different during the war. At the onset of the siege, the government mobilized all resources, including healthy men, to fight on the front lines. For a brief period, nobody, including theatre makers was spared from being drafted into the armed forces. Total mobilization in 1992 meant that a new war schedule was instituted for the entire municipality of Sarajevo. To fulfill their duty, citizens between ages 18 and 65 (55 for women) had several options. They could join the Territorial Defense and partake in the military effort or they could join the militia. Another option was to become part of civil protection which included medical and relief services. Small business owners and public sector employees were obligated to continue their war duty (*radna obaveza*), which meant they had to report to work according to their assigned schedule.\(^{140}\) Simply put, if you owned a bakery, your job was to bake bread, because this helped with the overall functioning of the city.

The relationship between culture and the war changed in the eyes of the government in 1993, when an Artistic Squad was constituted to categorize all theatre-related work as civil service. From that moment, municipal theatres became institutions of special importance for the defense of the city (*Javne ustanove od posebnog značaja za odbranu grada*). To some extent, theatre workers were relieved of army duty (although some still chose to serve), and would then fulfill their civil service by going to the theatre and doing their job. In the testimony of actor Izudin Bajrović, we can begin to understand how the process functioned:

> I think the military and civil government was smart enough to realize, and even help by sparing us from going to the front lines. They realized that culture, and especially theatre, resonated with the international community. At the end of the day, the government

allowed for theatre to happen, despite the need for manpower… Unfortunately, at the beginning of the war artists were frequently collected in theatres and streets of Sarajevo, and taken to the front lines. But things were resolved quickly, and the artists were left alone to do what they do best.¹⁴¹

The experience of those who did end up in the army is reflected in the example of several students from the Sarajevo Academy for Dramatic Arts. As student-soldiers, they essentially were forced to desert in order to attend class, rehearsal, or a performance.¹⁴²

In general, the government did not seem to have much interest to meddle in cultural activities in besieged Sarajevo. Performers were allowed to entertain soldiers on the front lines, and there is even an anecdote about how the Bosnian Premier Haris Silajdžić, after attending a performance, awarded the actors with cigarettes - a priceless possession in wartime Sarajevo.¹⁴³ That government acknowledged the importance of theatre for the survival of the city, or at least tolerated it, is also reflected in the notion that theatres had priority in terms of electricity, immediately after hospitals and several other critical institutions.¹⁴⁴ However, power was never guaranteed and theatres had to be prepared for any scenario.

3) Production of ideologies/mythologies/ethnicities

During the war, and even in the years leading up to it, a profound ideological shift was felt all over Yugoslavia. With the death of President Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the shared idea of brotherhood and unity among all Yugoslav nations entered the final stretch of its demise. Many

¹⁴¹ Diklić, Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu, 22.
¹⁴² Diklić, Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu, 161.
¹⁴³ Diklić, Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu, 90.
¹⁴⁴ In a conversation with Lejla Hasanbegović she showed me the official act issued by the government which allowed electrical priority for theatres.
believed that space was finally made for the expression of their ever-so-repressed ethnic and cultural individualism. What followed was a rapid upsurge of ethno-nationalism in various forms across the country. During this period, while political factions disseminated ideas of national awakenings, theatres in Zagreb and Belgrade, and to a lesser extent in Sarajevo, opened their doors to the discoveries of the new national Self. However, theatres had to compete with a network of representational practices in which identities were being made and unmade overnight, from fabricated media coverage and political spectacles, to civilian protests that often contained performative elements. Those artistic endeavors in institutional theatres that did not succumb to pressure struggled to implement strategies that could preserve space for nurturing alternative ways of thinking.

Upon Croatia’s declaration of independence in the fall of 1991, the pressure to disseminate Croatian-ness was forced on all cultural institutions in Zagreb. Along with the nationalist euphoria came the dismantling of Yugoslavian iconography. Andrea Zlatar-Volić refers to the 1990s as the period of culture of memory and amnesia:

The cultural symbolic capital in Croatia was created in the 1990s to serve on a formal level as the national representation of the country and the nation. The cultural policy encouraged the production of artistic projects (megaprojects, such as those in film and music or theater performance), which were supposed to create a set of images of a national history, that is, to shape the crucial spaces in Croatian national history. The basic characteristics of the 1990s are therefore, the autoreproduction of national cultural space,
the suppression of the individual and the collective memory of the Yugoslavian period, and the construction of new memory through a reconstruction of a mythological past.\textsuperscript{145}

The main problem here, as Darko Lukić argues, is that the process of unmaking and making myths was done quickly, superficially, uncritically, and apologetically.\textsuperscript{146} Culture as a whole needed to be reinterpreted and reshaped according to the newly acquired independence, and into what the ruling officials proclaimed was authentically Croatian. In theatre, for example, there was a return to the neoromantic image of Croatia that brought plays with nationalistic and religious themes to the stage. According to Croatian theatre historian Jasen Boko, although this aesthetic did not last very long in the theatre, it was a visible strand all throughout the 1990s.\textsuperscript{147}

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb (HNK Zagreb), which serving as an arm’s length to the ruling government assumed the mission of enlightenment. In a rarely critical text regarding the role of HNK Zagreb in the process of redesigning history and the misuse of mythology, Ivan Vidić facetiously states how the National Theatre would have won first place if there was a competition for representing the homeland in the best possible light.\textsuperscript{148} He then goes on to list all the elements that were part of the new “authentic” Croatian play: a pastoral landscape, elements of religious rituals, folk music and pomp resembling sporting events. Ultimately, when comparing wartime theatre repertory in Belgrade and Zagreb, the latter definitely prevailed in the number of productions that encouraged national belonging.

\textsuperscript{146} Darko Lukić, \textit{Drama Ratne Traume} (Zagreb: Meandar, 2009), 280.
\textsuperscript{147} Jasen Boko, \textit{Nova Hrvatska Drama}, (Zagreb: Znanje, 2002), 8.
In the official narrative, Croatia was fighting a defensive war. In the government controlled media, it was referred to as the Homeland War or the War of Independence. In the Zagreb City Museum, ordinary citizens and tourists are informed that “from 1991 to 1995, the history of the Republic of Croatia was characterized by the Croatian War of Independence, a defensive war fought for the independence and territorial integrity of the Croatian state.” The government, with the aid of media, constructed the war as “just,” or in the least justifiable. And as Mark Thompson argues, the Croatian government “wanted its version of the war’s origins, course, and purpose to be uncontested.” Nationalistic journalism was dominant because of a centralized media system that “established loyalty towards the state power and nationalistic elite,” as Karmen Erjavec and Zala Volcic argue. Myths of Croatian military superiority, the patriotic war cause, and the defensive war idea were perpetuated by mainstream Zagreb-based media sources, HRT (Croatian National Television) as the most influential medium, and by newspapers Vjesnik, Vecernji List and Danas. In his book about media and the Yugoslav wars, Thompson lists the main strategies for asserting media control: replacing personnel by HDZ faithful, steering publicly-owned media companies into state ownership or into the hands of chosen entrepreneurs, virtual monopolization of airwaves, suppressing private electronic media, limiting freedom of speech under conditions of emergency which the President defines at his discretion, etc. More independent media sources, such as Arkzin, an anti-war newspaper published during the war, testify to these problems. In their publications, Arkzin journalists

149 The museum contains a permanent exhibit called “Zagreb in the Homeland War.” The exhibit is very small and there is not very much to see, beyond several posters with (biased) information, a few relics from the bombing of the Upper Town residences and a television set emitting fragments of political spectacles from 1991.
150 Mark Thompson, Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Luton, UK: University of Luton Press, 1999), 8.
152 Thompson, Forging War, 137.
reported about the problematic supremacy of a “just,” “defensive,” and “justifiable” war concept endorsed by the media, and about how the only possible criticism addressed at the Croatian government is merely the lack of organization regarding how they conduct military operations, or how the majority of media uses the “language of intolerance, vengeance and war mongering” But as Thompson states, those who dared to oppose became “disoriented,” “unpatriotic,” and “Yugo-nostalgic.”

In her book *Performance, Space, Utopia: Cities of War, Cities of Exile*, Silvija Jestrović writes about a particular trend in the Serbian national discourse of the 1990s:

Milosevic’s regime managed to do that through what I call the hyperinflation of history – excessive and strategic usage of history to win political arguments and influence the public. The tactic is to place diverse historical facts and remote historical events on the same plane. As in a *danse macabre*, Serbian victims from the medieval Battle of Kosovo are placed side by side with the dead from the Croatian concentration camps of the Second World War, and with the still fresh corpses of Serbs killed in Croatia, Bosnia, or Kosovo and broadcast on state-run television. Hyperinflation of history is the means of the spectacular government by which it becomes the “absolute master of memories” that enables “contemporary events to retreat into a remote and fabulous realm of unverifiable stories, uncheckable statistics, unlikely explanations and untenable reasoning.”

The archetype of nationalistic euphoria that overwhelmed Croatia during the 1990s had been underway since the 1980s in Serbia. During this period, plays with national themes and imagery

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154 *Arkzin* 0, September 25, 1991.
155 Thompson, *Forging War*, 140.
appeared in abundance on Belgrade’s stages. The problem was similar, as Ksenija Radulović asserts, the lack of critical approach to national themes resulted in anachronistic and historically manipulative works. Moreover, theatres produced plays that turned to distant Serbian history and myth to explain contemporary issues.\footnote{Ksenija Radulović, “Nacionalni resantiman na sceni,” \textit{Teatron} 118 (2002): 7.} In the vast sea of plays with national themes, or “S” plays as they were popularly called, one particularly stands out in collective memory.\footnote{The “S” stands for Serbia or Serbian.} The \textit{Battle of Kolubara}, produced in 1983 in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, is particularly remembered for having anticipated the nationalistic fervor that would come in the 1990s. Interestingly, the play is not remembered for the content that glorified Serbian past, but as an audience phenomenon that transformed the spectator-citizen into the spectator-Serb.\footnote{Slavica Vučković, “Trauma i katarza u srpskom pozorištu.”} To this day, the words of Dalibor Foretić, a notable Croatian critic who reviewed the show in Belgrade, stand as a prediction of Yugoslavia’s tragic death: “I am terribly scared of the times in which the theatricality of life becomes more powerful than the liveness of theatre.”\footnote{Slavica Vučković, “Poziv na bitku,” \textit{Teatron} 118 (2002): 12. In this essay Vučković quotes Foretić’s review that was published in Zagreb’s daily \textit{Danas} on February 7, 1984.}

The principal reason for bringing up productions from the 1980s is that they are precursors to the events that unfolded a decade later. One particular incident in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre helps to highlight this legacy and the hostile environment in which institutional theatres found themselves at the start of the 1990s. \textit{Saint Sava} was one of the productions to be performed in 1990 at the 35\textsuperscript{th}, and last truly Yugoslav festival \textit{Sterijino Pozorje}, which takes place annually in Novi Sad. It was produced by a theatre from Zenica, a small town in Bosnia, which was visiting Serbia on this occasion. Prior to the performance of \textit{Saint Sava} in Novi Sad, anonymous nationalists threatened violence and called upon authorities to stop the performance.
While apparently nothing happened in Novi Sad beyond fervent applauses at every mention of Serbia, this incident was a prelude to their next performance in Belgrade. On May 31 of the same year, the performance of *Saint Sava* came to a full stop when Serbian nationalists, tied to radical political factions, surged into the theatre. The rowdy dialogue between the protesters in the audience and the actors on stage was recorded and can be seen on the internet.\(^\text{161}\) According to the protesters, the performance was a misrepresentation of Saint Sava, one of the most important saints in the Serbian Orthodox Church. It was not a spontaneous incident of audience rebellion, but an organized effort that can be traced to certain individuals in Serbian politics who were later associated with ethnic cleansing.

The incidents surrounding the Bosnian production of *Saint Sava* did not receive much attention at the time. Today, however, we can clearly see it as a piece of a much more complicated puzzle. Nationalistic aggression in Serbia became a common occurrence in every aspect of social life, and in Belgrade’s institutional theatre the *Saint Sava* incident was just the beginning. As tensions escalated, actors and directors of non-Serbian nationalities started disappearing from the stages of Belgrade’s theatres, including Haris Burina, Zijah Sokolović, Mira Furlan, Rade Šerbedžija, Izet Hajdarhodžić, Uliks Fehmiu, Enver Petrovci, Milan Pleština, Milan Štrlić, Žarko Radić, Žarko Laušević, Zlatko Sviben, Paolo Madeli and Haris Pašović. Some withdrew from the Belgrade stage because they no longer felt welcome, but others did so after experiencing nationalistic aggression. Such was the case of Bosnian actor Irfan Mensur, who in 1993 was physically assaulted and badly injured in a theatre cafe in Belgrade.

Alternatively, in Sarajevo similar examples of flirting with history were not quite as prominent during the war. In fact, many artists who participated in the creation of Sarajevo

wartime theatre testify the opposite. For example, according to Dino Mustafić, Sarajevo was free from any kind of romantic nationalist works in the theatre: “We simply no longer believed in the mythical images of the world since all signs of civilization were completely destructed in Sarajevo.”\textsuperscript{162} Admir Glamočak emphasizes that works were chosen based on individual preferences of the people who were creating theatre during the war, suggesting there was no pressure on theatre makers to produce anything based on religious or ethnic grounds.\textsuperscript{163} Jovan Divljak, a general who regularly attended theatre during the war, even goes as far as to argue that theatre and culture in general did much more than any political institution to preserve Sarajevo’s multicultural and multiethnic identity.\textsuperscript{164} Zoran Bečić’s captures the essence of this sentiment: “I didn’t participate in any kind of theatre that glorified some political party or platform. My theatre literally fought for bare life, for the life of the city, the life of our citizens, and the life of artistic creation.”\textsuperscript{165} Bečić was an actor of Serbian origins, which is clearly recognizable by his last name. In fact, a mixture of all ethnicities were found in Sarajevo wartime theatre, which provided yet another reason to shy away from plays loaded with images of national belonging. Thus, with the exception of a few marginal cases, politics stayed outside of the Sarajevo theatres. What’s more, I posit that Sarajevo found an important ally in theatre. There appears to have been enough room for questioning of the highly contested realm of ethno-national identification, and for citizens of all ethnicities and religions to be able to congregate without fear of being harmed. This was particularly important, because according to anthropologist Ivana Maček, “Sarajevans had to reconcile their own lived experiences as members of ethnocultural groups in a

\textsuperscript{162} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 190.  
\textsuperscript{163} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 100.  
\textsuperscript{164} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 62.  
\textsuperscript{165} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu}, 35.
multicultural city with the mutually exclusive, even hostile constructions of ethnonational identity that political leaders formulated and the war increasingly forced upon them.”  

4) Repertory Politics

The aim of this section is to understand the place of the forthcoming nine case studies in the broader context of repertory politics. Both Zagreb and Belgrade theatre strongly felt the shifting of repertory politics during the war. The first aspect of this change resulted in more room for two types of productions: those that were essentially escapist, and others that were based on history, myth or religion. In the post-war years, institutional theatre in both cities has been criticized for their wartime repertory. The basis for this criticism in Belgrade lies in the opinion that theatres, despite the general repression that was felt throughout the city, ultimately had the freedom to choose what productions would be presented, and yet they chose mostly vaudevilles, comedies, and boulevard theatre. Exploring the repertoire of several major theatres in Belgrade during the war years, including Atelje 212 and Yugoslav Drama Theatre, we can plainly see that the majority of theatre managers and artistic directors did not intend to produce theatre that would directly and openly engage in contemporary issues. The productions, such as those explored in this dissertation, which afforded opportunities for public critique, were not afforded much room on the repertoire. On the one hand, repertoires were brimming with vaudevilles, melodramas, farces, and light comedies, such as *La Duchesse des Folies-Bergers* by Georges Feydeau or Molière’s *L’École des Femmes* or *The Blue Bird* by Maeterlinck. On the other hand, theatres produced classics from Chekov to Mamet, as well as revivals of plays with national themes and tradition.

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While in this respect decisions were undoubtedly made with legal, ideological, and financial repercussions mind, in my research I have uncovered additional information that adds another layer to the discussion. Wartime issues of *Ludus*, a specialized theatre newspaper published in Belgrade, reveal numerous sorts of issues that were plaguing institutional theatre during this period. From its inception, *Ludus* was designed as a chronicle of Belgrade’s theatre life and included anything from reviews to interviews with notable theatre makers. The first issue of *Ludus* was published in November 1992, while the war was underway in Croatia, and during the culminating point of anti-regime protests in the streets of Belgrade. In the first issue, Feliks Pašić, a notable Belgrade critic and editor of *Ludus*, solicited a response from prominent intellectuals and members in the field to the question of what theatre can and should do in times of isolation and conflict. The debates prompted by this inquiry would continue throughout the war, signaling a concern with theatre as an ethical practice and revealing anxieties of those who were responsible for creating and managing institutional theatres in Belgrade. Interestingly, the focus was more on the question of whether theatres should keep their doors open or shut while the war is ongoing, rather than how theatre can empower the community to resist the war, violence, and forced ethno-national divisions.

Other interesting discussions have involved the debating of responsible repertoire in times of crisis, and the kind of reality that should be represented on stage during violent conflict. Analyzing these responses brings attention to a discernible division between those who held that theatre should provide refuge from the brutal reality, and those who thought that, by offering escapism, theatre plays the role of an accomplice to the regime in power. For example, Slobodan Selenić, a well-respected Serbian writer, argues in favor of the idea that Shakespeare or Corneille did not decrease our (Serbian) awareness of the present situation, but rather act therapeutically,
and are furthermore evidence that the Serbian nation is capable of producing something other than the war. This argument frames theatre as evidence of humanity – the idea that culture separates us from animals. In the same issue, Filip David argues the contrary. He criticizes those who believe that theatre should provide an escape from reality into what he sees as the “warm world of theatrical illusion.” In his article, David asks “… to forget what? Destroyed cities, hunger, death, camps, and mass graves? By not accepting reality we take part in collective guilt, responsibility for crimes. Unawaken theatre, the theatre of forgetting, is an accomplice to the crime.” Other responses in this issue include the idea that theatre should be a site of traumatic confession (Mira Otasević), or that by continuing to perform (Serbs) are archiving the times (Slobodan Stojanović), or that (Serbs) need theatre to show that this horrible reality is not the only reality we can produce (Jovan Hristić). Why then, with all this consciousness, did theatres not carve out more space for productions such as Dark is the Night, The Last Days of Mankind or The Powder Keg that are in focus in this dissertation? Ultimately, despite a general agreement that theatres should take an active role – if not to galvanize the nation to rise against the war, at least to provide space for critical dialogue – these responses indicate a lack of clear vision in the realm of repertory politics.

Similar trends can be noted in Zagreb, as Croatian critic Dubravka Vrgoč vividly describes:

… the war years saw the flourishing of comedy that offered escape and oblivion.

For us, laughter was a defense, a form of diversion, a way of shutting out daily reality or of changing it. Many of the plays performed on our stages during the

169 Ludus, November 5, 1992, 4-5 and 14.
first half of the 1990s proved that banal plots, chance encounters, and comic mishaps could for a few moments or hours make us forget unbearable reality. At that time Croatian theatre was discovering Carlo Goldoni, George Feydeau, Dario Fo, Aleksander Ostrovsky and native writers such as Marin Držić, Titus Brezovački and Ivo Brešan. Then in the postwar period, when it seemed that the arrival of peace would bring Shakespeare, Ibsen, Strindberg and the Greek dramatists back to the stage, our theatres rather unexpectedly displayed a preference for melodrama.\textsuperscript{170}

Another trend that can be noted in Croatian theatres, and which arguably had more influence on public discourse during the war, is the expansion of national and religious theatrical megaspectacles. Ana Lederer defines megaspectacle as a model for “articulating Croatian history that was usually an adaptation of some epic literary work performed by large ensembles.”\textsuperscript{171}

These productions were performed either on the stages of institutional theatres, or in various open air locations around Zagreb. A particularly interesting phenomenon that can be noted is the emergence of religious theatrical forms, such as mysteries, miracles, and morality plays that were staged for important Catholic religious dates. Sanja Nikčević notes the growing interest in these forms after 1990; between 1945 and 1990 only six such works were performed, while between 1990 and 1994 the number increased to sixteen. During these four years, like productions based on medieval scripts, as well as on original contemporary texts were performed in theatres across Croatia. Nikčević ties the wartime return to medieval religious forms to the revival of Catholicism following the end of communist rule and the birth of an independent state. The


\textsuperscript{171} Ana Lederer, \textit{Vrijeme Osobne Povijesti} (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2004), 8.
appeal is in the collective, she states, because “today we are brought together by collective danger; this danger forces us to develop collective rituals instead of individuality.”\textsuperscript{172}

Jasen Boko contends that the moment was right for these types of theatre productions that could fit well into the nationalist mix. This trend might in part be explained by the changes in management that were happening during the war when old theatre managers were being replaced by more ideologically suitable leaders. These new directors needed to prove their loyalty to the system – and to do that, they had to embrace the national as the new ideological matrix, which Boko argues, was done with much enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{173} In light of such circumstances, plays such as \textit{The Last Link}, which nurtured individualism, and \textit{Welcome to Blue Hell}, which was a direct commentary on group dynamics, seem even more significant for the preservation of alternative spaces of belonging and community in Zagreb during the war.

In Sarajevo wartime theatre, only a handful of productions on the repertoire might be labeled as historical, mythic, or religious. For example, in 1994 Kamerni Teatar 55 produced \textit{Husein Kapetan Gradaščević} by Ahmed Muradbegović for the centennial celebration of the first written text of bosniak-muslim dramatic literature. Truthfully, the repertoire does not seem any less of a mixed bag than in Zagreb and Belgrade. Yet, while escapism in Belgrade meant turning a blind eye to current events, in Sarajevo the same types of productions were valued differently. Or as the director Dino Mustafić states, “Beckett’s, Shakespeare’s and Chekhov’s lines sound completely different in Sarajevo at that moment than in any other place in the world.”\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{172} Sanja Nikčević, “Prikazanja danas ili zašto se u hrvatskoj na kraju dvadesetog stoljeća igra kazališna forma iz srednjeg veka,” Krležini Dani u Osijeku (2009): 70.
\textsuperscript{173} Boko, \textit{Nova Hrvatska Drama}, 7.
\textsuperscript{174} Diklic, \textit{Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu}, 189.
5) International Community

The involvement of the international community in the wars of Yugoslav succession has been extensively studied by scholars of various disciplines, especially in political science and history. What is much less discussed is the impact of the international community on the development of culture in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia. Foreign involvement in the wars of Yugoslav succession particularly affected theatre in Belgrade and Sarajevo, and in very different ways. In June of 1992, the UN Security Council imposed wide-ranging sanctions on Serbia - economic, cultural, financial, diplomatic, travel, and more. All ties across the border were immediately cut, resulting in shortages of food and other goods, triggering a blooming of the illegal (grey) economy. Inflation skyrocketed, causing a sharp drop in the standard of living across all demographic lines. On one day an average salary could provide goods for the whole family, while on the next it would hardly be enough for a bag of detergent. The break in communications with the rest of the world was a significant blow to the cultural life of the city. Prior to the war, Belgrade was the center of theatrical activity in Yugoslavia, and many artists from all over the world passed through on their international tours. In 1992, not a single international production visited the city. The situation was not helped by the circulating image of Serbia as the conflict’s aggressor in the global media.

The ripples of damage done by the cultural embargo is best seen in the case of the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF), a longstanding institution that connected Serbia with the international theatre community. Founded in 1967, BITEF’s mission was to introduce Yugoslavian audiences to the latest worldwide theatre trends and innovations in the medium. In 1992, due to the blockade, for the first time in its history it was not an international festival.

consisting entirely of domestic productions. Jovan Ćirilov, longtime selector of the festival, was accused of promoting status quo while the war was raging a hundred miles away from the sleepy capital. Many believed that maintaining the continuity of the festival meant promoting the idea that life in Serbia goes on despite the war, which is precisely the sentiment that Milošević’s government desired. But Anja Suša, well-known today in Belgrade’s theatre, and who was a student of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts during the war, paints a different picture:

It is very difficult to evaluate the reasons whether a theatre festival should be held in the sleepy Serbian capital, while a couple of hundred kilometers away wars are raging, and Yugoslavia is faced with a total degradation of societal values. It is possible to find arguments for and against… BITEF under sanctions was of a notable lower quality than it was ever in its long history, but perhaps the smallest contact with the world, which seemed more a peek through a pigeonhole, meant a lot to the youngest generation of artists and students of drama arts.\(^{176}\)

In 1993, albeit still under sanctions, the line-up was slightly better, but still without any familiar names that would be expected at a festival with an international reputation. Then with the temporary abolition of sanctions in 1994, the festival seemed to partially return to its old form. Many countries of the world were again willing to send and financially support artists to attend the festival in Belgrade; the program of the 28th BITEF includes names such as Lev Dodin and Bob Wilson.\(^{177}\) This example of the BITEF festival was by no means an isolated case, with the vast majority of cultural institutions experiencing similar problems. The embargo, however, did not affect everyone in the same way, which is illustrated by the experiences of Kult Teatar and


\(^{177}\) Anja Suša, “Argumenti za i protiv,” 38.
by the production of *Dark is the Night*, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Notwithstanding, one aspect related to this production is relevant for this section. Namely, Kult Teatar’s tour of *Dark is the Night* in Europe and America, as well as the former Yugoslav republic Macedonia, illustrates the complexities, and at many times, the absurdities that shaped and limited the scope of international exchange. In March of 1994, the production team was finalizing preparations for their Macedonian tour, during which they were scheduled to perform in Skopje’s National Theatre and in a few other major theatres across this former Yugoslavian republic. However, their plans were interrupted by a political gesture on behalf of the Macedonian Ministry of Culture. It was reported that the National theatre in Skopje received an official notice to stop all preparations for the tour.\(^{178}\) The stated reason for this ban was in deference to the UN embargo, and the word “unsuitable” became recycled in the media. On the other side of the border, the Serbian regime used this case as an opportunity to build a reputation of tolerance. According to Slavica Vučković, “nobody protested louder than Milosevic’s administration” against the banning of this production.\(^{179}\) Here it is perhaps useful to remind that Macedonia separated peacefully from Yugoslavia in a referendum on September 8, 1991. The case was quite different than in Croatia and Bosnia, where any possibilities of cultural dialogue during the war were inconceivable. From the initial attempt to bring the production to Macedonian audiences, their plans were sabotaged three times until 1995, when *Dark is the Night* was finally granted permission.

Much to everyone’s surprise, in 1994 Kult was granted Swiss and American visas, which opened the possibility of reaching out to the diaspora. Immediately, the marketing for the show

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\(^{178}\) “Nepodobna je ‘Noć,’” *Borba*, June 20, 1995.

\(^{179}\) Slavica Vučković, “Trauma i katarza u srpskom pozorištu.”

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shifted; *Dark is the Night* became glorified as the first theatre production to disrupt the cultural blockade. The press talked up the significance of this tour, emphasizing Kult’s mission of showing the rest of the world that the Serbian nation was much more than a barbaric aggressor, as the Western media most often promoted. The contexts of these tours, however, raise more questions about the aims and impact of *Dark is the Night*. The invitation to perform in Switzerland came from the Orthodox Christian Foundation and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Switzerland. At that point, it was already known the Serbian Orthodox church was heavily implicated in Milošević’s government, helping him stay in power throughout the 1990s (the Catholic Church played a similar role in Croatia). Ironically, this tour was officially marketed as the “Antiwar Cry of the Youngest Theatre in Serbia.”

As in the case of Switzerland, the cast and crew insisted that the United States tour was not an official or regime-initiated visit, but a private tour organized by the funds of private sponsors. Interestingly, the Serbian Ministry of Culture provided money for travel expenses, which indicates that they had at least some form of approval by the government. Alternatively, it may have been a solitary act by the Minister of Culture at the time, who is also thought to have financially supported the National Theatre in Sombor that was known for its provocative productions. The audiences in Switzerland and the United States were comprised mostly of the Serbian diasporic community, although there is some mention of spectators from other former Yugoslav countries. Judging by the reviews and guest book messages, the show was received with even more emotion than in Belgrade. This audience was different from that in Belgrade, with the common binding factors including the distance from their motherland as well as the war being the.

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182 Excerpt from the guest book that was displayed for audiences on the American tour to sign in or leave a message for the cast and crew of *Dark is the Night*. 

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The impact of the international community on Sarajevo was quite different than for Belgrade; while the Serbian capital suffered closure and isolation, Sarajevo was opened to the world by the intervention of the international community. The siege of Sarajevo garnered much attention, not just in the realm of journalism and humanitarian work, but also from the worldwide artistic community. In this respect, there are two ways of examining foreign influence: through the direct impact on the theatrical community in Sarajevo, and through the impact afforded by facilitating “excursions” to Europe where Sarajevo artists could show their work. International involvement was important for artists working in Sarajevo during the siege, and many saw it as a lucrative opportunity to draw the world’s attention to what was going on in the city:

… we played the card that we are the capital city of one of Europe’s country with our own cultural tradition, and that this city is now being shelled, but that – despite all difficulties we have to face, we are creating art, maintaining the culture of the city and civilization. Then we started with many different theatre projects, exhibits, concerts, etc. It was important to get a minute on CNN or BBC, or on any media so that Sarajevo doesn’t fall into oblivion. Then it truly became a cultural movement.\(^{183}\)

As luck would have it, during these trying times Sarajevo theatre gained a great deal of international recognition, and some would go as far as to argue that it gained recognition otherwise not possible without the siege attracting so much attention. During the war many notable individuals from the world of theatre visited Sarajevo as guest artists or in some other capacity. The most well-known is the case of Susan Sontag, who in 1993 directed *Waiting for Godot* with Sarajevan actors. But there were many others who came, including Peter Schumann,

\(^{183}\) Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 150.
Paul Auster, and Vaclav Havel. Another notable example is the MESS/FAMA project *Beba Univerzum*, which represented a series of lectures that took place at various locations in 1994. The intention was to create a mobile university in the effort to continue disrupted education in the city. In the back yard of Bosnian artist Nihad Kreševljaković, Erika Munk held a lecture on theatre in times of crisis, and Vanessa Redgrave spoke of her experiences in acting. William Hunt lectured on the Vietnam War, while John Fine and Robert Donia lectured about the medieval Bosnian state. Actor Izudin Bajrović, who was at the core of Sarajevo war theatre, remembers that before the war, “it was difficult to go beyond local towns, with perhaps a few visits around former Yugoslavia… the war surely brought somewhat of an affirmation of Sarajevo theatre which was not very well known in the world prior to this conflict.\(^{184}\) Similarly, Admir Glamočak, actor and dean of the school of drama at the time, explains that during the siege, Sarajevo artists made contact with many relevant international theatre and film schools which he believes would not have happened if not for the war.\(^{185}\)

International influence in Sarajevo also resulted in international tours, as Sarajevo theatre artists were invited to be guests at many international festivals. For some, this was an opportunity to show to the world that life in Sarajevo remained beyond what the media was broadcasting. Others saw these as opportunity for exile from the besieged city. Perhaps the most remembered was the 1994 tour of several European countries (under the UNESCO auspices) led by Haris Pašović. The Sarajevo Festival Ensemble was then invited by Peter Brook and the Bouffe du Nord Theatre to perform two productions that were created in the besieged city: *Silk Drums* (based on Noh theatre) and *In the Country of Last Things* (based on Paul Auster’s novel).


\(^{185}\) Diklic, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 88.
I will conclude this section with a brief mention of Zagreb. Namely, during the first half of the 1990s, Croatian culture experienced isolation, not as much due to the war, but more due to regime-driven isolationist politics. There were hardly any international groups visiting the country, and the only international visits of Croatian artists were sponsored by the state (a trend that was slowly shifting in the second half of the 90s). Many previously announced guest appearances at festivals were cancelled because, Croatia was a high risk country until 1995, while some potential guests were kept from participating due to Croatia’s role in the war in Bosnia. Isolationist politics contrasted with Croatia’s attempts to re-brand itself as belonging in Europe. In 1994, Croatian theatrologist Ana Lederer wrote in resignation: “Even through Europe is always on the tip of our tongue, we need to be concerned about the virus of cultural isolation which creates a false feeling of being as successful as anyone else in Europe, but which in reality leads us into provincialization.”

6) Theatricalized Society

One of the most frequently overlooked factors that conditioned the production and reception of theatre, and wartime culture more broadly, is much more difficult to precisely define. I will lead with a quotation from cultural anthropologist Marko Živković:

The regime as well as the opposition was constantly staging megalomaniac spectacles, rallies, conferences, and carnivalesque protests. For instance, in the midst of hyperinflation and international blockade in 1992 a Serbian businessman, a flamboyant figure himself, managed to stage the Fisher-Spassky chess rematch on the Montenegrin coast. A

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festive atmosphere that oddly clashed with the grim reality of war, poverty, and hopelessness was actively promoted by the regime-controlled media in order to project a rosy picture of reality. The incongruity between frivolous entertainment and grim reality, however, produced widespread feeling of living in a surreal world. Local commentators as well as outside observers often referred to this state of affairs as “magical realism,” or the “dreamworld.”

This state of affairs that Živković calls a “dreamworld” is essentially a performative concept. It hides under many different terms that were a part of the daily discourse during the war. The idea that “real” theatre has moved out of the buildings and into the streets, could often be heard at the same time in Belgrade. Dubrakva Knežević, a theatre director, describes life in Belgrade as “living on the borderline between rare theatrical events deeply grounded in our actual problems and a para-theatrical reality far from any common sense.” And in his goodbye letter to Belgrade, Sarajevo-born theatre critic Mair Mustafija writes in 1992, “the role of the theatre critic has changed because of theatricalized reality… the job of a theatre critic and any other normal job has become obsolete and worthless.” In countless other writings by actors, directors, critics, and other members of the theatre community, one registers a sense of loss in regards to what role theatre should assume during the war and how it can compete with reality.

In Sarajevo the situation was similar. Izudin Bajrović states, “somehow the line between theatre and life was erased. The question was which one is grander, theatre or life? Which one was more theatrical? Life became theatre, tragic theatre, and theatre became life. We might call

this supratheatre, because theatre and life were one and the other.”191 Another example is Dino Mustafić’s statement, “life was drafting a very strange dramaturgy – much more dramatic than any dramatic structure, more than any theatre can represent.”192

A comparable attitude is registered in Zagreb during the war. For example, Darko Lukić writes, “in the midst of war, images on the TV screen and evening news bulletins gave a more dramatic and moving recounting of the horrors than theatre ever could.”193 Ana Lederer writes in Zagreb, “endless news watching on television became simultaneously an existential need and a form of cultural consumption.”194 Suzana Marjanić states, “participants of real theatre become the audience for the theatre of war. There was nothing that could stop the ongoing performance of politics and war.”195 In her wartime writings from Zagreb, ethnographer Lada Čale Feldman registers what she defines as heightened theatricalization in the city. She notes different types of “suddenly awakened political ritual behavior in Croatia, from pre-election rallies, through celebrations of the newly INAugurated government, military parades, liturgical rituals of political importance, to organized or spontaneous protest gatherings of citizens.”196

This idea of a theatricalized reality and its many iterations overwhelmed every sphere of public space in wartime Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo. In fact, it could be argued that the performative interpretation of reality is the factor that most evenly impacted all three cities. Not only did this occupy the minds of artists and intellectuals, but the idea was weighed by politicians, journalists, and all those who had anything to do with creating public discourse, on

191 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 27.
192 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 189.
195 Suzana Marjanić, “Dr. Inat in the Alternative Theatre of the Nineties,” Frakcija 16, 52.
television, radio, and in print. For example, Branislav Jakovljević has drawn attention to the exploitation of theatrical language and imagery by the media and politicians in the context of the Bosnian war. One of his case studies is the Markale massacre of 1994, in which an open air green market was shelled in downtown Sarajevo. Immediately afterwards, UNPROFOR declared shells could have been fired from either end – the aggressor or the defending army. Because the situation was unclear, it was easily misconstrued. In the aftermath of the incident, the media, as well as several persons of power, constructed the event using familiar language of the stage (mise-en-scene, directing, etc.). In a final disturbing recounting of the event, a popular news anchor of Bosnian-Serbian television reenacted the massacre, bringing mannequins to the television studio and even prostrating himself on the floor among them to pose as one of the Serbian corpses that were allegedly used in the ‘staging of the Markale explosion.’ In Yugoslavia, the media waged a war that some would argue was as detrimental to the dismemberment of the country as the armed conflict on the ground. Fabricated stories were disseminated by various television and news channels that it was difficult to discern where reality ends and myth begins. As Baz Kershaw argues, “mediatization of society disperses the theatrical by inserting performance into everyday life – every time we turn into the media we are confronted by the representational styles of a performative world – and in the process the ideological impact of performance becomes ever more diverse.”

All of this confirms the statement “warzones themselves are highly performative spaces,” where the “performative environment is key to understanding the potential and limitations of performance responses within them.” The inability to see how institutional theatre can

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199 Thompson, Hughes and Balfour, Performance in Place of War, 2.
productively contribute to a theatricalized society is especially visible in Belgrade and Zagreb. One reason is provided by ethnographer Lada Čale Feldman, whose work explores the dispositions of citizens as audiences, and in that reveals a new and important angle. Feldman concludes that professional theatre failed to find a response to wartime reality. The problem with repertory theatre is with its historical and mythical revival dramas, satirical sketches (she lists ad HOC’s work) and utopian fairytales, which fail to respond to the “grown feeling of collective impotence in front of a terrifying reality.” As a counterexample, she uses a theatrical event that, according to her, was successful in the wartime context. The performance of *The Passion of our Saviour* took place in May of 1991 in Zagreb, during a period of frequent air raids:

*The Passion of Our Saviour* was one of the rare examples of theatre played out in the open, which aptly responded, not only to the aforementioned need for a theatricalization of urban open spaces, but to the popular need for a mystical communion in the open, for active symbolic participation, for a collective self-recognition in an allegorical story… The harmoniousness of its ancient *chakavian* dialect, popular Lenten chants and a consciousness of its belonging to a Catholic theatrical tradition had an almost hypnotic effect on the audience, especially so when bearing in mind the fact that in Zagreb, where the play was performed as an upper town procession, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić gave his blessing to all the actors and the audience after the play.

Feldman highlights the possibility for participation of ordinary citizens as the most significant component, implying that theatre institutions are for a selected few and not open to the general public.

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201 Feldman, Senjković and Prica, “Poetics of Resistance,” 22.
The effect of a theatricalized society can be a complicating factor for institutional theatre, which may find itself bewildered and incapable of producing representations of the same strength. However, grappling with the idea that theatre is useless in a spectacular society, which is particularly visible in Belgrade and Zagreb, played out differently in Sarajevo. In fact, theatricalization of reality was recognized as an important element of theatrical creation and reception, not as an inhibitor. Actor Izudin Bajrović argues that it is precisely because reality and theatre overlapped that theatre acquired a ritual dimension, without which it would have never become so important for Sarajevo citizens.\footnote{Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 27.} In Sarajevo, theatre became the only true and reliable representation form – from a subjective vantage point.
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<th>CULTURE OF RESTRICTIVE MEASURES</th>
<th>SARAJEVO THEATRE</th>
<th>BELGRADE THEATRE</th>
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<td>Does not significantly impact theatre during the siege. Theatre has more freedom.</td>
<td>Although government does not control theatre (as much as it controls the media) theatres have a hard time shaking off inherited practices.</td>
<td>Government has control over theatre more than in Belgrade and Sarajevo. Declaration of Independence mandates new Croatian-ness to be promoted.</td>
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<tr>
<th>IDEOLOGY/ MYTHOLOGY/ ETHNICITY</th>
<th>SARAJEVO THEATRE</th>
<th>BELGRADE THEATRE</th>
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<td>Very little interest (if any) in ideology. Push for sustaining prewar multi-ethnicity in the theatre.</td>
<td>Although nationalism seeps into all spheres of life, ideology does not figure prominently on theatrical stages (this trend much more characterizes the 80s). However, there are serious isolated examples.</td>
<td>Most impacted by ideology. Many productions with religious, historical and mythical figures. Explosion of national euphoria.</td>
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<tr>
<th>REPERTORY POLITICS</th>
<th>SARAJEVO THEATRE</th>
<th>BELGRADE THEATRE</th>
<th>ZAGREB THEATRE</th>
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<td>Decisions made more on personal level, as well as the possibilities of acquiring human and material resources.</td>
<td>Theatre repertory mostly intact; a lot of escapism on the repertory; paying lip service to the government while sneaking in critical works.</td>
<td>Megaspectacles, comedies, emphasis on Croatian dramatists. Emergence of young dramatists on the institutional stage.</td>
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<th>INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY</th>
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<th>BELGRADE THEATRE</th>
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<td>Significantly widens the possibilities for Sarajevo theatre community. Theatre used to send message to the world. Many new connections made, that would not have been possible before the war. Theatre gives voice to Sarajevo community.</td>
<td>Huge impact due to UN sanctions. Severed ties with international community. International festivals consist of mostly domestic drama.</td>
<td>Regime-driven cultural self-isolation. Contradictory to the national effort to promote Croatia as genuinely European.</td>
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<tr>
<th>THEATRICALIZED SOCIETY</th>
<th>SARAJEVO THEATRE</th>
<th>BELGRADE THEATRE</th>
<th>ZAGREB THEATRE</th>
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<td>Interpretation of reality as “theatricalized” helps theatre gain importance in the community.</td>
<td>“Theatricalized” reality paralyses theatre. A lot of confusion and doubt that theatre can do anything productive for the community in such circumstance.</td>
<td>Spectacular politics and protests. Megaspectacles on institutional stages.</td>
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Figure 3. Breakdown of Influential Factors by City
Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to examine how notions of community and belonging were negotiated within the auspices of institutional theatre in Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. I looked for patterns and discrepancies, which led me to define four distinct approaches to negotiating belonging and building community: 1) feeling (particularly affect and emotion), 2) embodiment and communion, 3) civil society (particularly notions of class, urbanity, and civilized society), and 4) engagement with hegemonic notions of belonging (especially with the nation). In the forthcoming chapters it will become clear that most interpretations of community and belonging were, in fact, hybrids of these four frameworks. However, it will be also be clear in each case study that some were more dominant than others. Therefore, in Zagreb we can discern a strong need to engage with hegemonic notions of belonging, particularly in relation to the nation and gender, while it appears that in Belgrade there is interest in exploring various aspects of civil society. And cases in Sarajevo point to the need for practices of communion and togetherness that build a sense of community among urban citizens in the midst of war. The second goal of this chapter was to explore the possible components that contributed to such interpretations in and around institutional theatre, as well as to set up the grounds for understanding the position of the nine case studies on a larger scale. I defined six primary factors that influenced theatre development in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, including, warzone proximity, culture of restrictive measures, production of ideologies/mythologies/ethnicities, repertory politics, international community, and theatricalized society. These factors worked in concert to constitute the possibilities and the direction theatre might take during this period. To
demonstrate how this played out on a smaller scale, in the following two chapters I will carefully inspect nine different wartime productions.
CHAPTER 3

MOBILIZING THEATRICAL FORCES 1991-1993

In her anthropological study of the siege of Sarajevo, Ivana Maček states “when our civilian expectations of life are shattered by war, we search for ways to organize our shocking encounters with violence.” Any generalizations of how civilians experience trauma should always be met with suspicion; there are as many responses as there are types of people. However, anyone who has ever experienced war knows there is a degree of truth behind this observation. After the initial shock ensues a period of adaptation to new circumstances. The degree and level of adaptation is entirely individual and depends on many factors that I will not discuss here. My intent in this chapter is to explore the encounter with Wars in Croatia and Bosnia and the process of adaptation by examining case studies from Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade, with a particular focus on the “moment” of war – the immediate response to violent conflict. Herein, I explore how community and belonging is negotiated in these intuitive responses to the war and I explore the reach and limitation of institutional theatre in this process. I describe three different approaches to organizing theatrical communities in the face of war, and I investigate their strategies for negotiating belonging, as well as their impact on civilian communities in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade. Frameworks of understanding community and belonging that were outlined in the previous chapter will be appropriately integrated through the discussion of each individual case. Thusly, in Zagreb I discuss how theatre engages with notions of hegemonic belonging, in Sarajevo I evaluate how theatre helps restart paralyzed urban civilian

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203 Ivana Maček, *Sarajevo Under Siege*, 34.
life at the start of the siege, and in Belgrade I investigate how theatre grapples with issues of social structure and affect.

Chronologically, this chapter is limited to the years 1991-1993 and encompasses the war in Croatia as well as the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo. I begin with ad HOC theatre in Zagreb and their production of *Divorce Yugoslav Style*, which was created at the very beginning of the War in Croatia. I then go on to examine SARTR’s production of *The Shelter* in Sarajevo, which arose as a reaction to the start of the Sarajevo siege. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Kult Teatar’s production of *Dark is the Night* in Belgrade, which was staged after the War in Croatia had ended and while the conflict in Bosnia was entering its second year. Although chronologically this production came later in the war, it was the first production by an institutional theatre in Belgrade that directly addressed the ongoing conflict.

I find that these disparate approaches are bound by the same need to step outside of existing institutional theatres in order to create new organizations to respond to the war. Furthermore, these examples reveal an obsession with daily politics, and they are linked by the use of humor as a distancing device to enable the exploration of the violent conflict. However, the parodic and farcical humor reflects the need to laugh, almost hysterically, in the face of danger. What binds these intuitive responses to the war is also what exposes their limitations. Because they were created in the moment, with a sense of urgency to form an artistic response to the war, these cases are more utilitarian and lack the nuances in understanding of belonging and community that we find in the later years of the war. Finally, as is discussed in more detail below, the first theatrical responses to the war were heavily shaped by ideology (Zagreb), a culture of restrictive measures and wartime economy (Belgrade), as well as warzone proximity (Sarajevo). These factors at once defined and limited the possibilities for negotiating belonging
and community in the theatre. The forthcoming discussion demonstrates these responses were successful in their own way, and despite their limitations, reveal theatre’s ability to quickly mobilize in a crisis.

3.1. Negotiating New Croatian Belonging in Zagreb

Here in Zagreb we haven’t suffered severe casualties. Indeed, if you were to come here today you’d think that there was no war on. But that would be an illusion. The war is also here, it just affects us in a different way. At first there is a feeling of bewilderment. The war is like a monster, a mythical creature coming from somewhere far away. Somehow you refuse to believe that the creature has anything to do with your life, you try to convince yourself that everything will remain as it was, that your life will not be affected, even as you feel it closing in around you. Finally the monster grabs you by the throat. You breathe in death, it impregnates your sleep with nightmare visions of dismembered bodies, you begin to picture your own end. -- Slavenka Drakulić, 1992.

In 1991, shortly after the start of the violent conflict in Croatia, one group of Zagreb-based artists postponed their engagements with other cultural institutions to organize a theatrical response to the war. They established a travelling theatre group called “ad HOC Cabaret” (ad HOC in further text), with the intent to serve the front lines, military quarters, and refugee centers. Operating within a society that was culturally and politically repressed from the top-down, and during a time when any open discussion of the war was carefully evaluated by the regime, they found a way to insert themselves into the war effort, thus gaining access to freely produce and perform work that engaged with the ongoing conflict. During its existence, ad HOC performed a total of 25 times on the front line and had 29 runs in a municipal theatre in Zagreb. While, from a cultural perspective, any effort to engage with the war during a time of powerful repression might be interpreted in a positive light, in this chapter I intend to draw attention to the more problematic aspects of their work. In the following discussion I examine material and performative aspects of ad HOC’s work to show how it supported and reinforced hegemonic
notions of belonging set by the Croatian nationalist stronghold. Furthermore, I discuss how ideology and warzone proximity factor largely into the possibilities of negotiating of community and belonging.

Ad HOC was producing and performing work that openly engaged with the war at a time when existing institutional theatres in Zagreb struggled to deliberately explore the violent conflict. In the *Anthology of Croatian War Drama*, compiled by theatre scholar Sanja Nikčević, it can be seen that few productions between 1991 and 1995 were actually staged in Zagreb. In fact, it was not until 1994 that the first war play premiered in Croatia’s capital city. Nikčević registers in this period some thirty one plays across the country that are at least somewhat connected to the topic of war. Interestingly, many of these plays were produced on the radio and never in the theatre, or were staged only after the war. Out of those thirty-one plays, only thirteen were staged in Croatian national and municipal theatres. Nikčević lists Nino Škrabe’s *Two Sisters* as the pioneering play of Croatian war drama. Interestingly it was first produced in Chicago, and then in the small town of Jastrebarsko, approximately 30km from Zagreb. For the first professional repertory play, Nikčević lists Davor Špišić’s *Welcome to War* (Dobrodošli u rat) in HNK Osijek, located approximately 170 miles from Zagreb. A total of three war plays were produced in 1992, all outside of Croatia’s capital. Interestingly, two out of those three were

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204 From 1991 to 2001 Nikcevic counts 94 war plays, produced in theatres, on the radio, or were just published, which not surprisingly indicates the majority of the plays were written in the post war period. The playwrights she includes in this number come from all spheres of Croatian theatre – from those well affirmed to lesser known writers.

205 It was performed in Thalia Hall - Thalia Hall was commissioned by Bohemian immigrant John Dusek and designed by Faber & Pagels and was completed in 1893. This public hall was built as a social and political center for Chicago’s Bohemian population centered in Pilsen. Modeled after the old Opera House in Prague, the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival structure is characterized by its rusticated stonework and rounded arches. A large proscenium arch frames the theater’s stage with a second floor gallery wrapping around the room. Named for the Greek Muse of comedy, Thalia Hall was an early mixed use building housing a theater, apartments and retail stores. Thalia Hall played an important political role as a meeting place for groups working for the creation of Czechoslovakia after WWI.
produced in the Croatian cities of Osijek and Dubrovnik, which by that time were both heavily
damaged by Serbian military forces.

In the first encounter with the war, Zagreb’s theatres were silent, focusing instead on
sustaining existing repertoires and day–to-day operations. That, however, was not the only
reason for the silence. During the period when ad HOC started operating, the political climate in
Zagreb was rapidly changing and the impact was felt across all spheres of cultural life. At the
dawn of the war, Misha Glenny, a British journalist who covered the wars of Yugoslav
succession on the ground, and who has written one of the best foreign journalistic accounts of the
war, describes Zagreb as he sees it in early 1991:

The Croatian capital is without doubt of Central European, Habsburgian pedigree
whose population is experiencing the same mixture of liberation and uncertainty as the
peoples of Budapest and Prague when they broke free from the fetters of socialism.
Zagreb is urbane, petty-bourgeois, although not quite as eerily Austrian as Ljubljana and
other Slovene towns. Even though brutal gun–fights and nationalist killings have been
reported as near as twenty-five miles from Zagreb, the population seems more interested
and excited by the impending declaration of independence. Defiant symbols of Croatian
statehood bedeck the central square, formerly Republic Square, now renamed the square
of Ban Jelacic, the nineteenth century Croatian military leader… A voluminous Croatian
flag, recognizable by the chequered shield, is draped limply over the huge statue of Ban
Jelacic. Along with drink cans containing “Fresh Croatian Air”– to “open when homesick
or in need of freedom” street traders tout maps of Greater Croatia including much of
Bosnia and parts of what is now Serbia. Inset proudly next to the map is a photograph of Ante Pavelic, the Ustasha leader.\(^{206}\)

A wave of new national awakening was sweeping Croatia even prior to the breakout of violent conflict with Serbia. The rise of Franjo Tudjman, former general in the Yugoslav Army, a radical nationalist and proponent of Croatia’s “thousand year old dream” of independence (tisućljetni san), produced a heated atmosphere on Zagreb’s streets following his election in April 1990.

When Tudjman’s HDZ party (Croatian Democratic Union) won majority in the parliament, being Croatian and the need to emphasize one’s own Croatian-ness became the main topic in daily political discourse. With power in their hands, Tudjman’s government enforced new iconography to signify national belonging and Croatia’s desire for independence. For example, the red and white checkered flag (šahovnica) became resurrected across Croatian territory in Yugoslavia. The design of the flag is through to stem from the Middle Ages, but it was misused by the pro-Nazi Ustasha regime during the Second World War. Streets were renamed to honor Ustashas and to erase communists, and the Latin alphabet became compulsory on all official documents.\(^{207}\)

Even more radical actions were required by the new Croatian government: a loyalty oath for all Serbs that held a job in the public sector.\(^{208}\)

A Zagreb-based ethnographer wrote that during this period “the symbolic characteristics of Croatian identity ‘exploded’ in national euphoria.”\(^{209}\)

Ad HOC was able to find its place because space was carved out only for those cultural efforts that would support the discourse of new Croatian-ness. Indeed, guerilla cabarets are usually not recognized for their aesthetic power, but for the production of discourse and

\(^{206}\) Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, 82.
\(^{207}\) Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 120.
\(^{208}\) Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, 120.
meaning. In the case of ad HOC, the discourse is directly related to the war with Serbia, with reference to the international community that was mediating the conflict. Disguised under a veil of humor lies the support for the idea of a “just” war, a concept that renders Croatia a victim of external powers without any fault of its own. The ultimate validation of their work came with an invitation from the president of Croatia to visit the presidential villa in February of 1992. On this occasion, Tudjman accepted a gift from ad HOC, who were reportedly commended by the president for being one more proof of unity and national awakening of the Croatian people.²¹⁰

An examination of the group’s founding documents and institutional background reveals that ad HOC was not an independent organization, but was instituted as a part of “Croatian Art Forces” (CAF), a project under the auspices of the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Education and the Croatian Association of Dramatic Artists formed in September of 1991. CAF was founded in Zagreb as an organizational body that would gather artists who wished to partake in the war effort. Among CAF’s activities was the formation of a special military unit for artists who wanted to enlist as soldiers (borbena brigada zbora hrvatskih umjetnika), as well as the organization of performances for refugees, soldiers, and the wounded. The Croatian Association of Dramatic Artists lists a total of 247 theatre productions and 64 artistic programs that were a part of the CAF organization during the war.²¹¹

The HOC in ad HOC stands for Hrvatski Oslobodilački Cabaret, meaning Croatian Liberation Cabaret. It consisted of some thirty Zagreb-based artists stemming from the performing and fine arts fields. The performers came from many different Croatian institutional theatres, including ZeKaEm, ITD, HNK and Kerempuh, and they were joined by painters and

²¹¹ “Strategija razvoja hrvatskog društva dramskih umjetnika,” Hrvatsko društvo dramskih umjetnika, accessed March 30, 2015, https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxz a2FsYWt1c3xneDo3ODU5MmUxNmQxNzc3NTc0.
sculptors who served as stage hands and technical support. The co-founders of the group, Tahir Mujčic, director, playwright, and puppeteer, and Boris Senker, playwright and critic, were both known in the Croatian theatre scene since the 1970s. The group’s initial pitch was for a television cabaret, but after being rejected by the Croatian National Television, they secured patronage from the Croatian Army and subsequently turned to creating a popular theatre group. Senker and Mujčic outlined a mission to including the following goals: to make masses laugh in troubled times, to relax and encourage men on the front, to raise their morale, to help them forget the bloody reality, to caricaturize the enemy in order to demystify it, to poke fun at the senselessness of the war that is being forced by the enemy, and to be entertaining, mobilizing, patriotic, motivational, ironic, humorous, and rough.

Some funding was acquired from the Municipal Fund for Culture in Zagreb (Gradski fond za kulturu), which they accessed via the municipal theatre Komedia in Zagreb that took on the role of ad HOC’s executive producer. Besides rehearsing in the Komedia theatre, Croatian Association of Dramatic Artists and Jadran Film lent spaces for the group’s rehearsals. The military donated two trucks, one of which was used for the transportation of people, while the other was used for scenery and props, and which could additionally be converted into a stage. It was a basic stage-on-wheels concept that the ensemble could assemble quickly wherever they went.

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212 Lukić, Kazalište, Kultura, Tranzicija, 107.
214 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 44.
215 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 45.
216 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 43.
217 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 317.
218 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 27.
219 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 19.
Ad HOC’s idea to start a travelling cabaret corresponded well with the general sense of war preparedness that was described in the previous chapter, and the concept gained even more momentum once the conflict took off. Their founding documents indicate that the artistic collective was meant to be active throughout the duration of the war, after which it would cease to exist. Thus, it was intended to exist in the moment, to address the temporary needs of soldiers, refugees, and the population affected by the war. What makes ad HOC stand out in comparison to any other theatre in Zagreb operating during the war and touring on the front lines is that all members of the group were also soldiers. Ad HOC was a sort of military unit within a military unit. It was even assigned a commandant, sculptor Peruško Bogdanić. Not only did the actors perform in military uniforms, and have weapons in their possession, but they also saw their work as guerilla warfare and themselves as equal and honorable constituents in the Homeland War. From the following statement by ad HOC’s founder we can see that the group willingly put themselves in service of the government war politics:

When preparations were finished, we went directly to the headquarters of the Croatian Army and asked to be mobilized as volunteers with the task to “fight” by means of theatre. As such, the number of our performances or the locations were not a matter of our decision – we were fulfilling our military duty. Each one of us would receive a memo to show up tomorrow at a certain meeting point, and only our commandant received a message with the next touring location… The war was not anyone’s private matter, and as such, theatre in war should not be anyone’s improvisation.

\[220\] Mrduljaš, *ad HOC Cabaret*, 19.
\[221\] Mrduljaš, *ad HOC Cabaret*, 36.
\[222\] Mrduljaš, *ad HOC Cabaret*, 35.
\[223\] Mrduljaš, *ad HOC Cabaret*, 32.
By rendering themselves as soldiers in the war, ad HOC was able to access certain areas that were restricted to civilians. Furthermore, this provided the possibility of identification with those on the front lines, as well as the authority to speak about the war to those communities caught inside the warzone that represented their audience.

We turn now to the discussion of ad HOC’s touring production *Divorce Yugoslav Style* in order to explore the use of national imagery in support of the hegemonic political project of belonging in Croatia. Ad HOC’s repertoire consisted of one of the two versions of *Divorce Yugoslav Style* (*Bratorazvodna Parnica*), each containing a prologue, one farce, and four monologues. Here the focus will be on the first version that was performed when the group started their fieldwork in 1991. *Divorce Yugoslav Style* is a cabaret-style performance with songs, puppets, satirical vignettes, parodies, and profanities. It begins with a prologue, in which the audience is directly addressed and prepared for an evening of theatre. This is followed by a farce in which fast paced dialogue, puppets, and songs are juxtaposed with Yugoslavian, Serbian, Croatian, and European iconography. The performance starts with a dark stage where a backdrop depicting “the universe” is lowered, accompanied by the music of Bach’s *Toccata and Fuge in D minor*. The backdrops and music continue to change swiftly: The Earth. Music: Strauss, Zarathustra; Europe. Music: Beethoven Ode to Joy; Yugoslavia. Music: Hey Slavs\(^{224}\); Croatia. Music: Our Beautiful Homeland.\(^{225}\) As the performance begins, a Croatian *gardist*\(^{226}\) and a Serbian *chetnik*\(^{227}\) scream about the stage, shooting at each other, while the last backdrop with the image of Croatia slowly turns into Picasso’s *Guernica* followed by a sound battle between

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\(^{224}\) “Hey Slavs” or “Hej Sloveni” in Serbo-Croatian was the hymn of Yugoslavia.

\(^{225}\) “Our Beautiful Homeland” or “Ljepa Naša Domovino” – new Croatian hymn that replaced Hej Sloveni.

\(^{226}\) Croatian soldier in the Homeland War.

\(^{227}\) World War II reference and derogatory term for Serbs in the war.
the Croatian hymn and a Chetnik song. Three performers dressed in Croatian military uniforms emerge on stage, each carrying their own life-size puppet representing three European politicians who were involved in the Yugoslav crisis: Lord Carrington, Van de Broek, and De Michelis. These foreign policy actors are made into frivolous and dumb Serb-lovers, and are accused of watching the war from a distance without doing anything about it.

Apart from the three European puppets, the rest of the characters represent soldiers in the Croatian army or in the Yugoslav National Army (YNA). A signature characteristic of ad HOC’s work are the characters whose uniqueness is also reflected in the language that each of them speaks. As Tahir Mujčić explains, the inspiration was drawn from a variety of geographical regions, minorities living in Croatia, and various regional dialects. In reality, the Croatian soldiers who would be exposed to the production were also from different regions of the country. Consequently, there are characters from Zagorje, Slavonia, Dubrovnik, but also an Albanian and a Bosnian soldier who serve in the Croatian army. Some of these characters are represented in the four monologues after the farce. For example, one monologue pokes fun at a Croatian soldier Matek, from Zagorje, who is serving in the YNA. In this fast paced, cabaret style performance, scenes change quickly, while at the end the new Croatian hymn is played to the joy of everyone in the audience. An actress describes the atmosphere in the audience at the end of ad HOC’s very first performance, “… as the Croatian hymn “Our Beautiful Homeland” reverberates throughout the hall, the soldiers stand up with us and raise two fingers – Victory! In that moment we are all brothers in arms! We are all sure of our victory!” In general, the discourse in this play fits harmoniously with the rhetoric of a defensive, or “just” war, where

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228 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 193.
229 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 119.
230 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 105.
Croatia is framed a victim of both the Serbs and the international community. Nothing in this work suggests an effort to disseminate a less biased view.

Evidence suggests camaraderie was forged not only during performances, but also before and after, as is seen in the testimony by a sculptor-made-scenic designer who travelled with the group: “The audiences were enchanted by the show, but what seemed also very important to them was the socializing and conversation with us after the performance. Our mission was not only to perform and leave as soon as the show is over. We would stay with the soldiers and refugees, civilians in war ridden towns, we would stay long afterwards to eat dinner with them and talk.”

In an interview with Croatian scholar Sanja Nikčević, one of the founders of ad HOC asserts the “real play” happens before and after the actual performance is over; the ritual of announcement, collective set up of the stage, and cathartic socialization afterwards all constitute the most important aspect of this artistic endeavor. The performers might share cigarettes with their audiences and other highly prized goods. Furthermore, some of the performers were personally vested in the war, since they originated from towns and villages across Croatia that were seriously impacted by the war, such as Vukovar, Dubrovnik, and Slavonski Brod.

In the urban context, however, ad HOC’s work resonated differently. The first Zagreb premiere of Divorce Yugoslav Style occurred on January 14, 1992, in anticipation of Croatia’s diplomatic recognition by the European Union on the following day. The production was staged in a public institution called dom vojske, which literally translates as “army home.” These institutions are found scattered across Yugoslavia and were used to house a variety of military spectacles, formal dinners, and cultural events. A statement about this particular performance mentions the dom being full, but not overcrowded, and besides army generals, the audiences

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231 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 36.
consisted of heads of Zagreb’s institutional theatres, television and radio editor-in-chiefs, and journalists.233 One of ad HOC’s playwrights wrote about this performance in his journal:

The play did not produce the same reactions that we are used to having when we perform for soldiers. At the end of the day, this was not the audience for which the play was designed. Besides Croatian military officials, there were people from Zagreb’s cultural life. As usual, they are an audience which is not capable of positively receiving such efforts, without criticizing its aesthetic value… For them, the performance was merely a piece of information about the work we do in the field.234

What is also likely is that ad HOC’s work did not appeal to the urban sentiment of Zagreb’s cultural community, which found them extremely crude, lowbrow, and even primitive. As a matter of fact, besides Igor Mrduljaš’s book ad HOC Cabaret: Hrvatsko ratno glumište, which is the primary source for this dissertation, hardly anyone in the Croatian theatre field has written, or even mentioned ad HOC’s work. That there was antagonism between ad HOC and the broader urban cultural core is further indicated in many instances of the group’s personal accounts, where the feeling of being misunderstood figures prominently.

However, despite the apathetic reception of what it considered their Zagreb premiere, this was not the end of ad HOC’s urban engagement. On March 29 of that same year, on the stage of Zagreb’s municipal theatre Jazavac, Divorce Yugoslav Style premiered under the title Take cover, they’re leaving!, while ad HOC was renamed to MiM Cabaret. In the opening speech an actor exclaims from the stage:

MiM that you are watching tonight from the comfortable seats of this municipal, civilian theatre… MiM is an attempt to conserve the work of ad HOC and perform for Zagreb

233 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 55.
234 Mrduljaš, ad HOC Cabaret, 68-69.
audiences who never had a chance to see it... MiM is a compromise, a practical adaptation of a unique theatre experience... From the truck-stage to the luxurious theatrical ambience...\textsuperscript{235}

According to the group, the opening night was hugely successful. This adaptation of \textit{ad HOC}'s work stayed on the repertoire of Jazavac theatre for six months and had twenty nine runs. Clearly there was somewhat of an audience within the walls of the capital city that had interest in their work. Jazavac, or as it will later be renamed, Kerempuh (something I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4) is a strictly profiled theatre. It has been operating in Zagreb since 1964 and specializes in cabaret, satire, political short forms, and aphorisms. Over the course of its existence, it nurtured its own audiences that react well to the sensibility of their work. During the War in Croatia, Jazavac even organized their own travelling cabaret and toured combat zones, which according to the description sent a message to Serbs on the other side of the front line that Yugoslavia is no more.\textsuperscript{236}

After their six month run in Jazavac, \textit{ad HOC} disassembled. Ultimately, it was conceived to support the war with Serbia that ended in 1992. Although the War in Bosnia (in which Croatia was heavily involved) was accelerating during this period, the group did not find the need for further engagement. What is also likely is that with Croatia’s conquests in the Bosnian war, it was getting harder to defend the war cause. Finally, Ad HOC’s work was made to be site-specific and utilitarian. As will be seen in the forthcoming chapter, the plays \textit{Welcome to Blue Hell} and \textit{The Last Link} dealt with urban belonging, and were much more focused on addressing the urban audiences. However, it will take institutional theatres three more years to

\textsuperscript{235} Mr duljaš, \textit{ad HOC Cabaret}, 312-313.
\textsuperscript{236} Satiričko Kazalište Kerempuh, http://www.kazalisterempuh.hr/o-kazalistu/.
come out with performances that were more critical of the hegemonic notions of belonging in Croatia.

3.2. Mobilizing Artistic Forces in Besieged Sarajevo

ŠSSMZ: No more talking! Enough lazing around. The theatre must urgently start with operations. DIRECTOR: On the show.
ŠSSMZ: Of course. If you are a theatre, you must continue to work.
DRAMATURG: Wait a minute please!
ŠSSMZ: You shut up! Either you write or you go to the front!
DIRECTOR: Oh he will write alright…we already have a play.
ŠSSMZ: A play about what?
DIRECTOR: About you. You are my characters.
DRAMATURG: Your characters. Your characters. What about your audiences?
DIRECTOR (points to the audience in the theatre) Here it is! This is my audience.
The lights come on in the theatre. The actors applaud to the audience.
-- The ending of the Shelter, by S. Plakalo and D. Bibanović

Similarly to Zagreb, the first attempt at organizing a theatrical response to the war in Sarajevo had ties to the government, and was strongly impacted by warzone proximity. However, the results were very different in this Bosnian capital. Only a month after the start of the siege, a group of Sarajevo artists founded the Sarajevo War Theatre (Sarajevski Ratni Teatar), or SARTR for short. Structurally and conceptually, SARTR was envisioned as a theatre of all theatres, which were temporarily paralyzed from constant attacks on the city. Growing out of the need of artists to restructure artistic life under new circumstances, and to restore theatre production, SARTR developed as an organic response to new conditions. Artists from all institutional theatres who wished to continue working during the siege were welcome to join. In the autumn of 1992, a group of actors, playwrights, and directors from the Sarajevo National Theatre, Kamerni Teatar 55, and the Youth Theatre gathered to produce SARTR’s first war premiere: Shelter (Sklonište) by Dubravko Bibanovic and Safet Plakalo. It opened on September
6 in the basement of the Youth Theatre that doubled as a shelter, less than five months from the beginning of the occupation. By 1994, the Shelter was performed 94 times; half of these performances occurred in cultural centers, hospitals, and military units around the city.237

The production of Shelter was much more accessible because, unlike ad HOC’s Divorce Yugoslav Style, it did not exclude anyone with its point of view. There was no singing of hymns or characters based on national identification, only universally funny archetypes such as the head of the shelter or the local gossip. However, the ability to communicate with audiences outside of the space where the production originated, and reach different layers of Sarajevo society who found themselves in military units, hospitals and other crisis centers is not where I want to stir this discussion. Instead, the emphasis will be on the first days in the life of SARTR, on the production of Shelter, and on its effect on the urban, intellectual, and theatrical community. I intend to focus on a particular aspect of their work to show how SARTR and their production of the Shelter might be interpreted as a ceremony to jump-start “normal” urban civilian life in besieged Sarajevo. By working on the organization of SARTR and on the production of Shelter, as well as by attending theatre, Sarajevans engaged in a symbolic ritual of reconciliation with the state of war, which strengthened the urban community and signaled a continuation of pre-war civil life in the city. This entire effort was an incredible feet of human will, and the trigger for what would soon result in a hyperproduction of theatre in besieged Sarajevo.

Reporting from the second performance of Shelter, a journalist describes the post-show atmosphere in the theatre: “… some seventy people were sipping their drinks, the women complementing each other on their dresses, men speculating about how the Sarajevo
soccer team will do if it ever manages to get out of the besieged town.” 238 There is a bit of wonder in the journalist’s tone; after all, how should one interpret such quintessential moments in the midst of war? What this journalist witnessed was the performance of normality, something that Sarajevans practiced in various aspects of their besieged life. The notion of “normal” urban civilian life in Sarajevo is essentially a process of adaptation to war conditions in the besieged city:

What people meant by “normality” swung back and forth between two points of reference, peacetime and wartime. When Sarajevans spoke of normal life, they meant the prewar way of life and social norms that had been lost amid the violent circumstances of the siege. They saw the way of living that they had been forced to adopt during the siege as abnormal, yet it became strangely normal during wartime… Sarajevans coined the expression “imitation of life” to mark this coping strategy. They patched together a semblance of existence, living from day to day on terms they could neither finally accept nor directly alter. This stance enabled Sarajevans to conduct themselves according to wartime norms while remembering their prewar norms and enshrining them as the ideal of how life should be. 239

Theatre played a big part in this exercise of everyday life in the city. It was a place where the ritual of everyday life could happen, as actress Aida Begić recollects, “where people hung out, met, fell in love.” 240 By coming to the theatre, Sarajevans partook in an aspect of their lives that was considered “normal.” The production of The Shelter was the one of the first

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239 Maček, Sarajevo Under Siege, 9.
240 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 44. As a chilling side note, people also went to the theatre to find out who was still alive, due the lack of standard communication channels.
instances of revalidation of urban life in war-torn Sarajevo. It gave people a glimmer of hope that some form of life will be possible.

Nowhere did warzone proximity factor so significantly as in the case of SARTR and their first production. The two-way relationship between war and theatre is perhaps most visible in this first attempt at organizing theatre under new circumstances. The siege of Sarajevo symbolically started with the death of two civilians on April 5, 1992. Two urban, educated women, Suada Dilberović (University of Sarajevo medical student, originally from Dubrovnik), and Olga Sučić (Croatian mother of two children) became symbols of the incomprehensible violence that enveloped the city for nearly four consecutive years. In a matter of days, the European community and the United States recognized the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus intensifying the Bosnian Serbian effort to take over the city. The entire world witnessed a European city being reduced to dust, yet the siege lasted almost four years (1425 days) with a devastating 11,541 victims, not to mention the numerous displaced. Sarajevo is situated in a narrow valley surrounded by hills on all sides which, made it a perfect target for a siege, and by May of 1992 much of the city was held by Bosnian Serb forces who positioned snipers and artillery on the adjacent peaks. Day-to-day life of Sarajevo citizens transformed into a matrix of sniper evasions, and a hunt for food, water, fuel, and basic goods. Telecommunications were halted and all exits from the city were blocked. Ethnic cleansing was practiced in Sarajevo neighborhoods, and a steady influx of refugees from all parts of Bosnia altered the demographic balance in the city.

241 There were six victims that day, but Suada and Olga, educated, urban women, became symbols of all the innocent civilians who lost their lives in the Sarajevo siege. Today the Vrbanja bridge over the Miljacka river, on which they stood upon being shot, is named the Bridge of Suada and Olga. In the inscription bellow it reads: “Kap moje krvi poteče i Bosna ne presuši” which translates as “A drop of my blood flows and Bosnia never dries out.” Bosnia here refers to the river of the same name which springs on the outskirts of Sarajevo and flows through the entire state.
In the very beginning of the siege, there was mass chaos and confusion, as nobody knew what to expect from the war, nor how long it would last. Then a transition occurred, and life in the city started to with equilibrate according to new norms of survival. This transition is described by a Sarajevo actor:

When everything started in ’92, first none of us could figure out what had happened, nor could suspect what was about to happen. So, the beginning was the most horrifying in the entire war, that spring, summer and fall of ’92. We expected slaughtering, people were terrified… street combats… some hordes of people who would come to our homes and slaughter us. This feeling endured until sometime at the end of ’92. Then we figured out that the siege is our destiny and that most likely there will not be slaughtering in our homes, that there would not be street battles, even though it would still happen occasionally, but that those inhumane people decided to stay up on the hills and kill us from above. When we realized that the siege was our destiny, we were forced to adapt to the given circumstances. We can and we must live in a siege as difficult and as dangerous as it might be. So we focused all our energy towards the organization of life which would in those conditions be as normal as possible… This meant the continuation of working habits… Life that was now totally bare needed to be enriched somehow. What could I have done personally, as an actor, then to continue doing my job?\textsuperscript{242}

This turning point became important for the development of theatre during the siege, and this is where SARTR found itself on the forefront.

\textsuperscript{242} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu}, 17.
The idea to establish SARTR was born out of circumstances of the siege. It all started when Dubravko Bibanović sought shelter with his father in the Youth Theatre Cabaret, located in the basement of a building in downtown Sarajevo that was identified by the government as a suitable shelter. Bibanovic, a director and former head of the Youth Theatre in Sarajevo, found himself close to the building during one of the first shellings of the city. Playwright Safet Plakalo also sought shelter here, and later recalled the basement being full of actors, writers, painters, and other individuals belonging to the Sarajevo art scene.” Gradimir Gojer, who will go on to become the wartime head of Sarajevo’s notable theatre, Kamerni Teatar 55, wrote in his book about the first time he sought shelter in the Youth Theatre:

… all of a sudden detonations started in the center of the city. With a bunch of employees from Hotel Belgrade I found myself in the Youth Theatre Cabaret… The members of the theatre were here, whose rehearsal was stopped short, but also neighbors from some surrounding buildings…. To everyone this space seemed the safest… Nobody knew what was going on in the city…

The start of the Sarajevo siege had brought cultural workers, nearby residents, and passersby into a small space in the basement of the Youth Theatre. From then on, many would seek shelter, and some would even make this space their temporary home.

At first, everything became paralyzed, including all Sarajevo theatres. Then a group of theatre artists who were hiding in the Youth Theatre basement, including Safet Plakalo

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243 Biban’s apartment was located in Grbavica, a neighborhood in Sarajevo which was immediately seized by the Serb armed forces. After a failed attempt to find a safe space, Biban decided to seek shelter in the Youth Theatre Cabaret.

244 Safet Plakalo, “Plod smrti” (unpublished manuscript, Sarajevo, 2012), 111.

245 Gradimir Gojer, Teatar pod opsadom, (Sarajevo: MES Sarajevo, 1997), 61.
and Dubravko Bibanović, came to the idea to organize SARTR - a theatre of all theatres that would unify the leftover theatrical human and material resources in the city. Even in these chaotic, unstructured times, there was a desire to create a legal structure with all elements and hierarchies that might be found in a typical institutional theatre. SARTR, however, was not imagined as an agit-prop theatre, or as an arms length of the government, as in the case of ad HOC in Zagreb, but as the fourth professional theatre in the city of Sarajevo. Their mission reads below:

The decision to constitute SARTR is made based on the need and initiative of Sarajevo theatre artists for a new theatre which would, in its organizational structure, as well as repertory politics and business model, be suitable for the time we live in, and which would, especially during the war and in the post-war period, fill the gap in Sarajevo’s theatre life which was created due to inactivity or insufficient activity of the three existing theatres.\footnote{“Odluka o osnivanju Sarajevskog ratnog teatra” in Desetljeće SARTR-a (Sarajevo: Galerija Novi Hram, 2002)}

Besides its mission, SARTR’s founding documents list their repertory goals, including fostering contemporary domestic drama that focuses on the present historical moments, peoples and processes, and on the fight for sovereignty and freedom of the Bosnian republic, Bosnian tradition, cultural and literary heritage, as well for producing foreign dramatic literature that would speak to the moment.\footnote{“Odluka o osnivanju Sarajevskog ratnog teatra.”} As evidence suggests, mentioning Bosnia in their repertory goals had nothing to do with advancing any political or ethnic goals.

The constituting meeting of SARTR’s Board of Directors, headed by Sarajevo’s Minister of Internal Affairs, and consisting of many individuals from the world of culture, commerce and military, inaugurated the new theatre on May 17, 1992. An agreement was
reached with the wartime head of the Youth Theatre to set up a headquarters in this location, with permission granted to use all available technical and human resources. While it is absurd to think of any steady financial support of cultural institutions during war, SARTR’s was to be supported by the municipal and republic funds, as well as via its own commercial operations. SARTR was named an “institution of special importance for the defense of the city” by the Regional Headquarters of Armed Forces (Regionalni štab oružanih snaga), the Municipal Headquarters for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Institutions and people in Sarajevo (Štab za zastitu kulturnih dobara, institucija i ljudi koji rade u njima Skupštine Grada Sarajeva), and the Business Collective of Professional Theatres in Bosnia and Hertzegovina (Poslovna zajednica profesionalnih pozorišta Bosne i Hercegovine).

On September 6, 1992, less than five months after the founding of SARTR, their first theatre production entitled Shelter was ready to open:

The house – or rather the basement shelter – was full: all sixty armchairs were taken, although there was no publicity for the event for fear the Serbs might choose the performance as an opportunity to bomb it just as they do with the markets and – notoriously – with the bread lines. Admission was free for Sarajevans; a donation (a pack of Marlboros) was suggested from foreign journalists. It was standing room only in the tiny shelter, and the audience spilled out into the corridor. There the noise of mortar bombs and the rattle of machine-gun fire could be heard more clearly than the actors’ words.\(^{248}\)

The success of the show was somewhat of a surprise, not only to the foreign press that would go on to report about Sarajevo’s “resistant” theatre throughout the siege, but also for the

\(^{248}\) Husarska, “Stage Fright.”
theatre community itself. Audiences kept showing up night after night, arriving well dressed as if they were attending some sort of “grand ceremony.” However, in order to arrive to this moment, SARTR’s crew worked strenuously under precarious conditions: water and power restrictions, shelling that damaged a part of Youth Theatre, and frequent sniper attacks that made daily travel to rehearsal a deadly risk for all involved. SARTR’s sound technician was killed one month before opening night, and one of their colleagues lost both legs when a grenade fell in front of him (a year later he will become the head of the Youth Theatre!). Despite all odds, *The Shelter* was finalized and the show finally opened to the public.

As much as the origin and structure of the theatre itself were influenced by real events in the city, so was the theme of their first production written by Safet Plakalo and Dubravko Bibanović. The autobiographical references are difficult to miss in the *Shelter*. The play takes place in the basement of a Sarajevo theatre, more precisely in the costume and props storage, that has been repurposed to serve as a bomb shelter. The main characters are the Dramaturg and the Director who contemplate the role of theatre in war. Interwoven in their philosophical debates are various type characters from the “real” world: the director of their shelter, a local goods dealer, a gossip, an old man, and an old woman. In a self-referential manner, underwriting themselves as protagonists in the play, the characters Director and Dramaturg are constructing the plot for their new play that will be about themselves. An interesting aspect to point out is that war is not a central focus of *The Shelter*. We are aware the war is affecting the characters in the play, however it is always something that is above and outside of their world.

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249 Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 89.
Although the existential issue of making theatre during wartime is the main focus of the production, there is an undercurrent of commentary. This is primarily achieved through the intrusion of three characters: ŠSSMZ, Hajro and Mina Hauzen. ŠSMZ (acronym for Šef Svih Skloništa Mjesne Zajednice) is the Chief of all shelters in the county, a character-legacy of those communist union-activist types, and is represented in the play as power-hungry, ready to submit to higher powers and oppress those beneath him, while obsessed with acquiring a better position for himself. Through this character, the authors comment on the organizational structure of the city under siege. Hajro is a small crook turned war goods dealer (named after a legendary Sarajevo thief), whose wheeling and dealing on stage reflects similar practices that blossomed during the war, such as exchanging priceless items for basic goods – batteries, medicine, and cigarettes. Finally, in the words spoken by the indestructible Mina Hauzen, some more familiar concepts associated with the war come up. For example, the leader of Bosnian Serbs Radovan Karadžić comes under attack, or a comment is made about the role of international powers in the conflict. All of these characters bring comedic relief into the play and serve as a way to poke fun at the newly established institutions in the war. The aim of *The Shelter* was not to burden audiences with the tragic or naturalistic, but to provide some relief for the already hungry and scared people. As one of the actors puts it *The Shelter* was not a story about the atrocities of war, but about the grotesque nature of war.\(^{251}\)

Furthermore, evidence suggests that it was not intent on advancing anyone's ideology, nor any practices of exclusion based on national belonging. This leads to another relevant point that I will now address.

\(^{251}\) Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 34.
Before the war, theatres in Sarajevo were very much a multicultural environment – something that was considered normal in pre-war reasoning. According to the 1991 census, in Sarajevo there were 49.23% registered Muslims, 29.82% Serbs, 6.62% Croatians, and 10.71% of those who considered themselves Yugoslav. In the city center, the number of declared Yugoslavs was 16.43%, more than in any other municipality in Sarajevo. One of the first signs of the siege was a restructuring of demographics according to ethnic background. This was done in two ways: Muslims and Croats were removed from all Serb areas, and Serbs were urged by the Bosnian Serbian authorities to evacuate all Muslim areas. The latter was especially important for Bosnian Serbs, as it facilitated justifying of the siege for those in power (the remaining Serbs in Sarajevo were a threat inasmuch as it posed questions of why the Bosnian Serbs are attacking their own people). Not only was it important to create an image of separate living by ethnicity, but also to destroy signs of common cultural heritage, economy and government. The assaults were unmistakably directed against the city’s chief institutions of collective memory, leading some observers to characterize these attacks as “memoricide.” The besieging forces sought to shatter civic pride by whipping out records, and physical manifestations of the city’s diverse history: they destroyed the Olympic museum, the Oriental Institute, and the Vjećnica, which housed the National and University Library. Theatres too should be considered places of common memory. Furthermore, as the nationalistic propaganda increased on all sides during the 1990s, it became more important to preserve any multinational practices. In his unpublished manuscript, Safet Plakalo stresses that SARTR originated as a multinational company and

252 Zavod za statistiku republike Bosne i Hercegovine, Etnicka obilježja stanovništva, 1993, Statistički bilten 233 (Sarajevo), 20.
254 Donia, Sarajevo A Biography, 314.
“against all those who divide and sort us into nationalist pens,” somewhat jokingly listing “theatre artists“ as the nationality of their choice. Even a simple examination of names easily reveals the ethnonational background of SARTR’s ensemble and crew. For example, both protagonists in *The Shelter* are of ethnic Serbian background. Theatre artists of all ethnic and religious backgrounds continued to work in Sarajevo’s theatres. For some, it was important their nationality be emphasized, as was the case with a Sarajevo actor who emphasized the significance of Serb visibility in the city, as a way of encouraging Sarajevans: “theatre was one of those places where you could show people that you have stuck around.”\(^{255}\) The entire theatre community was a hodgepodge of nationalities, and that remained unchanged during the war.

In conclusion, SARTR’s work was extremely important for reaffirming urban life in the city of Sarajevo. It was a much needed proof for the institutional theatre community of the possibilities of working under new circumstances. SARTR, however could not sustain the momentum once it was determined that Kamerni Teatar 55, for the reasons that will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter, was a better fit for wartime theatre production. Although the focus had shifted for practical reasons, throughout the siege SARTR produced two more plays: *The Love of George Washington* (Holiday Inn, 1992) and *Musa Skins a Goat* (Kamerni Teatar 55). SARTR did not perish after the siege and to this day continues to operate as the fourth institutional theatre in the city. Similar to ad HOC, their work was created hastily, in the moment and for the moment. Therein lies its strength and its weakness. It mobilized quickly to address the needs at the very beginning of the siege. As time went by, however, the Sarajevo community and the experience of war changed which, as shall be seen in Chapter 4, other works were better able to address.

\(^{255}\) Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 151.
3.3. Catharsis in Belgrade

Dark is the night.
We're so pale, completely worn.
We ask ourselves: How much is this life worth?
Dark is the night.
Can't see the hand before my face.
We're all going to end our days in a horrid, deep and dark place.
We're all waiting for those better days to come.
Dark is the night,
Like there will never be a dawn. 256

--- Lyrics from the theme song in Dark is the Night, composed to the melody of the Russian love song “Темная ночь” from 1942 about a soldier longing for his love.

It is perhaps curious that Belgrade’s professional theatre community was the last one to react to the war in light of the fact that the war was not fought on Serbian territory. When a response finally arrived, as in the cases of Zagreb and Sarajevo, it did not come from within the existing institutional theatre network, but from the stage of a newly founded theatre. Kult Teatar was inaugurated in 1993 with the production of Dark is the Night (Tamna je noc'), the first and only original war play written by a playwright of Serbian nationality during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia produced before the Dayton Peace Agreement. Dark is the Night became an overnight success with Belgrade audiences, and it became reported as the most “cathartic experience” in the city: “Although before the audiences Dark is the Night seems truly an attractive play, this is not merely enough to explain the phenomenon that would single it out. There were better plays in better times, but without such a secret and close connection between the stage and the people surrounding it… Popović’s Night is a catharsis.” 257 This excerpt from a review represents only one example of many to use similar wording. In fact, nearly all reviews following the premiere of Dark is the Night on June 23, 1993 mention tears in the audience, how

spectators are returning to see the show night after night for their slice of catharsis. Tears and catharsis became essential language in every report about the performance and the main idioms for framing of the spectators’ experience at the show. The actors themselves describe “unbelievable emotional eruptions,”\textsuperscript{258} with the audience “worried, shocked, crying, and applauding five minutes on their feet.”\textsuperscript{259} Clearly there was a strong visceral response to the show.

The following discussion is focused on the unpacking of Kult Teatar and \textit{Dark is the Night} to explore possible reasons for the strong affective response of Belgrade’s audiences. With the representation of the decaying middle class, as well as the open treatment of the ongoing conflict, I argue that this performance satisfied a deep-seated need for processing traumatic experiences. Furthermore, I will show how a myriad of factors worked in concert to produce fertile grounds for the overwhelming response, including the experience of war in Belgrade, repertory politics, wartime economy, as well as cultural repression. The remaining component of the discussion aims to point out the more problematic aspects of this project. A closer analysis of archival material reveals a very calculated effort that was behind Kult Teatar and \textit{Dark is the Night}. I aim to demonstrate how the ongoing war was used to inaugurate a new production model which relied on celebrity names and emotional appeal. In this production model, war becomes a commodity that needs to be sold to the audiences.

By the time \textit{Dark is the Night} was opening in the summer of 1993, the war in Croatia had subsided while the war in Bosnia was in its second year. Already so much damage and terror had been produced by the Serbian regime, that journalists jokingly referred to Serbia as the “Land of

\textsuperscript{258} Predrag Ejdus, in discussion with the author, July 2013.
In 1992, a travel and economic embargo was introduced, and refugees and mass exoduses were changing the demographic landscape. A glimpse of this atmosphere is described by playwright Biljana Srbljanović, who was a student at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade during this period: “I spent days, years as a student, at the airport or in front of the Hotel Slavija where the buses left for Budapest taking away generations and generations of people.” With skyrocketing inflation and the rise of crime, Belgrade became overwhelmed by black market vendors, selling anything from gasoline, cigarettes to Deutsche Marks. Power supplies and basic goods became sparse, and heating in schools a luxury. Similarly to Zagreb, the urban landscape was altered: “On regular days, the pavement of Knez Mihailova Street was packed with street vendors selling nationalistic insignia and war uniforms. From their improvised counters and even from some of the nearby cafes, “patriotic” songs were played calling for hatred and killing.” In this disturbing atmosphere, Belgrade’s institutional theatres were paralyzed and unable to find a response to the war.

Characterized by a cumbersome organizational system with ample bureaucratic channels, institutional theatre in Belgrade had to face the challenge of balancing their output in relation to their benefactor - the state. Some critics of the period accuse theatre of failing to deliver on what is viewed as the basic mission of the art – to promote critical thinking and free thought, and ask difficult questions. The silence of Belgrade’s theatrical institutions has most severely been criticized by dramaturg Ksenija Radulović:

It would be wrong to say that during the 1990s the war being waged in our neighborhood was a taboo topic. This war in which Serbia played no small part,

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262 Jestrović, *Performance, Space, Utopia*, 43.
simply was not a topic… We have witnessed both directly and indirectly a multitude of brutal acts of destruction, deaths, and mass exoduses, while officially we have not even established whether we were or were not at war…. In theatre, the war has been approached according to that same official principle…That is, approached carefully, cautiously, furtively, often with a noticeable measure of humor, and even more often through metaphors or abstractions.263

On the other end of the spectrum were attitudes that theatre must not assume the position of a “simplified stronghold of critical oppositional thought,” as was the stance upheld by the head of Yugoslav Drama Theatre Jovan Ćirilov.264

During this period, notable Belgrade playwright Aleksandar Popović was searching for a venue for his new play about the ongoing war in Yugoslavia, called Dark is the Night. However, Popović was encountering difficulties. According to the playwright, the piece was offered to a few major theatres in Belgrade, including Duško Radović, Zvezdara Teatar, and the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. As the rejections kept coming, the reasons were never specified, although Popović somewhat ambiguously declares for a newspaper, “first they love it, then they said no.”265 While it is not quite clear whether internal censorship had anything to do with this case, or theatres simply had other reasons, it could have easily been argued the play was less than appropriate for the moment. Popović was quite familiar with the censorship practices of Belgrade’s institutional theatres, as he is one of Yugoslavia’s most banned playwrights. With at least seven of his plays, Popović experienced problems with the state. He calculates spending about a year of his life attending various questioning sessions for which today no evidence

exists. In the 1950s, he spent several years imprisoned in Goli Otok, a concentration camp instituted by Yugoslavia’s President Tito for all SSSR sympathizers. Then in the 1960s, he commenced building a career as a playwright, and eventually become a laureate of the Serbian dramatic literary canon. Popović’s plays were always popular among Belgrade’s audiences and in theatre circles, a notion clearly recognized by Kult Teatar’s manager, who saw in it the opportunity for success of his new theatre.

At the time when Popović was searching for a venue, Minja Obradović was looking for new ways of producing theatre in Belgrade. Motivated by a devastated wartime economy, and in the midst of UN sanctions, Obradović came up with a new model that would bypass funding from the state. Financially and organizationally, Kult Theatre was formed against the predominant institutional theatre model, one that depends on state funding and donations. Instead, Obradovic imagined a producer’s theatre in which everyone involved would be entitled to a share of the revenue. This also meant that everyone would share the same risk of failure. For example, Obradovic explained, “the director would be a shareholder in a particular project, which means they partake in the risk, but the success with the audiences and distribution brings them a percentage in return.” Perhaps, from an organizational and financial standpoint, Kult Theatre was non-institutional. But the theatre artists who gathered around it were those of strong institutional pedigree. In fact, Kult relied on the fame of its actors, playwrights and directors whose names audiences knew from institutions such as Atelje 212 and Yugoslav Drama Theatre. According to Obradović, the actors were ranked based on their fame, size of the role, and publicity, which is why in his words, “only the best writers, actors and directors can

266 Vučković, “Trauma i katarza u srpskom pozoristu.”
participate.” For example, in the production of *Dark is the Night*, two of Yugoslavia’s famous comedic actors, Predrag Ejdus and Seka Sabljic were cast as the parents. Kult’s mission included the production of domestic dramas and comedies, which “boldly communicate with the present.” When read more closely, one notices words such as “subversive,” “illegal,” “alternative,” and “edgy,” juxtaposed with the phrase “to reconcile between economy and aesthetics.”

When, in 1993, producer Obradović heard of Popović’s new play, he immediately recognized an opportunity and made a deal with the author to use *Dark is the Night* as the inaugural production for his newly founded theatre. This was not the first time these two have collaborated. In 1984, when Obradović was founding Zvezdara Teatar, another one of Popović’s “problematic” plays was used as an inaugural piece. Obradović knew that, precisely because it was banned, the play was an excellent marketing tool for the theatre. Similarly, Obradović carefully calculated the opportunity with *Dark is the Night*, confident a sure hit was in his hands. In a time when audiences in Belgrade, and moreso in the rest of the country, were bombarded with images of national myths and glorified war heroes, Popović’s play was to offer an alternative. But the topic of war, in and of itself, was clearly not enough to securely fill the seats night after night. To ensure success Obradović brought on board a famous musician and an all-star cast. In a recording of the show, we see the cast outplaying each other in their signature styles, enhanced by heightened comedic actions and taking advantage of every moment to seduce the audience. While their acting skills should not come under question, they were clearly cast with awareness of their previous many successes on various institutional theatre stages in Belgrade.

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268 Radošević, “Podvig zvani ‘Kult.’”
269 “Prilog za repertoar i ideju Kult teatra,” (Beograd: UPC Kult).
Chronologically, *Dark is the Night* is set in Belgrade, somewhere in between the anti-government student protests of March 1991 and the beginning of the war in Croatia. The plot focuses on the life of an urban, educated middle class Belgrade family. The Father (Labud Aškerc) is a respectable professor, surgeon of Slovenian descent, whose father died while defending Belgrade in World War II (the insinuation here is that his father probably died fighting alongside members of the same nationalities who are now fighting each other in the Croatian and Bosnian wars). Kosara, his wife and mother of two children is the matriarch of the house, a loud and annoying character that embodies manipulated masses; throughout the play we hear her repeating phrases she overhears on television. The action is set off by Mane, Sofia’s boyfriend, who receives a draft notice at the beginning of the play. The rest of the plot revolves around his struggles between wanting to desert and wanting fulfill, what he suspects, are the moral duties to his country.

*Dark is the Night* addressed directly some very serious contemporary problems that were affecting Belgrade citizens at the time of the run. The question of mobilization of youth for the armed forces would have been the one problem affecting everyone equally, regardless of class. In the image of a young soldier-amputee, *Dark is the Night* offered a reality-check that was contrary to the romanticized image of the war hero that permeated the media. It comments on all the actions young men in Belgrade undertook in the effort to escape the draft, from hiding at a friend’s house, to faking medical problems, or fleeing abroad. The figure of a young soldier, torn between tradition (read nationalism) and the youthful desire to live, are interspersed with hysterical parental figures whose never ending stream of dialogue drowns antiwar cries of their children.
The response of the male population to the general call-up was according to some sources only 15% (50% in the rest of Serbia) which was very low, especially compared to Croatia. Belgrade became the center of resistance towards the military draft. Men hid at their friends’ and relatives’ homes. At night, nobody opened doors and mistrust was everywhere. For a few months, you would not see men of a certain age anywhere on the streets. The watchful audience member could identify with the story, as everyone at least knew someone in Belgrade who was directly impacted by the compulsory draft. Even the young male actors in the production struggled with this theme. For example, Dragan Mićanović, who played Mane (Sofia’s boyfriend) claimed in an interview for a local newspaper this role was much harder than playing any Shakespeare or Mammet. To play such a role, he said “it’s not Hamlet, but something much more dangerous and real.” For young men and their families in the audience, leaving the world of the play at the end of the evening in 1993 still meant uncertainty.

The mere fact that somebody was speaking about the war during this period could have potentially resulted in similar reactions. However, an aspect of Popović’s play may have played a significant role in the reception. *Dark is the Night* advances the trope of the decaying middle class. Sociologist Mladen Lazić argues that “at the height of the crisis one of the most widespread claims was that of the “disappearance of the middle class.” This was a belief upheld by the urban middle class primarily in Belgrade that according to this social group came as a result of the drastic pauperization. The family represented in *Dark is the Night* belongs to the educated urban middle class in Belgrade which by the end of the play experiences a complete breakdown – the communication among members is disrupted, all the money is gone and their

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272 Collin, *This is Serbia Calling*, 45.
son is drafted for the war. It could be argued that the audiences coming to see *Dark is the Night* were mostly part of the same social strata, given that the majority of Belgrade theatre audiences come from the urban, educated, middle class. They would also, arguably, belong to the body of citizens who opposed the war, as the demographics of that same milieu comprised the majority of the student opposition to the regime. This production afforded them the opportunity to see themselves performed, straightforward and without allegories. Or as one reviewer states, “Popović’s theatre brought us back into our own uncomfortable skin” by means of “dialogue without artificial gloves.”

This light domestic drama would have been palatable to a vast spectrum of audiences partly due to its comedic elements. However, the manner in which the war is treated in the play must be recognized as one of the primary reasons that contributed to the achievement of such popularity. War is by no means glamorized, and is in fact, shown as a devastating force. Still, the topic is very is carefully negotiated; there is no explicit mentions of sides, discussion of guilt, no direct accusations of the government (with the exception of a scarce tidbits of dialogue which could be read as anti-government). In other words, it lacks a critical point of view, other than war is bad, in general. Why and because of whom we are in this war, is just one of the questions that is left out of this play. In fact, the text lacks any kind of direct or uncomfortable questions. It was a safe play, and in the words of distinguished professor M. Miočinović, “the amount of war the audience can tolerate.” As a result of this general message, the impact was diluted. At any rate, there was not enough problematic content to arouse an antagonistic reaction from the government.

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277 Mica Milošević, “Tajni putnik Staljin.”
There are somewhat contradictory accounts in regards to what happened when the show opened on June 23, 1993. In published interviews with the artists and in the production critiques, there is no mention of any problems with the government. However, late professor Ognjenka Miličević, in the only critical article written about this production, claims there were anonymous threats, a bomb threat and phone calls demanding to stop the show. She provides no other information regarding whom these threats were coming from, nor at whom exactly they were directed. At any rate, the cast refrained from discussing these issues with the press. The author of the play did not appear to be worried about the “official” reception of the play. Three months after the show opened, he commented on this topic in an interview: “Today we can talk about things much more openly then before. Not because of the System, but because of the chaos…there is a lot of side shifting…” Another really interesting point was made by scholar Slavica Vučković. She argues that by staying silent, the government took this case as an opportunity to build a reputation of tolerance and freedom of speech. This, she states, became especially clear when Dark is the Night was officially banned by the Macedonian government. Alluding to the Macedonian scandal, she says “nobody protested louder than Milošević’s administration” against the banning of the production. This, however, is a topic for another study that would be more focused on Milošević’s relationship with culture.

In my research of this production I found that the harshest criticism of Dark is the Night came from Nenad Prokić, a dramaturg from Belgrade who is discussed in the following chapter for his role in adapting The Last Days of Mankind. He takes issue with the hysterical, farcical laughing in the production, instead of what he thinks should be a seriously treated topic that in reality affects everyone in this city. I tend to agree with him. But while Dark is the Night can

279 Jovanov, “Razgovor u Bitef teatru o ‘Traumi i katarzi u srpskom pozorištu.’”
be criticized for all its shortcomings, including the commodification of war, I want to juxtapose Prokić’s criticism with the statement of the young actor who played Mane, the soldier-amputee:

There were always audiences for this production… Always… Somehow it was a vent for people. I then realized that theatre can be very therapeutic. Spectators returned many times over – to cry. To let go of everything they have suppressed. Hidden in the darkness of the theatre they could allow themselves to be emotional. The life they were living outside of the theatre was attacking them with horrific images, there was simply no time to contemplate and understand the world in which they live.280

The overwhelming reception of this production during the war does not allow us to dismiss it as populist nonsense. Instead, it should be studied for the ways it addressed the deep-seated need to process the war in the city. Since this is the only production in Belgrade during the entire length of the war that directly explores the ongoing conflict, there is nothing to fairly compare it with. To reiterate Ksenija Radulović’s statement from the beginning of this discussion, there were only allegories, metaphors and abstractions, but this will be addressed in the following chapter.

**Conclusion**

The need to step outside existing institutional theatres to create new organizations that would use theatre to process the war points to a lack of will and interest within the professional theatre community to engage with the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. In Zagreb and Sarajevo, the immediate responses arose with the first encounter with war, and were very much dependent on the ideological moment in the first, and a particular experience of war in the second. These first works were created with a sense of urgency foregrounded in their desire to form an artistic

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response to the war, which is similarly registered in Belgrade – though the response came with a delay. These cases point to the need to laugh, almost hysterically, to cope with the war, with a lot of daily political commentary. These first responses to the war are therefore much more utilitarian than artistic, lacking a more nuanced understanding of belonging and community.

Then, sometime in 1993, the picture starts to slowly change within the existing network of institutional theatres, resulting in a broadening in the understanding of the relationship between war, community and belonging in the later years of the conflict.
While the theatrical community did not suddenly explode with desire to address the conflict, or even realize the role it could have in the shaping of the public sphere, cases in this chapter reveal a more complex engagement with the war in all three cities, resulting in powerful performances. The strategies turn from hyperbolic, parodic and farcical humor, based on daily politics, towards more implicit strategies of representation that come from deep meditations on belonging during the war. This chapter explores how major institutional theatres in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb struggled with notions of belonging and community during the second half of the war. In Zagreb the focus is on The Last Link (Drama Theatre Gavella, 1994) and Welcome to Blue Hell (Satirical Theatre Kerempuh, 1994). In Belgrade, The Last Days of Mankind (Yugoslav Drama Theatre, 1994) and The Powder Keg (Yugoslav Drama Theatre, 1995) highlight the work of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. Finally, the productions of The City (Kamerni Teatar 55, 1993) and Lovers (Kamerni Teatar 55, 1993) serve as case studies for the examination of Sarajevo theatre. All of the productions selected for this chapter were staged following the cease-fire in Croatia, and throughout the duration of the Bosnian war.

While the previous chapter explored immediate responses to the war, thus providing a limited scope of productions to choose from, it was far more challenging to decide what to include in this chapter. The following criteria guided the selection. First, as the title indicates, the intent was to explore existing, mainstream municipal theatres that have gained popularity in the old country of Yugoslavia, and have continued to operate with success in the post-Yugoslav period. A municipal theatre (gradsko pozorište) is founded by the city, and is partially supported
financially by the municipal government (unlike the national theatres, which are supported on the republic level). Consistent with the previous chapter, the productions in this chapter engage with the conflict and the war reality, albeit some less directly. The sole exception is the play *Lovers* from Sarajevo which, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, was included as an excellent example for exploring the dynamics of building and sustaining community in the Bosnian capital city during the siege. Lastly, cases for this chapter were selected based on their success with audiences, as well as relevancy in the theatre history of this period. The discussion of the *Lovers, The Powder Keg* and *Welcome to Blue Hell* is focused on the relationship between the performance and the recipient, while *The City, The Last Days of Mankind* and *The Last Link* allow for the examination of the notions of community and belonging on a textual and conceptual level. The discussion in this chapter starts where the previous chapter ended in Sarajevo, before continuing onto Zagreb, and finally to Belgrade.

4.1. Rituals of Mourning and Celebrations of Life in Sarajevo

The War in Croatia formally ended with the final cease-fire on January 2, 1992, followed by official international recognition of Croatia as an independent state. In the spring of that same year, the Serbian armed forces advanced towards Bosnia, marking the beginning of the conflict in which Croatia too will play no small part. After the initial shock, the citizens of Sarajevo engaged in the process of re-assembling their public and private lives, and SARTR’s production of *The Shelter* was one of the first efforts to signal this change. Due to a shrinking number of public places in which citizens could assemble, sparse supplies of electricity, as well as due to the artistic need to resurrect a space for congregation, theatre was recognized as the ideal place for fulfilling both cultural and existential needs. However, SARTR and their borrowed space in
the Youth Theatre basement-turned-shelter did not become the focal point of theatre activity during the siege. While they did continue to produce work, Kamerni Teatar 55 (Chamber Theatre 55) became the main center of wartime theatre activity in the city. The motivation to reopen Kamerni Teatar 55 was based on the convenience of its location, but more importantly about maintaining a municipal institution and a city theatre in the midst of aggression on the very urban core of the city.281

Kamerni Teatar 55 was founded in 1955 as an alternative to the National Theatre of Sarajevo, which was at the time the only playhouse in the city. Conceptually and stylistically, it offered a different perspective than that of the proscenium stage with big, overdesigned productions. The intimate space, a black box theatre with one hundred and sixty seat thrust-stage, is located in downtown Sarajevo, on one of the main city streets. At the start of the siege it became paralyzed like all other cultural institutions in the city, until it was determined that some form of life must be assumed during the war. Due to its relatively sheltered location (to reach the theatre one must one must pass through a corridor and up the stairs), which was likely determined based on a subjective feeling of safety, rather than actual reality, Kamerni was chosen as the central locale for the production of theatre during the war. Muhamed Karamehmedović explains the reasoning behind this decision:

The focus shifted towards Kamerni, because among other things, it was the safest for the audiences. Rare productions that were held in the National Theatre, were done with great fear… even though the building that houses Kamerni was directly hit by grenades, and there was death to be seen at the entrances and exits of the building, somehow it was more protected – or better yet, it gave us an illusion of safety.282

281 Gojer, Teatar pod opsadom, 63.
282 Davor Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 139.
The damage done by a grenade that fell on the theatre, destroying the upper floors which were mostly populated with offices, did not prevent the team, headed by Gradimir Gojer, from securing the space using UN supplies and continuing with their plans. The war season in Kamerni was inaugurated with a production of the musical *Hair Sarajevo Anno Domini 1992* in November of 1992, after which the theatre continued to operate throughout the duration of the siege.

The war brought a new sense of community in Sarajevo, and community became a tool for survival. It might be useful here to evoke Tonnies’ notions of *gemeinschaft*, a small-scale, organic or close-knit community, and *gesellshaft*, a large-scale, impersonal civil society. The former became increasingly important in besieged Sarajevo and not only in terms of logistics, such as coordinating water, wood, food, and supplies for example, but also in regards to psychological survival during the war. Theatre in Sarajevo, especially Kamerni Teatar 55, was the place where community could be reinforced through rituals of performance. The following discussion unpacks two productions that were staged in Kamerni that demonstrate two different approaches towards creating community and negotiating belonging through performance. I first consider the production of *The City* (Grad) to explore how ritual was used as a staging device in a performance of collective mourning of the besieged city. The analysis then turns to *Lovers* (*Ljubovnici*) to explore how engaging audiences on an emotional level fostered a positive shared experience that resulted in massive interest in this performance. In both cases, albeit in very different ways, the theatre was transformed into a place of worship, congregation, and communion. In both cases, albeit in very different ways, an experience of *communitas* as interpreted by Jill Dolan was achieved in the theatre. Dolan uses Victor Turner’s critical term and applies it to those moments in theatre “in which audiences or participants feel themselves
become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way; spectators’ individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience.”283 Unlike in Belgrade and Zagreb, theatre in Sarajevo assumed a central role in the cultural life of the besieged city. Cases in this chapter point to a special bond between the theatre community and their audiences during the war; so special, in fact, that there is nostalgia in the language used to describe the qualities of wartime theatre by those who were in the city during the siege. Furthermore, evidence points to a two-way relationship between institutional theatre and the preoccupation of Sarajevo citizens with self-preservation of the body and mind during the siege. The need for self-preservation profoundly impacted the understanding of what theatre can do for a community inside a warzone, while at the same token the performances were being shaped by the war mentality.

The City (Grad): A Collective Intellectual Meditation on Sarajevo

“It was a performance after which the audience found it difficult to applaud.”284 This is how one of the actresses describes Haris Pašović’s The City which opened on February 7, 1993 in Kamerni Teatar 55. The City, a collage of existing literary texts assembled by poet Semezedin Mehmedinović and theatre director Haris Pašović, was a meditative piece about the destruction of cities through history. One of the qualities that make Pašović a significant figure in Sarajevo wartime theatre is his effort to involve the international intellectual and artistic community, and to represent Sarajevo in cosmopolitan terms. He initiated the revival of the Sarajevo International Theatre Festival MESS, which stopped operating in 1991. In 1993, MESS started offering

284 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 184.
production support to all existing theatres in the city, and was even credited for organizing the first international film festival in Sarajevo during the occupation. In 1994, Pasović managed to tour two of his productions across Europe, *The Silk Drums* and *In the Country of Last Things*. While *The City* was not performed outside of Sarajevo, it definitely shows interest in repositioning Sarajevo on the map of the world. In fact, this was the production Susan Sontag saw upon her arrival to Sarajevo, after which she made the decision to direct *Waiting for Godot*, an event that is most familiar to Western audiences, and one that was used by media worldwide as the image of a suffering Sarajevo. In the discussion I will focus on the structure and content of the performance to explore how theatre made use of ritual to assert urbanity and civilized society.

The arrival of Haris Pašović in Sarajevo caused a stir among artists in the city. By then, countless members of the theatrical community had already left, and rare were those who chose to return in the midst of the siege. Prior to the war he was directing extensively in Belgrade, where he is still fondly remembered for his production of *Spring Awakening* in 1987 at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. Before returning to Sarajevo on New Year’s Eve of 1993, Pašović spent some time in Belgium working on a production with other former Yugoslav colleagues, such as Macedonian playwright Goran Stefanovski. This entire journey has been described in an article by Dragan Klaić, a Belgium-based Serbian scholar, who offered Pašović refuge inside his own home, and worked with him on this project. Klaić explains the reason for Pašović’s return was great anxiety for leaving his mother and sister in Sarajevo, “that his place was there, not in Stockholm nor Antwerp.”285 A more idealistic reason is listed by Pašović in his personal account *City the Engaged*, as “respect for Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Anna Akhmatova and the

285 Klaić, “The Crisis of Theatre?”, 149
artists from the Warsaw ghetto.”\textsuperscript{286} Whatever the real reason may be, Pašović returned to Sarajevo and immediately merged with the remaining theatre community, initiating new projects, including the revival of MESS, Sarajevo’s most famous pre-war theatre festival.

The production of \textit{The City} was Pašović’s first project upon arriving in Sarajevo. The piece was performed as a part of the revived Sarajevo Winter Festival constituted back in 1984 - the same year the Winter Olympic Games were held in Yugoslavia. As the siege was already taking it’s toll, some of the actors were in terrible physical and mental shape when Pašović asked them to participate in the piece. Izudin Bajrović, who was cast as Horacio in the play, had just returned from the front lines, and Ines Fančović, one of the oldest Sarajevo actresses and one who will play Sylvia Plath in \textit{The City}, refused to exit her apartment prior to rehearsals. Based on the fact that rehearsals lasted only one week, the production was assembled very quickly. The concept was minimal, as were the resources needed to execute the production. Based on the question – what is a city? – Pašović and Mehmedović composed a text using a variety of poems, prose and original writing.\textsuperscript{287}

Based on the writings of Dragan Klaić, Pašović had been pondering this question while still in Antwerp:

Now, in May 1992, Haris was in my house, glued to the television set, watching CNN for hours, staying up late, waking up at noon as if from a nightmare, and then having to face another nightmare of the reality. Watching him for weeks going almost crazy from anger and anxiety, cut off from his mother and sister in Sarajevo, I said at some point that we should try to do something but within our profession, theatre… For a few evenings Haris


\textsuperscript{287} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu}, 203.
and I sat at the computer, constructing an outline for a production on Sarajevo, with the
city as a hero and martyr. We discussed the history of the place, its mentality and
lifestyle, its multicultural character, its humor and music, its literature and its slang.
Sarajevo embodied the values and attitudes that the war in Yugoslavia had been
systematically destroying, and now the city had become its symbolic and factual target.288

When Pašović left for Sarajevo, the project he was working on with Klaić and Stefanovski
continued in his absence. It culminated with the production of Sarajevo, Tales from a City that
premiered in Antwerp in March of 1993. The final text was composed by Goran Stefanovski and
directed by another Macedonian artist, Slobodan Unkovski, who will later go on to direct The
Powder Keg in Belgrade. In the published edition of this play, Stefanovski wrote: “This play is
intended to be a candle lit for the health of the soul of the city of Sarajevo. It is dedicated to the
heroic struggle of the people of the city in their tragedy and to one Haris Pašović.”289 Although
Pašović had fled to Sarajevo prior to finishing work in Antwerp, he brought a corresponding
concept to Sarajevo. In the modest program for The City the play is described as “dramski kolaž”
which in English literally means theatrical collage. It was composed out of a variety of prose and
poetry written by notable historical literary figures including Polish writer Zbigniew Herbert,
Spanish film director Luis Buñuel, Lewis Mumford, Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, as well as
Borges, Sylvia Plath, Shakespeare, some parts of the Bible, and the works of Bosnian writers
such as Abdulah Sidran, Semezedin Mehmedović, Sadik Sadiković, Haris Pašović. A part from
the spoken word, the production consisted of live piano music, songs, and chants.

289 Goran Stefanovski, Sarajevo Tales from a City, in Balkan Blues, ed. Joanna Labon (Evanston: Northwestern
University Press, 1995), 211.
Pašović’s directing concept in *The City* has elements of ritual that are reflected in the circular positioning of actors on stage, the use of candles as the only lighting, in chants, and with music and declamations of the text. The mystical quality of the performance motivates one actress to refer to Pašović’s *The City* as a “strange composition,” while another actor frames it as a “miracle… a play that had the power of a magnet.” In a recording of the performance the actors’ faces and bodies so clearly manifest exhaustion, hunger and weakness, heightening the mystical sensation. *The City* might be framed as a ritual performance of citizenship, according to Silvija Jestrović, “the gathering of actors and audience members surpasses the theatrical event and becomes a congregation of citizens – a direct communication and a collective meditation on the city.” She further ties it to Peter Brook’s notion of *holy theatre* “where the actors have no other choice but to create out of their deepest need and in response “to a hunger”: ‘This theatre is holy because its purpose is holy; it has a clear defined place in the community and it responds to a need the churches can no longer fill.’” This echoes the attitude of Bosnian writer Dževad Karahasan who wrote: “Theatre like this nurtures and shelters us from fear, like a warm mother’s womb, or one of the still undestroyed places of worship.” I would argue also that by its structure and content the performance of *The City* was in a sense similar to the Theatrical Peace Prayers held every Saturday morning during the war in Kamerni Teatar 55. These ritual ceremonies were characterized by a collage structure, which included music, poetry, theatrical enactments, and speeches. While mostly secular events, only on occasion did these events have a truly religious character, with the effort to ensure participation of all religious

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290 Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu*, 79.
293 Jestrović, *Performance, Space, Utopia*, 130.
communities. As explained in Gradimir Gojer’s book, the prayers were for the “salvation of the City, but a prayer as a dignifying act, as a possibility of creative expression, not as a lament, a crying session before our unfortunate destiny.”

*The City* might also be interpreted as a ritual in which the besieged urban, educated, multiethnic citizen was symbolically placed against the imaginary of the rural, barbaric aggressor. For example, the review of the performance that came out in Sarajevo’s only wartime newspaper *Oslobodjenje* states “nothing is low and literal… the world comprehended through an intellectual prism… subtle nuancing of feelings, without a raised voice, without shouting…” Another comment frames the production as “a rarely urban play,” and Pašović’s directing style as the “need of a director to cry out with an articulated phrase.” We see this need to reinforce the civilized against the barbaric in other places during the war, such as in the following quotation by writer Dževad Karahasan:

> For as long as we keep thinking about literature, greeting each other as our upbringing requires, and using cutlery while dinning; for as long as we keep wanting to write or paint something, or endeavoring to articulate our situation and our feelings by means of theatre; for as long as we retain our right to a common life among different nations, religions, and convictions, we still have a chance to survive as cultural beings…

Here Karahasan recalls what went through his head when he was invited to be one of the founders of a Sarajevo-based PEN center during the war, but his words reflect a broader cultural idea that is also recognizable in *The City*. Thinking in terms of dichotomies such as urban vs.

rural and civilization vs. barbarity, the use of timeless intellectual and literary pieces reflects the need to create distance from the aggressor, which was framed as barbaric. From Pašović’s own directorial concept, to the language used in the interpretations of the performance, the concern was to highlight Sarajevo as a civilized society, contrary to the narratives that justified its annihilation, and against the Western gaze that frames the Balkans as the European barbaric Other.

**Lovers (Ljubovnici): Emotion, Memory and Renaissance Comedy**

Analyzing testimonies by actors, directors and theatregoers who were interviewed for Davor Diklic’s book *Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu 1992-1995*, one production particularly stands out. This is the production of *Lovers (Ljubovnici)* that was staged in Kamerni Teatar 55 on April 24, 1993. The high frequency of mentions and the language used to discuss it by various members of the Sarajevo theatre community indicate that the popularity of this wartime theatrical event supersedes any other performance during the four years of the siege. Although *Lovers* does not directly engage with the topic of war, the bond that was generated between the artists themselves, as well as between the artists and audiences characterized no other performance during the war. The success of this production was not only a result of a light theme, but also due to the manipulations of familiar imagery and expressive cues that generated profound connections based on collective longing in the tight space of Kamerni Teatar 55. It was a unique blend of distant and familiar, packed into a small space, filled with audiences from all parts of the city, all with the notion of a common destiny. Unlike *The City*, which invited contemplation on the war and destruction, *The Lovers* relied on emotion to invite communion and reinforce solidarity.
Žan Marlot, an actor in the show describes the atmosphere in the theatre at one of the first runs:

I remember one time… we were making our way from the dressing rooms. It was cold, but we were already prepared, there were candles, and we had priority electricity for the duration of the show… And we come out of our dressing rooms to see. We can’t enter the stage, we have no place to perform: there were so many people that each and every little part of the space was overflowing. There was at least a hundred people who were standing, not including the stairs, the floor, the entrance and the stage. We cannot enter the stage, let alone perform… Then they wanted to ask some people to leave. Some women cried out “Don’t send us away, we’re from Alipasiño Polje!” And so people managed to somehow squeeze themselves, and to free a little bit of the space on which we performed.299

Another actor in the performance recalls how the performance, which was initially planned to be performed on the stage that was 8x12m in size, ended up being performed within a space 3x4m large due to an incredible influx of patrons who swarmed the theatre.300 Actress Vanesa Glodjo, who herself had seen Lovers seven times during its run, claims that there were people in the audience who have come back to see the play twenty and thirty times.301 And even after the first thirty runs, there were still people in the hallways and the stairs of the theatre who were lining up to get a glimpse of the play.302 But what is also interesting, according to Gradimir Gojer, the production of Lovers alongside the regular theatregoers, brought into the theatre a new kind of audience. Gojer remembers large numbers of soldiers in the auditorium for example. He states,

299 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 172-173.
300 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 31.
301 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 109.
302 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 234.
people of “different generations, old and young, of different religious beliefs, and different occupations” came for their “portion of laughter.”

*Lovers* is an anonymous renaissance comedy from Dubrovnik, a beautiful historic coastal town in Croatia, and a city on UNESCO’s heritage list. The tradition of 17th century comedy in this Croatian city absorbed elements of the Italian commedia dell’ arte. However, unlike its Italian counterpart, it did not rely on improvisations based on loose scripts (*soggetto*), but was fully scripted. Theatre historian Nikola Batušić argues that improvised comedy was not a part of the Dubrovnik tradition due to the lack of professional actors. Undoubtedly influenced by the Italians, these comedies have characteristics that pertain specifically to Dubrovnik (the distinctive geography or a variety of noble or lower class characters for example). The plot in *Lovers* was composed, akin to comedies from this period and according to a specific pattern. In the case of 17th century Dubrovnik comedy, love and conspiracy are usually at the center with stock characters such as old man, doctor, parasite, prostitute, and decadent young men. Although it was fully scripted, testimonies show that actors Admir Glamocak (Intrigalo) and Senad Basic (dotur Prokupio) caused bolts of laughter using their command of the genre, as well as improvisations, which were often created, on the spot and in response to the audience. Already in rehearsals, the artists working on the production experienced a strong sense of community that rested upon laughter and relief. As the theatre was unbearably cold during the preparation of the show, the rehearsals were held in a smaller space that contained one furnace, which at least occasionally provided some heat for the actors. Despite the conditions, as the

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303 Gojer, *Teatar pod opsadom*, 70.
307 Gojer, *Teatar pod opsadom*, 70.
scenic designer who worked on the show fondly recalls, the rehearsals abounded with spontaneous fun, and laughter was an integral part of the process.\textsuperscript{309}

The comical is not the only element that figured into the overwhelming positive reception associated with \textit{Lovers}. The familiar sounds of the Croatian coastline, as well as the Croatian coastal dramatic tradition might have heightened the emotional experience in the theatre. Namely, when \textit{Lovers} was produced in Sarajevo in 1993, Bosnia and Croatia had already started a war amongst themselves. Despite the alliance between Croatian and Bosnian governments from the middle of 1992, in early autumn of the same year, relations between these two nations deteriorated when the Croats of Herzegovina attempted to expand. It soon extended to the rest of Bosnia during late autumn of 1992, and escalated further in 1993.\textsuperscript{310} The most memorable image of the Bosnian-Croatian conflict, and the one that is most familiar to the Western eye, has to be the destruction of the town of Mostar between May of 1993 and January of 1994. Given the circumstances, why would a Croatian renaissance comedy be chosen for the repertoire of any Sarajevo theatre during the war? The director of the production, Kaća Dorić, had lived and worked in Sarajevo since the 1960s, but was born in the northern part of Serbia and was educated in Belgrade. This, however, should be not interpreted as an unusual choice. Croatian dramatists have been present in Sarajevo theatres since the founding of the National Theatre in 1921, and have ever since represented a constitutive element in Sarajevo’s repertory theatre.\textsuperscript{311} Nevertheless, the fact that \textit{Lovers} was produced in Sarajevo in that particular moment imposes a certain symbolic reading of this choice, nor would such a reading have been able to escape Sarajevo wartime audiences.

\textsuperscript{309} Diklić, \textit{Teatar u ratnom sarajevu}, 234.
\textsuperscript{310} Cohen, \textit{Broken Bonds}, 275-276.
More importantly for this context it should be mentioned that Dubrovnik was one of Yugoslavia’s favorite vacationing spots, visited frequently by citizens across the entire old country. When in 1991, the Yugoslav National Army, led by Serbs and neighboring Montenegrins, ruthlessly attacked Dubrovnik, it came as a terrible shock to everyone. In the nine-month siege of the city, many cultural monuments and heritage sites were destroyed, rendering Dubrovnik the first city-symbol of destruction in the Yugoslav wars. By the time the show opened in Sarajevo on April 24, 1993, what transpired in Dubrovnik has already become public knowledge in all parts of the former Yugoslavia. Thus, we can only imagine that Sarajevan’s would feel a degree of allegiance with Dubrovnik - the first city to endure a siege, and at the time a shared common enemy embodied in the Yugoslav National Army. The fact that this production occurred in war-ridden Sarajevo might be interpreted as a gesture of understanding, or recognition between the two cities, one which was already liberated, the other deep in occupation.

In the case of the Lovers, the familiar was heightened by the use of sound. The following quotation by Djordje Slavinić, a Sarajevo professor who reportedly attended the production many times, illustrates the atmosphere in the theatre:

The warmth of the Mediterranean, the closeness to our mentality… it deeply affected me… people cried listening to the beautiful songs performed by ‘Friends,’ an ensemble which represented a symbol of the disappearing city – just like the diminishing number of singers left in the ensemble over time, not because they were leaving the city, but because they were dying... 312

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312 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom sarajevu, 258.
Slavinić then goes on to juxtapose this experience with the production of *Hair Sarajevo Anno Domini 92*, the first theatrical event in Kamerni Teatar 55 since the start of the siege, and the only one that came close in popularity. But for Slavinić the adaptation of the Western musical failed to achieve the same level of affective response because it did not carry notes of local color or familiarity. In Slavinić’s reasoning we can truly see how *Lovers* brought up a longing for the past and the old country. In the play, the vocalists enacted troubadours singing Dalmatian songs, beautiful traditional Croatian songs usually performed by groups of male singers (*klape*). These emotional songs are cherished across the former Yugoslavia and are associated with the Adriatic Coast. When at the end of *Lovers*, the song *La Musica di Notte* was performed, Dino Mustafic, a prominent Sarajevo director, recalls the audience singing along with the actors, “laughing through tears – or crying through laughter.”

The centrality of feeling figures more prominently in the discussion of *The Lovers* than in any other case study in this dissertation. Even more so than was the case with *Dark is the Night* in Belgrade. The basic human need for connection, which “theatre’s feeling-labour” might meet is fully materialized in the experience of *Lovers*. In some ways, the production of *Lovers* comes close to a utopian experience as it is understood by Dragan Klaić. He argues that “utopia is, by its very nature, without conflict – a state of stasis, harmony, and balance,” which are not usually components for exciting theatre. The first lesson in theatre, at least from a Western perspective, is that conflict is the essence of drama. However, in the case of *Lovers*, the conflict was raging outside of the walls of Kamerni Teatar 55, in real life, while the inside of the theatre was a longing for harmonious balance.

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313 Diklić, *Teatar u ratnom sarajevu*, 189.
Intense reactions are frequently found in theatre in extreme situations, because as Ivana Maček argues, “only in extreme situations of armed conflict, mass catastrophe, or natural disaster do most people realize how entirely we depend on one another for physical as well as psychological survival. What we seek in our social relations is a sense of security, however real or illusory this security may be.” The idea of wartime solidarity is not unique to the Sarajevo case, but can be found in numerous examples. For instance, in her study of women and war, Penny Summerfield uses the concept of wartime togetherness as a cultural construct within which to frame experiences of wartime relationships. Theatre as an art form has all the components to engender togetherness in war, and as is seen in the case of Lovers, it thrives in extreme situations. This case demonstrates that in Sarajevo it was not the theatre as a place of cognition, debate, instruction or reflection that made it so necessary for the community. Levels of experiencing feeling, such as affect and emotion, are what infused theatre with so much vitality during the war.

4.2. Negotiating Marginalized and Gendered Belonging in Zagreb

Although the war on Croatian territory formally ended in 1992, the situation remained critical. Political scientist Dijana Plešina, who wrote of this period, noted the “war psychosis…continued to dominate everyday life…,” while listing several reasons that were contributing to the crisis. Namely, in 1992, one third of Croatia’s territory was still occupied; approximately 750,000 refugees from Bosnia and Croatia were flooding the cities, which

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316 Maček, Sarajevo Under Siege, 86.
continued to be a burden to the already devastated war economy. The continuing pressure of another possible aggression on Croatia, as well as the spilling over of the war from Bosnia onto Croatian territory in April of 1992, all brought a considerable tension to the cities.\textsuperscript{319} At the same time Croatia’s involvement in Bosnia started shifting the perceptions of war in public and intellectual discourse, and fueled a growing mistrust in the government leadership of Croatian President Tudjman. The enthusiasm from the beginning of the conflict that was justified by the fight for independence had waned, and with Croatia’s involvement in Bosnia the war was no longer easily excused, nor was Croatia able to sustain the image of a victim. President Tudjman’s reputation, both at home and abroad was experiencing an “all-time low” as he became “castigated as a hypocrite and a willing accomplice in Milošević’s partition plans.”\textsuperscript{320} Simultaneously, as Croatian anthropologist Lada Čale Feldman has acknowledged, despite media oppression, “timid signs of oral, written, visual and theatrical popular humor” critiquing the President began to emerge.\textsuperscript{321} She welcomes these signs and reads them as “possible sources of a hopefully developing democratization.”\textsuperscript{322} The signs of Feldman’s argument can also be seen in the altered relationship between war and theatre in Zagreb in 1994, when the first productions on the topic of war materialized under the auspices of institutional theatre; two of these are considered in the forthcoming discussion.

The analysis opens with \textit{Welcome to Blue Hell} produced in Satirical Theatre Kerempuh, where the discussion focuses on the construction of a collective subcultural identity in Zagreb. This work was a rare example of institutional theatre from the first half of the 1990s, in which

\textsuperscript{319} Plešina, “Democracy and Nationalism in Croatia,” 135.
\textsuperscript{320} Marcus Tanner, \textit{Croatia: A Nation Forged in War} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 291.
\textsuperscript{322} Feldman, “The Image of the Leader,” 42.
there are direct references to the Zagreb’s political reality of the war years. The discussion then turns to *The Last Link* (*Poslednja Karika*) and the construction of belonging from a female perspective. Written by Lada Kaštelan, a rare example of a female playwright whose works were actually produced on stages of institutional theatre at the time, *The Last Link* became known in the history of Croatian theatre as one of the most important plays of the 1990s. When Dubravka Vrgoč was writing about new tendencies in Croatian theatre during the war, she refers to theatre as a “safe place” in which one can “react indirectly to reality,” arguing that during the war complex relations among the playwright, director, actors, and spectators were characterized by a search for another reality, by which the violence and hopelessness could potentially be surmounted.323 These productions loosely fit into the broader initiative in Croatian theatre known as the New Croatian Drama that dates back to 1990, although *Welcome to Blue Hell* is closer to the tradition of political theatre of the 1970s.

Unlike Sarajevo, where theatre became one of the most central spaces for sustaining community during the war, in Zagreb such potentials were never quite realized. While the repertoires were largely filled with low risk choices such as melodramas and plays with historical or religious themes, there are moments to be noted in which theatre attempted to provide space for the questioning of community and belonging against the set national program. The productions discussed in this chapter are particularly significant because they lack any larger-than-life heroes (as was the case with religious or historical dramas). Instead, the subjects of inquiry are ordinary urban citizens: an educated Zagrebian family in the case of the former, and a working class unit in case of the latter. *Welcome to Blue Hell* and *The Last Link* demonstrate to what extent ideology played a role in the shaping of responses to the conflict within the

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institutional theatre network in Zagreb. These works disclose masculine and feminine anxieties about belonging in relation to the nation during the war, and while both are about class, more importantly both disrupt the hegemonic political project of belonging in Croatia. The discussion opens with Welcome to Blue Hell and is focused more on reception, followed by The Last Link, in which I deconstruct nuances of the text.

Marginalized Belonging in Welcome to Blue Hell: Veterans, Soccer Fans and Croatian-ness

The war that broke out in the territory of Croatia in 1991 was heretofore referred to as the Homeland War (Domovinski Rat) or The Croatian War of Independence. Even the name of the war reflects the idea of a new nation as a home that needs to be defended. It has been previously stated in this thesis that during this period, it became increasingly important to define Croatian-ness, what it means, and how it should be embodied. The drama Welcome to Blue Hell (Dobrodosli u Plavi Pakao), as well as the reactions to this production, are reflections of this problem. The text itself, which focuses on a group of urban football fans and veterans of the Croatian War, suggests a struggle to define collective male identity immediately following the end of the War in Croatia. Furthermore, the audience reaction, as well as that of the government, point to an intricate performance-spectator relationship in this particular moment. Although as its primary interest, the play scrutinizes unstable notions of belonging within a subculture, it is reflective of the anti-government sentiment that was brewing in the Croatian capital. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the plot of the play, and provide historical context before continuing the discussion of community and belonging associated with this particular case.

Welcome to Blue Hell was written by Borivoj Radaković as an adaptation of a chapter from his novel The Glow of the Epoch (Sjaj Epohe), published in Zagreb in 1990. The central
inquiry in Radaković’s play is a group of soccer fans called Bad Blue Boys that is associated with the beloved soccer club Dinamo from Zagreb. *Welcome to Blue Hell* offers an inside look into the group dynamics and identity issues of this collective. The action takes place in a family home in a neighborhood that was once a part of Zagreb suburbia, but has now grown into a part of the city proper. Four friends, devoted Dinamo fans, meet at home to watch a game between Croatia (formerly Dinamo from Zagreb, now renamed Croatia) and Hajduk (soccer club from Split, a rival town on the coast of Dalmatia). Initially, the boys planned to travel to Split with other members of the Bad Blue Boys fan group. However, strapped for money, they stay at home glued to the TV. *Welcome to Blue Hell* contains a subtitle – “comedy/chaos in two parts” – which also indicates the two halves of the soccer game during which the action takes place. The characters in the play include four friends from the “hood,” only one of which currently has a job, while the rest run some sort of unsuccessful shady business. While they watch the game at Boža’s house, a selection of supporting characters coast through the scenes. Boža’s father, unemployed and a former hippie, his mother an old “rocker chick” and the only breadwinner in the family, and his sister of questionable morals. The entire span of characters is meant to reflect the demography of the war years – disillusionment, unemployment, poverty, black markets, and otherwise.

One of the distinguishing features of this drama is the lack of a central conflict. Namely, the dialogue is a collection of bickering, vulgarity, trivial and quickly forgettable short instances of small conflicts that have to do with soccer, dating, unemployment, government and war. What is relevant for this discussion is that the characters, besides being members of the Bad Blue Boys fan club, are also veterans in the Croatian Homeland War. With that in mind, as Dalibor Foretić has argued, the act of watching a soccer game becomes a ritual, a frame for unleashing pent up
aggressive behavior. Furthermore, the language, which is a perfect replica of the Zagrebian urban idiom, signifies the recognizable tribal speech that characterizes cliques or gangs.\footnote{Dalibor Foretić, “Zagreb kao dramsko mesto,” Kraljini dani u Osijeku 2 (1997): 166.}

The fact that the characters in this play are fans of Dinamo soccer club has a lot of relevance in this particular moment. The Bad Blue Boys (BBB for short) were founded in 1986 in the city of Zagreb as the first organized group of Dinamo football fans. At this time, Dinamo represented Zagreb’s unique identity within Croatia, while simultaneously carrying the reputation of Croatian national identity within Yugoslavia.\footnote{Alex J. Bellamy, The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-Old Dream (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 118.} A documentary film about the BBB illustrates that Dinamo was more than just a soccer club - the blue jerseys, the white letter “D” and the checkered Croatian flag on the club’s crest, became the symbol of the Croatian resistance in the common country. To root for Dinamo meant to be proud of your origins and to preserve consciousness of belonging to a future nation in which the Croats will finally live independently.\footnote{The full documentary is available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcFixMvAg30} During the 1990s, the soccer club and its fans interacted with the government in both supporting and subversive ways, which explains why the reception of Welcome to Blue Hell was colored by actual events that have determined the war and post-war destiny of this soccer club.

In his book, The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-Old Dream, Alex J. Bellamy has argued that the Dinamo conflict, which will be explained shortly, represents a phenomenon within which fundamental questions of Croatian national identity can be explored. The aspect of this conflict that is the most significant for the discussion of Welcome to Blue Hell has to do with the controversies surrounding name changes of the club.\footnote{Bellamy, The Formation of Croatian National Identity, 118.}
Europe the word “dinamo” is associated with the Soviet Sport Society of the same name, which was in 1923 founded in Moscow. Following the Second World War many countries in the Eastern bloc, including Croatia, adopted the word for their own sports. The history of this choice is itself interesting, as the writer Maxim Gorky suggested, because *dinamo* expresses ‘energy, motion and force.” Dinamo Zagreb carried this name from 1945 until 1991 when, in an attempt to create distance from the Yugoslav past, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman changed the club name to HASK-Gradjanski, which was an amalgamation of two rival pre-Second World War Zagreb soccer clubs. After the first effort to change the club’s name failed, Tudjman changed it again in 1993 – this time to Kroaciya (Croatia). *Welcome to Blue Hell* captures the period of the second name change. It is important to note that these strategies were a part of Tudjman’s efforts to manufacture new iconography that would help distance the Croatian state from Yugoslavia. Interestingly, the Satirical Theatre Kerempuh, where *Welcome to Blue Hell* was produced, suffered a similar fate when in 1994 when it was also forced to change its name. Since 1964 this theatre existed under the name “Jazavac” (Hedgehog), named after a well-known story by a Serbian writer. However, in 1994, because of the symbolic connection with the Serbian enemy it was changed to Kerempuh. These symbols were meant to communicate to Croatian citizens, as well as to send a message to the international community that Croatia is now an independent state to be seen in a light separate from its Balkan geopolitical location. In reality, it was one of Tudjman’s exercises of nationalism, which unlike most of his other decisions, did not achieve mass approval by his supporters.

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Even before the war between Serbia and Croatia had officially started, the Bad Blue Boys were already implicated in the conflict due to a particular incident that transpired on the soccer field. Namely, in May 1990, Belgrade’s Red Star soccer team was playing against Dinamo in Zagreb’s Maksimir football stadium. Tensions based on nationalistic grounds rose up high, and soccer fans on both sides engaged in a violent conflict until the game was suspended. As a side note, the leader of Belgrade’s Red Star team was then Željko Ražnatović “Arkan,” who will go on to become one of the most notorious war criminals in the 1990s, and the leader of a Serbian paramilitary group that performed unspeakable crimes in Croatia and Bosnia. When the war erupted, Dinamo fans massively enlisted in the army, joining the Croatian Police forces, HOS, and the National Gard.³³⁰ It has been noted elsewhere that Bad Blue Boys wore Dinamo badges on their military uniforms, and draped Dinamo flags over their military sleeping quarters.³³¹ To this day, on the official website of the Bad Blue Boys it reads: “the majority of Bad Blue Boys considers that the War in Croatia started on May 13, 1990 – with the never played soccer match between Dinamo and Red Star.”³³² Many of the Bad Blue Boys died in the war, and to commemorate the deceased a statue was built in their honor at the Maksimir stadium. The memorial was not funded by the government, however, but by the fans themselves. The BBB fought for the nationalistic ideals of the government, but they were ready to jump ship as soon as Tudjman attempted to take away the name of the club, which to them was a sacred matter. For them, this gesture meant questioning of their dedication to the Croatian national cause and to their very Croatian-ness.

The Bad Blue Boys used a variety of resources to raise their voice against the name change: graffiti, petitions, a music video, and finally a collaboration with the Satirical Theatre Kerempuh on the production *Welcome to Blue Hell*.\(^{333}\) Thus, when the show opened, the conflict was transplanted into the walls of Zagreb’s institutional theatre. Members of the Bad Blue Boys fan club were invited to attend a special preview of the play. Video footage shows a group of fans jumping around “mosh pit” style in front of the theatre, to the music of the band Pips, Chips and Videoclips, who also provided the music for the play. Once inside the theatre, the audience continues on cheering in a manner that evokes the atmosphere of a soccer stadium.

Then, the video shows how the text of the play, which is full of recognizable lines and chants associated with Dinamo, provokes lively reactions inside the theatre.

*Welcome to Blue Hell* became a hit with Zagreb audiences, but was harshly criticized by the regime. According to the theatre’s leadership, the government went as far as to accuse the theatre for destabilizing the state.\(^{334}\) Immediately following the opening, harsh criticism was published in the state-run newspaper *Vecernje Novosti*. The playwright Borivoje Radaković was attacked for his Serbian origins, while the play was interpreted as a direct criticism of President Tudjman. Radaković, however, came of age in Zagreb, which is also where he was educated, and his identity was always inseparable from the Croatian capital. His command of the *kajkavian* dialect, which is one of the distinguishing features of Croatia’s capital city, permeates the characters’ speech in *Welcome to Blue Hell*. Writers for the independent media *Arkzin* state in a critical essay, “Radaković, an urban, modern individual, master of the kajkavian dialect, a true *purger*, but of Serbian origins, becomes a victim of the regime because he embodies the very


fantasy which Croats (with a capital C) have of themselves. Radaković’s case is a message of the regime: there is no such Croatian-ness that can save a Serb from his destiny in Croatia – the destiny of the paradigmatic enemy.”

In the theatre world, the play was seen as a much needed critical response to the war regime. For instance, Sanja Nikčević argues the writing and producing of this play, as well as the audience reaction should be upheld as an act of civic bravery. Dalibor Foretić interprets it as more than just support of the Dinamo name, but also as a harsh critique of society, politics and power relations that grew out of the Croatian war, “which is written in history as a war for liberation and homeland.” He also stands up to those critics who label the play as ephemeral and political, stating that Welcome to Blue Hell is not an agit-prop play, or some cheap sketch, as was argued by those who were close to the government, but a play of real quality whose values go far beyond ephemeral political reasons. I agree with Foretić about the quality of the play. It captures successfully the very raw relationships within a working class neighborhood in Zagreb.

Welcome to Blue Hell closed after seventy five runs, which is an average duration for Kerempuh’s productions. Anyone who lived through the 1990s, whether in Zagreb or in Belgrade, would recognize the zeitgeist of that particular decade in this production - a working class neighborhood where very few actually have a job, destructive behavior, post-war disillusionment, street corners full of young men without any perspective for a better life. For those who wanted to grasp, it was an invaluable opportunity to see a mirror image of the degradation of their society.

337 Borislav Pavlovski, “Bijeli grad” u znaku plave boje,” afterward to Plavi Grad (Zagreb: Hena com), 305.
338 Foretić, “Zagreb kao dramsko mesto,” 165.
Negotiating Female Belonging in *The Last Link (Poslednja Karika)*

The fact that Lada Kaštelan’s *The Last Link* did not result in a mass following such as *Welcome to Blue Hell* does not hinder its significance for Croatian theatre history, as well as for the topic of this dissertation. There are many things that could be said about this production, which opened five months after Radaković’s play, including the fact that it was written by a female playwright in an industry largely dominated by male writers, and that it is indeed a very well written play. When it premiered on October 31, 1994 in the City Drama Theatre Gavella of Zagreb, it garnered great interest both from the audiences and critics, as well as other Croatian theatres that subsequently went on to produce their own versions of the play. As a rare occurrence, the reviews were nearly unanimously positive, and it is repeatedly listed as one of the best, if not the best play in Croatian theatre of the first half of the 1990s. While these are all valid motives for including the production of *The Last Link* in any study about late twentieth century Croatian theatre, the reason for including it in this dissertation is that it problematizes belonging to the nation from an urban gendered perspective. While Lada Kaštelan’s play is certainly an anomaly on the Croatian stage during this period, it is also a reflection of the shifting political climate in the capital city as argued by Čale-Feldman. The following discussion is primarily focused on exploring how Kaštelan manipulates the text to wrestle with patterns of female belonging in Croatia.

Coinciding with the year of its debut, *The Last Link* is set in Zagreb in the year 1994, with ordinary middle class urban citizens as the primary subject of inquiry. Croatian theatre scholar Boris Senker with good reason describes Kaštelan’s dramaturgy as “an ironic celebration, a fantastic, dynamic, and in moments grotesque play of binary oppositions – birthday and funeral, dream and reality, real and unreal, body and shadow, past and future, life and death, public and private, comedy and melodrama – in which the characters are held within an unstable and
undefined situation of simultaneous recognizing and unfamiliarity.”339 The plot surrounds three women – daughter, mother, and grandmother – who become united one last time at an extraordinary dinner party. The events unfold during a single night, while Kaštelan’s intricate weaving of time intertwines the real with the fantastic. At the start of the play we find a woman in her mid-thirties, a character that Kaštelan symbolically names Her. On stage she is joined by the Maid, an older woman dressed in black and white “maid clothes,” who is carefully setting the table for a dinner party. It rapidly becomes clear this is not quite the realistic situation it appears to be. The Maid is, in fact, an embodiment of death, and the guests who are invited to dinner are no longer among the living.

In reality, the year is 1994 and it is the day of Her birthday and Her Mother’s funeral. She is thirty six years old, a war journalist, pregnant and abandoned by her lover. “I want to be the last link in the chain. I want to be the last link in the chain. I want to be the last link in the chain,” and Her words that open the play. Tonight she is contemplating suicide, but before that she is destined to meet with the youthful incarnations of her Mother and Grandmother. As the guests enter the party - the Mother with her Lover, and the Grandmother with her Husband - Kaštelan further complicates the plot. While the stage time is still 1994, the newly introduced characters operate on from within their own historical periods. Hence, the year 1994 coincides with the year 1971 for the Mother and 1944 for the Grandmother. In other words, it is simultaneously 1994, 1971 and 1944 in Zagreb and the three women are all thirty six years old when they meet on the stage. What follows is an interplay of seemingly arbitrary conversations in which we learn the complicated relationships within the family. The characters never quite recognize each other, but are always haunted by the familiarity. In a melodramatic turning point, a knock on the door interrupts the

party bringing us back to reality. Enters Her Lover to ask for forgiveness. He sees Her, but not the characters from the other side of reality. As the guests say their goodbyes, She is left with a choice - to proceed with suicide, or to give life another chance. After all, She chooses life: “New life is growing inside of me. The last link in the chain. And that is fine. It’s fine. Fine.” But there is an uneasiness in her words.

According to Nira Yuval-Davis, belonging to a nation relates to “people’s social and economic locations, which at each historical moment would tend to carry with them particular weights in the grids of power relations operating in their society.”340 The years out of which the characters are operating on stage in The Last Link, 1944, 1971 and 1994, are all significant moments in Croatian history. The Grandmother is coming from the period of the Second World War, which preceded the rise of the Croatian Independent State (NDH) under Germany’s auspices. The Ustasha regime, as it was called, attempted to purge the country of Serbs, Jews, and all who did not conform, including ethnic Croats. The year out of which the Mother character emerges is 1971, which relates to the MASPOK movement of the early 1970s. Also known as the Croatian Spring, this highly contested movement advocated more rights for Croatia within Yugoslavia. The national and the liberal-democratic were two parallel strains of the movement, with the former being more dominant.341 Stepping out of the realm of politics and into the fields of education and culture,342 the movement spread quickly and culminated in student demonstrations in Zagreb and other Croatian towns. The communists led by Tito saw danger in this movement and wasted no time to suppress it by firing leaders and imprisoning many individuals who were a part of the

342 For example, Ivo Goldstein notes that in the spring of 1971 a new, nationally oriented leadership was elected at Zagreb University and the journal of Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Matica Hrvatska) started publishing a weekly focused on national themes.
Croatian Spring. Why would these two periods be significant for the audiences that were watching *The Last Link* in 1994? As Jill A. Irvine has argued, “the period of reform, popular mobilization, and political turmoil during the Croatian Spring shaped the political perceptions and actions of both the leaders and the public in Croatia during the dissolution of Yugoslavia twenty years later.”

Additionally, some of the leaders of the Croatian Spring who were condemned or imprisoned, including the President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman, were rehabilitated in the 1990s. Similarly this could be said for the 1940s reference, particularly because Croatian nationalism of the early 1990s heavily relied on the imagery from the NDH period. Thus, Kaštelan’s anachronistic layering becomes a very sophisticated manipulation of time in which the present is underwritten by the past, and an exploration of social and economic locations of female belonging.

The war, as well as Croatia’s independence in the early 1990s, brought with it a new framework within which belonging was constructed. The media, as the most influential engine for the reproduction of imagery of belonging, defined and prescribed on a daily basis who is to belong and how one is to belong. In her book *The Body of War*, Dubravka Žarkov has shown how “the violent practices of the ethnic war and the representational practices of the media war in Yugoslavia rested upon the symbolic and physical capacities of male and female bodies.” These representations are key to understanding the specific constructions of belonging that women needed to fit into, in order to support Croatia’s newly gained independence and the war effort. Žarkov outlines several identities women were able to assume during the war in order to be included in the national project of belonging: the mother, the victim, and the armed body. Of these three types, the mother emerges as the core in the narrative of war and the birth of the nation.

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343 Lenard Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso, eds., *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007), 149.
that respect she identifies two types – the fierce mother and the mother of tears. The former is brave and determined, and will, for example, stand up against army generals and demand her children be pulled out of the Yugoslav National Army only so they could join the fight for the Croatian homeland. The latter is overpowered by grief and dependent of the son to come to her rescue. Žarkov reads these identity structures as metaphors for independent Croatia (fierce mother) and martyred Croatia (mother of tears). The other two desirable modes of belonging to the nation render the women either a victim reflecting “Croatia’s ultimate victimized Self,” or a soldier in which case she is celebrated for “embodying the ethnic essence of the nation.”

I would add here that any alternative modes of belonging and identification would come up against repression, as it was the case with the “Witches from Rio” incident from the early 1990s, when five feminist and anti-nationalist writers were prosecuted in the media for upholding views that were seen as anti-Croatian, thus rendering them unsuitable Croatian women.

How then, do the three generations of female characters in Kaštelan’s play fit into these categories, and what does that say about the construction of belonging in Croatia during the war? To answer this question, it is useful to observe the characters as individuals and as part of a collective, while acknowledging that “identity narratives can be individual or they can be collective, with the latter often acting as a resource for the former.”

On a collective level, we can situate these three characters according to their social and economic location into the group of Balkan women, and more specifically middleclass urban Zagrebian women. As an individual subject, the Grandmother embodies traditional values, adhering without objection to the patriarchal model; she is no stranger to ideas like the one in which a woman should bear a child in order to secure marriage. Her voice is very much that of the old Zagrebian urban women, elegant and moderate in her expressions,

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progressive but essentially traditional. As for the Mother, she is the most outspoken and flamboyant character in the play, as well as being the most complex and the one with most agency. A Croatian critic tied her exuberance to the representation of freedom and “hedonism all the way to oblivion” which was typical for Zagreb of the 1970s. She is the one who mocks her own mother (the Grandmother character) when uttering the following lines: “Men must be older and more mature in order to be able to guide us through life and take care of us.”

The least defined character in the play is Her. She comes from the time when the *Last Link* was written and produced. We know that she is a journalist that has been seeing a married man for the past eight years, who left her three weeks before her mother’s funeral, marking the beginning of the play. She is aware of expectations that are imposed on her as a Balkan woman. Partly due to Her being the observer in the play juggling between life and death, and partly because she has lost all hope in the future, She is rendered the most unstable character of them all. Her agency manifests itself only when she takes matters into her own hands and decides to take her life, thereby putting a stop to the chain of life. Even more than her Mother, Her’s agency drives this character into self-destruction.

Reverting to Žarkov’s divisions of female belonging during the war, the women in *The Last Link* share the status of victims. More specifically, they are victims of the war and they are victims of men, the lines between the two often being blurred. The lives of the three women have been defined by men, and by war. The Grandmother is married to a member of the Partisan army, the mainstream Yugoslav anti-German and anti-Ustasha resistance movement during the Second World War, which was led by Tito himself. In the play she is haunted by the feeling of fear that something bad is going to occur to him, and that after he returns to the war tomorrow, she will never see him again: “He won’t tell me anything. But something is happening, I know that

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348 Kaštelan, “Poslednja Karika,” in *Nova hrvatska drama*, 82.
something is happening and that it’s not good, and that something is bothering him more than ever before.”

The Husband, who wears a uniform with the red star symbol on stage, never gives her any clues in respect to where he will be going tomorrow, proving once again that war is a man’s business. For her, the future is composed of waiting. While the Grandmother is defined against an active warrior Husband, the Mother is defined by the absence of her military father: “… people remember their childhood, but not me… My memories start with my mother’s shriek when they called to let her know that her husband was killed…. Hence, the mistrust in men that has followed her into three failed marriages. The man that she brings to the ghostly dinner is her current Lover, who we later find out is a Croatian nationalist. Only in the case of Her, the man is not the main connection to the war, herself as a war reporter. Nevertheless, She is still rendered the victim of her Lover: “You pushed me into the abyss. Into darkness. Alone… It is surprising that I’m still here.”

In her analysis of the war and its aftermath, Dubravka Žarkov has noted the trend in anti-nationalist feminist discourses to focus on female victimization, both in Balkan and international discourses. Mass rape and sexual violence as a war strategy, which became public knowledge in 1992, is partly the reason for the emergence of this trend in relation to the wars of Yugoslav succession, and especially the Bosnian war. However, although she understands that the focus on the woman as a victim was a direct consequence of the issues that were indeed happening in reality, Žarkov also points to some problems with this construct:

The assumption that all women are victims of all men defines woman as an ultimate

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349 Kaštelan, “Poslednja Karika,” in Nova hrvatska drama, 74.
353 Žarkov, The Body of War, 213.
metaphor of victimhood, and paradoxically, adopts the dominant patriarchal notions of gender – with aggressive masculinity and violable femininity – even when wanting to subvert it… One consequence of such a standpoint is that, for antinationalist feminists, all women are seen primarily through the prism of victimization. Even women who, by every possible criterion, could have been defined through agency, are regularly described as “manipulated” and “trapped…” Such a conceptualization, on the one hand leaves nationalism and war as exclusively male enterprises. On the other hand, it separates victimization and agency, without recognizing that the two are not necessarily separate or opposite, but rather mutually constitutive, both empirically and discursively.\footnote{Žarkov, \textit{The Body of War}, 2015-2016.}

Elissa Helms takes this notion even further in her discussion on gender and nationalism during the Bosnian war, in which she points out a more sophisticated level of feminist activism relating to the Wars of Yugoslav succession: women are associated with total narratives of victimhood, without the possibility of “complicity, responsibility or even agency, for such ambiguity may lead to suspicions of guilt or inauthenticity on the part of the victim.”\footnote{Elissa Helms, \textit{Innocence and Victimhood: Gender, Nation and Women’s Activism in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina} (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 7.}

If we settle on interpreting Kaštelan’s strategy as perpetuating while attempting to subvert, we fail to see the struggle to define female belonging in the context of war, as well as to acknowledge her frustrations with options available to women. What symbolizes this struggle in \textit{The Last Link} is the act absolute rejection of politics as illustrated by the following example. In the dialogue below, the conflict arises when the Grandmother’s Husband finds his political ideals that he fought for as a Partisans in the Second World War (read communist ideals and workers struggle) become endangered in the year 1994:
GRANDMOTHER’S HUSBAND: A maid, in the year ninety four, wonderful. All of our ideals, our struggle, for nothing.

HER: It’s not what it seems. But that all of your ideals were in vain, this is true.

MOTHER’S LOVER: And not just in vain! You ruined everything! If you only knew what is happening right now… in the name of those ideals of yours! They’re putting us in jails! You and your… struggle… and your… Serbs!

MOTHER: Honey, the gentlemen comrade is perhaps a Serb.

GRANDMOTHER: God forbid.

GRANDMOTHER’S HUSBAND: Croat from Lika.

MOTHER: Like my father.

GRANDMOTHER’S LOVER: So you are not interested in what happened afterwards… with your ideals?

GRANDMOTHER’S HUSBAND: No, I don’t think I am.

MOTHER’S LOVER: Very good. Comrade pre-war leftist is not interested. Perhaps you would be surprised?

HER: And you, are you not interested what happened you your own ideals?

MOTHER’S LOVER: Of course I am.

HER: You could be surprised as well.

MOTHER: He’s not easily fascinated by reality.

MOTHER’S LOVER: Only you fascinate me. I would be glad if you explained everything carefully.

MOTHER: Absolutely not. If you don’t change the subject I’m leaving immediately. I did not come to a political conference, but a dinner. If you could
only talk without getting into a fight, but of course, that is not possible. It’s my birthday today, and not just mine it appears, I’m in a good mood and I perfectly don’t give a fuck for the fate of any sort of ideals. 

MOTHER’S LOVER: But it’s about the destiny of Croatia!

MOTHER: Even more so. In any case, I will not be able to avoid my destiny. Nor will it go around me.

HER: (to the Maid) She’s right again.\textsuperscript{356}

The rejection of politics, men’s politics, started in this dialogue is taken even further in an act of clothes stripping on stage, an idea proposed by the Mother but then accepted by all the characters. Each time someone attempts to discuss politics they all have to take off a piece of clothing, rendering them all half naked by the end of the play. However, regardless of the effort to reject or even ignore politics and wars, they keep resurfacing throughout the play like a nightmare. It is in this act of unclothing we are able to see the generational, as well as feminist relationship to politics.\textsuperscript{357} And as Croatian scholar Ana Lederer has argued, “the ignoring of reality is, in fact, an answer to the pressure, a strong poetic gesture of refusal of any dialogue with political history.”\textsuperscript{358} Not long after the play opened, in an interview for a Croatian daily, Lada Kaštelan spoke about her personal relationship with politics: “… how deeply the war is penetrating our intimate lives, or the fear of war… because I know that I cannot escape politics… because it penetrates the language I love and which I use to express myself, my disgust towards politics is absolute.”\textsuperscript{359} By not discussing the war on stage, but by focusing on its effect on an urban family in Zagreb, the war hovers as an invisible force that determines the

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\textsuperscript{356} Kaštelan, “Poslednja Karika,” in \textit{Nova hrvatska drama}, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{357} Ana Lederer, \textit{Vrijeme osobne povijesti} (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2004), 57.
\textsuperscript{358} Lederer, \textit{Vrijeme osobne povijesti}, 57.
\end{flushright}
characters’ destiny. This resonates with the audience in 1994, as one critic states, “we do not hear the thunder of the bombs, and the air raid warning, there is no blood… but the pressure of war is there in the unsurmountable sensing of the closeness of death…” The war, however, is not represented as just, or even justifiable, but as a destructive force in which we (un)willingly participate.

The rejection of politics, however, was not a trend of solely female writing. The new wave of playwrights that debuted in Zagreb in the early 1990s all had one thing in common: the distancing from politics and grand historical themes. This is why Lada Kaštelan is often analyzed as a member of this new wave, even though she is of an older generation. The Last Link is truly a well written play, and an example of excellent theatre – this I say while accounting for my own bias as an urban Balkan woman in her thirties to whom this play speaks profoundly on many different levels. Along with Welcome to Blue Hell it shows how, in these marginalized pockets of urban culture, which is where Croatian institutional theatre finds itself in the 1990s (the same could be said for Belgrade), there were rare occasions of profound critical inquiry about civil society and the role of ordinary citizens in the war. Centering on small, intimate lives, instead of those of historical figures and other larger-than-life characters that were saturating Croatian theatre in the 1990s, both of these works are set apart from the mainstream national discourse at the time.

4.3. (Im)possibilities of Building Community and Negotiating Belonging in Belgrade

Preeminent Belgrade scholar Ivan Medenica makes an argument about the shift in Belgrade institutional theatres in 1994, using Euripides as a historical parallel. According to Medenica’s interpretation, the case of Euripides is paradigmatic for Belgrade theatre in the 1980s

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360 Senker, Hrestomatija novije hrvatske drame, 580.
361 Lederer, Vrijeme osobne povijesti, 57.
and 1990s. His patriotism from the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, which is visible in *Heracleidae* and *The Suppliants*, changes as the war progresses, as is seen in his famous pacifist play *The Trojan Women*. Medenica draws a parallel with Serbian theatre, which changed “as the community started discovering the real nature of the war,” so that starting in 1994, a stronger anti-war engagement might be registered on the stage. In Belgrade theatre, the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was on the forefront of this change.

Any analysis of institutional theatre during the Wars in Croatia and Bosnia would not be complete without a closer look into the work of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade. The history and the breakup of Yugoslavia has, perhaps more than in any other theatre in the former common country, been reflected in the life of this major Belgrade institution. The work that was done in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre during the conflict was as colorful and diverse as in any other municipal theatre in the region. However, there was a strand of works during the early 1990s that demonstrate a commitment to providing space for alternative voices. It is from this line of works that examples are drawn for the following analysis.

The Yugoslav Drama Theatre was a landmark institution in the former Yugoslavia. When the dissolution began, the theatre kept its original name, performing as sort of a museum for the memory of an idea and a country. It was founded in 1947 by a special decree issued from Yugoslavia’s President Josip Broz Tito. The idea was to create an all-Yugoslav performing arts institution, which would mark the beginning of the life in the common state. With the idea to form a theatre that would represent the country, the best artists from all parts of Yugoslavia were

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brought in, founding a supra-national institution. Thus, from its very beginnings the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was meant to articulate the idea of belonging to the nation.363

When the war broke out and Yugoslavia ceased to exist in its original formation, the Yugoslav Drama theatre kept its name. This was not unusual, considering that after 1992, the name Yugoslavia was appropriated by the Serbian regime, which constituted a federal union with Montenegro.364 Other institutions, such as the Yugoslav airline (JAT) were also allowed to keep their names. However, from the moment of its dissolution, the idea behind the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, its mission and all that it stood for ceased to exist. This was a big blow to the artistic community, whose foundations were built on mobility and work opportunities all across the country. After the breakup of Yugoslavia this theatre became a sort of memorial site, a place for many of those who disagreed with the war regime. This sentiment is illustrated by Haris Pašović, whose work was discussed in this chapter in relation to Sarajevo, and who spent many years working in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre:

I believe that keeping the name Yugoslav Drama Theatre is a good thing, because in that way, we are not rejecting our own lives and our own history, which marked us as well as the generations before and after us. I think that it is very important that one such “live” institution carries this name, not just some statue. It is good to have a theatre which will remind us of the time which had its significant ups and downs, and which has been engraved in the theatre itself.365

364 This, however, was rejected by the regional and international community, and in 2003 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia officially became “Serbia and Montenegro.”
Unable to fulfill its mission of a theatre that housed artists from all over Yugoslavia, was this theatre becoming obsolete in the 1990s? The truth is that alongside many other institutions, it struggled to re-conceptualize its mission.

From the testimony of distinguished Belgrade actress Mirjana Karanović, there was a community within the theatre that continued to exist throughout the 1990s. It consisted of artists who sought out opportunities to address the gruesome reality that defined those years. This was the community of artists who tried to preserve whatever was left of the old “Yugoslav” spirit, and with their work consciously create a space that would connect the public with reality, and with the institution itself. This, however, was not a unified collective, according to Karanović, as there were those who disagreed with any kind of engagement. Although they were formally on the payroll, Karanović argues, they were not a “true” part of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre community. Her views point to a strife that existed, but also to a sense of belonging that was being nurtured within the theatre. The productions that are discussed in this chapter were a result of this community.

One of the biggest challenges that all municipal theatres faced in this period was their dependence on state funds. Evidence suggests that in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, many compromises had to be made in order to survive. The management refrained from making any drastic moves that would potentially jeoperdize the theatre. What they did do, however, was to produce works that more or less coveted ways questioned the regime. In 1991 a production of Pierre Corneilles’ Illusion Comique incorporated bits of Belgrade’s own reality on stage. Then in 1993, a production of George Tabori’s Mein Kampf was produced with direct allusions to Serbia’s war regime. However, it was the season of 1994-1995 that marked a serious transition

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366 Dragan S.V. Babić, Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište Samim Sobom, 118.
towards works which, each in their own way, problematized the war, by conveying the Balkan violence and the notions of identity in relation to the nationalist project of belonging. The production of Karl Kraus’ epic tragedy *The Last Days of Mankind*, followed by a staging of Shakespeare’s *Troilous and Cressida* and Macedonian Dejan Dukovski’s *Powder Keg* was a clear indication that times were changing in Belgrade’s theatre.

The forthcoming discussion focuses on two works that use different strategies to challenge the war logic in Serbia and to attempt to destabilize the regime. Theatricalized society as a factor that influences wartime theatre development truly seeps through the pores of these two examples. In *The Last Days of Mankind*, adaptation is used to subvert official media discourse and to demystify the principal mechanisms that sustain fixed narratives of community and belonging, while in *The Powder Keg*, the critique of Balkan violence becomes the ground for the production of resistant imagery, thereby transforming the theatre into a space for exercising alternative belonging. Juxtaposing these two works affords the opportunity to examine the elements that successfully build community, as in the case of *The Powder Keg*, but also to examine why *The Last Days Of Mankind* fails in this respect.

*The Last Days of Mankind (Poslednji Dani Čovečanstva): An Adaptation of a World War I drama on the Yugoslav Drama Theatre Stage*

An adaptation of Karl Kraus’ *Die Letzten Tage Der Menschheit* or *The Last Days of Mankind* opened on September 23, 1994 on the main stage of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. Belgrade-based dramaturg Nenad Prokić took on this early 20th century Austrian play and reworked it to fit the contemporary stage. Several interventions in his adaptation were the cause for one critic to call it “the first performance to take a sharp and uncompromising political
attitude toward the war” on the Belgrade institutional theatre stage. Aspects of the adaptation that are relevant to the topic of this dissertation are found in his reworking of the text, and are mostly contained in those more or less implicit moments where the viewer is expected to read in between lines. It is a similar strategy that has been discussed in relation to The Last Link in Zagreb, which is why it is necessary to deconstruct Prokić’s text. In the forthcoming discussion I will analyse how this work demystifies the role of media and challenges the main reproductive mechanism of nationalist belonging during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Additionally, I will explore why this production failed to galvanize the Belgrade community in 1994.

When Austrian writer Karl Kraus was writing The Last Days of Mankind, a tragedy of epic proportions, the First World War was well under way. It took him the entire period of the war to finalize his work, and by 1919 it was ready for publication in book form. In the preface to The Last Days of Mankind, Kraus explains how any performance of this work “according to terrestrial measurement of time would encompass about ten evenings,” which is why it is “intended for a theatre on Mars.” The original play contains 256 scenes in five acts, over more than 800 pages of dialogue and more than 500 characters in residence. In 1928, Kraus finally allowed a staged rendering of this work, and as an abridged version that he edited himself for the Social Democratic Arts Centre in Vienna. However, besides a few readings of the staged version, it was not until 1964 that the piece was actually performed in Vienna. Today The Last Days of Mankind is considered one of the first documentary dramas ever written.

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371 Dawson, Documentary theatre in the United States, 4.
372 Dawson, Documentary theatre in the United States, 4.
encyclopedic piece, with a decidedly antiwar attitude, is composed out of various newspaper headlines, articles, and political discussions Kraus overheard on the streets of Vienna. The play is an indictment of Austrian society from the focal point of a World War I Vienniese intellectual. In the pool of over five hundred characters (soldiers, generals, journalists, aristocrats, etc.), only two are central: The Begrudger (Grumbler in some translations) and the Optimist, with the former frequently interpreted as the voice of Kraus himself. A traditional plot does not characterize this work, and for the purpose of this discussion it suffices to say the play begins with the news about the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, and it ends four years later with God uttering Kaiser Wilhelm II’s words, “I didn’t want this…”

One of the most fascinating aspects of Kraus’ original text is his framing of the role of media in the First World War. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the Viennese playwright recognised in the bourgeois journalism of the pre-war years, and above all in the Neue Freie Presse, the germ – no, somehow already the reality of our own era of the media, built upon the emptiness of the word and the image… The press not only expressed the corruption of the time, but was itself its great corrupter, simply through “the commandeering of values through words.”

From a contemporary standpoint, Kraus’ focus on print journalism in The Last Days of Mankind seems almost prophetic. Edward Timms, an expert on Kraus’s work and an interpreter of other writings by the same author, has pointed to Kraus’s shunning of technology right before the start of the First World War. He argues that Kraus’s ability to connect propaganda with war, and to show that the “dangers of technological development are calamitously compounded by the malignant influence of the media,” makes his work so profoundly relevant for us today. Prokić’s

373 Hobsbawm, Fractured Times, 133.
manipulations of the text point to an awareness in the 1990s of the negative role the media played in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. For example, his adaptation begins with the preface in which the Begrudger directly addresses the audience: “From the main cemetary in Vienna, for CNN – Karl Kraus.” For the most part, the preface is a translation of the original, with an occasional reordering of lines to fit the flow of the Serbian language. However, with his decision to end the preface with the words that echo a familiar journalistic style, the audiences are conditioned to relate the remainder of the action to the contemporary spatial and chronological location. Although the notion of mediatized society did not achieve its full swing until the new millenium, these references would not go beyond the spectators who found themselves attending this production in 1994. At the very end of the play, when the protagonist utters his final words, this idea becomes even more localized: “From the central cemetery in Vienna, for CNN – Karl Kraus. From the central cemetery in Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, Belgrade, Amsterdam, London, Paris, Moscow, Milan, Barcelona, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Vukovar, Srebrenica, Mostar, Dubrovnik.” Lights out.\footnote{As a side note, Prokić’s choice of a western media conglomerate over, for example, the Serbia Radio Television, might also be interpreted as a reference to the “CNN effect,” which transformed the war in Bosnia into a global (and distorted) media spectacle. In critical literature, the CNN effect is most frequently tied to the siege of Sarajevo. For instance, in Blue Helmets and Black Markets Peter Andreas argues that the Sarajevo case was at the time the first most internationalized siege in modern history, “an urban market” for aid workers, journalists, peace activists and others, in which the presence of CNN, NGO’s, satellite phones proved as powerful as any other technology that was used in the war.}

We are no longer sure whether these final words are spoken by the Begrudger, Karl Kraus, or Belgrade actor Predrag Ejdus himself.

As an original text *The Last Days of Mankind* is explicitly critical of early twentieth century bourgeois society that chose to stay ignorant in the wake of World War I. For the most part, Prokić’s adaptation of Kraus’ work follows the original trajectory, while opting for more explicit associations with the contemporary moment in a few instances of the play. In these
moments, *The Last Days of Mankind* becomes a critique of Serbian civil society and its relationship to the ongoing conflicts:

I have written a tragedy, whose perishing hero is mankind, whose tragic conflict, the conflict between the world and nature, has a fatal ending. Alas, because this drama has no actor other than all mankind, it has no audience! …Come back to life, brave corpses, and ask them what they did to you. Because you were not among those who surrendered, deserted, you held your positions. Before you the enemy, behind you the Fatherland.

Behind you the enemy, before you the Fatherland. Which one is worse? Step out, and demand that they give you back your lives! Step outside the stillness, you, corpse (actor points to a random audience member), step out, and say what it’s like? Tell them that you will never again let them use you. But as one final irony, history will laugh rampantly, that day, when Austria becomes Serbia and Serbia becomes Austria, because that Serbian heart, it is also made of gold, and no matter what happens, to be a Serb will be unbearable.375

This monologue follows the final scene of the play when all characters clear the stage and the action completely subsides. At that point, as a recording of the 1994 production shows, two stage hands enter carrying an old man who struggles to stand on his own two feet. We recognize the lead actor who plays the Begrudger; however, now he is wearing a mask and speaks with a strong German accent which leads us to believe that he is the embodiment of Karl Kraus himself. While barely holding himself straight, he launches into a monologue that is a patchwork of original lines from the Begrudger’s speech in Scene 54, Act 5. The analogy of Austria-Serbia is

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entirely an addition of the Belgrade author. This intervention, amplified with the finger-pointing gesture, dealt a final blow to an already intensely uncomfortable scene.

The director of the play Gorčin Stojanović explains that precisely because of the direct fingerpointing, *The Last Days of Mankind* was not a production that could survive long on the repertoire of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. How unwelcome this production really was is exposed in an angry review written by a Belgrade critic: “In the closing moments of the production it becomes clear why the Yugoslav Drama Theatre wanted to produce *The Last Days of Mankind*. They only needed a few pompous displays to hide what Nenad Prokić really wants to tell us: how much we are guilty of the war, from Vukovar through many other battlefields, and that when peace finally ensues, to be a Serb will be intolerable! All of this raises questions in regards to the motives of this production, as well as Prokić’s false pacifism.” Stojanović’s strategy did not prove effective in that particular moment in time. In his original text, Karl Kraus constructed a piece in which the Austrian society could see themselves performed, while the Serbian adaptation of *The Last Days of Mankind* demanded identification with the World War One bourgeois society. Furthermore, the structure of the play, baroque atmosphere, lack of comic relief, mechanized characters resembling puppets, as well as an attempt at Brechtian directing technique left little room for identification with characters, which resulted in a play that would hardly appeal to a wider audience. More importantly, the way Stojanović handled the ending, where the audiences are cast as accomplices in the war, came too early. Based on the limited reception of this performance, Belgrade citizens were not prepared to hear this version of truth, or at least not packaged in this way. Despite its limited reach, *The Last Days of Mankind* was an important production for Belgrade in 1994. It was an indictment of conformism and passive

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citizenship, and arguably the very institutions which made this production possible. And years later, it will be argued, although there was no reaction to The Last Days of Mankind outside of the theatre, there were no censorship or arrests, this final line has remained as a testimony to a theatre that did not remain silent.378

**Theatre and Theatricalized Society: The Case of The Powder Keg**

The case was quite different with the production of The Powder Keg (Bure Baruta), which opened in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre the following year. In fact, this production caused quite the stir in Belgrade’s theatre circle, as well as among the viewers. When it opened on March 18, 1995 it became an overnight success. For critics it became the most important play of the war period, and one of those rare cases in theatre when text, directing, and acting were praised with equal passion. What makes it a compelling case study for this dissertation is that it succeeded in cultivating a community of resistance within the walls of Belgrade’s most important institutional theatre. Coming to see The Powder Keg became virtually a rite of passage for Belgrade urban youth and opposition.

Silvija Jestrović has examined The Powder Keg through Patrice Pavis’ phenomenon of concretization, which stands for the idea that a “meaning of artistic work is completed only through the process of its reception,” to argue that The Powder Keg is a “two-way street – not only a ‘reading’ from the audience into the ‘performance-text,’ but also a parallel re-reading reinforced by the actors’ improvisation and the audience’s participation.”379 According to Jestrovic, this was a “clear gesture of political protest, a means of empowering both the actors

379 Jestrovic, Performance, Space, Utopia, 62.
and the audience not only as contributors to a theatrical event, but also citizens,“ which she interprets as a bonding ritual prompted through political sentiment. I agree with Jestrović, but would add to the argument by highlighting that what enabled such transactions between the performers and recipients is the notion of community that had already existed within the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, and that the people who would come to see this production were already a part of the resistant community outside of the walls of this institution. Furthermore, The Powder Keg was as much an expression of the urban, educated middle class belonging as it was an act of political protest.

According to a number of testimonies by those who worked on the production in Belgrade, The Powder Keg generated a strong bond with audiences, as well as among the artists themselves. For actors of the older generation, the experience of working on the show was a transcendent experience, as it can be seen in the following quote by Mirjana Karanović:

In The Powder Keg we created something that I have never seen in the theatre before. I have never experienced a production in which the private and profesional mix. I always tell my students that it is not ME who enters the stage, but my character. Everything who you are, you leave outside of the stage, and you only bring your character. In the case of The Powder Keg, our own private selves were carried onto the stage… Considering that I was very close to some people who were living in Croatia and Bosnia, that war would find its way onto the stage via our performance. In some moments, we would give up acting and wrap up a monologue by saying: “I can’t do this anymore, I’ve had enough!”

380 Jestrović, Performance, Space, Utopia, 64.
381 Babić, Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište Samim Sobom, 117.
382 Babić, Jugoslovensko Dramsko Pozorište Samim Sobom, 117.
*The Powder Keg* became known as the production that gave birth to an entire generation of young actors in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. This was the war generation of actors who were coming of age, both as artists and humans, during an incredibly difficult time in Belgrade. For many of them, it was a transformative experience. For example, for Dragan Mićanović it represents a symbol of the ways in which their generation participated in the war, “as if we spoke through the text.”

Goran Paskaljevic, who later went on to direct the film version of *The Powder Keg*, claims that an entire class of citizens has identified themselves with this production. The class that he is referring to is the class of urban and educated citizens, or “those who were similar by spirit and education,” as Paskaljevic states. Another critic highlights how the lines from the play became a part of the Belgrade urban jargon, that many people returned to see it numerous times, and that everything in this production led to a “much needed catharsis in Belgrade’s theatre.”

*The Powder Keg* was written by Macedonian playwright Dejan Dukovski. In short, it deconstructs the idea of violence - Balkan violence. Structured in a cyclical pattern, the plot consists of eleven short scenes, each containing one character who will go on to die in the following scene. The principle based on repetition constructs violence as an infinite spiral in which the aggressor becomes the victim, rendering all characters dead by the end of the play.

That *The Powder Keg* was written by a Macedonian playwright and staged by a director of the same nationality (Slobodan Unkovski) was a significant fact for Belgrade in 1995. Since the war halted all regional collaborations, this was a significant attempt to revive at least a small portion of...
of the lost connections between Belgrade and the rest of the former Yugoslavia. This collaboration was easier to facilitate because the violence that accompanied the independence struggle in Croatia, Bosnia, and even Slovenia did not characterize Macedonia, which in 1991 declared independence from Yugoslavia. The Powder Keg was first staged in the Macedonian capital Skopje in October of 1994, with the Belgrade debut following several months later. In both instances it became an overnight sensation. But what was it about this play that generated such mass appeal? The director of the play sees it as an ancient tragedy, a text that articulates the tragic sentiment of living in the Balkans.386 Another critic argues that it articulated the feeling of collective tragedy.387 Either way, unlike The Last Days of Manikind, it spoke a language that the spectators understood.

To further this argument, I will now turn to three particular performances of the Powder Keg in 1997, 1999, and 2001. Although cases in point occurred after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which is officially the end point of this dissertation, they are a necessary part of this discussion. What is more, The Powder Keg was a forebearer of the change that came following the end of the War in Bosnia.

The first incident occurred in the winter of 1996/1997 when downtown Belgrade was taken over by anti-regime protesters. That season, during one of the runs of The Powder Keg in the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, the actors broke down the structure in the last scene where they normally would engage in a funeral procession at end of the play. In a gesture of alliance with the anti-regime protesters in the city, the actors modified this scene to reflect the formation of the protest walks that were happening every day in the city. Then, when some audience members

joined them on stage it resulted in an actual mini-protest inside the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. After one of the performances, the actors exited the theatre while blowing into whistles, which were one of the main instruments of the 1996/97 demonstrations. Upon exiting the theatre, as one actor recalls, they were joined by their audience in a shared protest.\textsuperscript{388} As a side note, theatre artists themselves are known to have taken part in the protests much more as citizens than they ever did from the stages of the theatres in which they were employed. In fact, many of them became faces of the 1996/97 protests.

Then in 1997, a large part of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre burned down, including the main stage, auditorium, and some offices. It was rebuilt and reopened to the public in 2003. While it was homeless, the Yugoslav Drama Theatre productions were housed by other institutional theatres in Belgrade. One such example is relevant for further discussion. Namely, on December 14, 1999 the National Theatre in Belgrade was hosting a performance of \textit{The Powder Keg}. In the final scene, Voja Brajovic, one of the older actors in the show, instead of traditionally finishing his scene, takes off his costume and reveals a shirt with the symbol of Belgrade’s resistance movement \textit{Otpor}. He then raises his hand, forming a closed fist (the main symbol of \textit{Otpor}), after which the rest of the actors follow his suit, thus forming a collective action on stage. This intervention was greeted by a fifteen minute ovation in the auditorium, which Voja Brajovic remembers as the most memorable moment in his entire career.\textsuperscript{389} This incident occurred after the three month long bombing, which dealt a final blow to the citizens of Belgrade. What transpired on stage in the National Theatre was soon spilled into the streets when


on October 5, 2000 the final uprising of citizens in Belgrade and Serbia which put an end to Milošević’s supremacy.

Finally, in 2001 *The Powder Keg* became the first production to partake in the Sarajevo MESS festival, after eleven years of halted exchange between Serbia and Bosnia. When it was performed on the stage of the Sarajevo National Theatre, which houses up to four hundred and fifty patrons, that night there was more than seven hundred people in the audience. The play was received with an “abundance of emotional reactions, lively applause, ovations and chants of approval.” Over the years, the moment towards the end of the play when actor Voja Brajovic says “I have something to tell you…,” became a signature moment where audiences came to expect some sort of radical move or improvised gesture. Once such example was the abovementioned *Otpor* shirt moment. However, on the eve of the Sarajevo performance there was only silence. And it was a deliberate action, as Voja Brajović remembers: “this time it was not necessary… people were excited, they expected that I would say something, but they received a message which reflected our emotions.” This time the lack of action communicated with strength that was deeply felt on both ends of the proscenium. When in 2011 the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was awarded MESS’s *Lovorov Vijenac* in the Bosnian capital, preeminent director Dino Mustafić stated at the award ceremony: “The Yugoslav Drama Theatre was the first institution to visit Sarajevo after the siege, even before any diplomatic exchanges took place.” The performance in Sarajevo in 2001 was attended by Snežana Banović, then the director of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, who was hoping to bring the production to Zagreb. However, many obstacles of political nature were still preventing the renewal of the

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391 Ćirić, “Poruka o emociji.”
relationship between Belgrade and Zagreb institutional theatre. Only in 2007 did the Yugoslav Drama Theatre finally perform in HNK Zagreb, however not with *The Powder Keg*. As a side note, even prior to the Sarajevo performance, *The Powder Keg* visited Macedonia in 1996, as well as Slovenia’s capital city Ljubljana in 1998. To this day, it marks the first municipal theatre production to make contact with a former Yugoslav country since the dissolution. In 2005, *The Powder Keg* celebrated ten years of being on the repertoire of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, and had accomplished a multitude of international performances.

**Conclusion**

In the later years of the conflict, institutional theatres in Zagreb and Belgrade become more involved in the public discourse about war. In Sarajevo, there is a clear understanding of how theatre can participate in building and sustaining community in crisis. Cases in this chapter point to a shift from interest in daily politics and comic relief at the start of the war towards more versatile dramaturgical strategies and complexity in thinking about belonging and community. Hysterical laughing in the face of war slowly dissipates as the war drags out and the feeling of exhaustion sets in. This is particularly visible in Zagreb, where the wave of patriotism slowly becomes swept over by scepticism. There is an increased interest in how theatre might be used to challenge the hegemonic political projects of belonging (*The Last Link, The Powder Keg, The Last Days of Mankind, Welcome to Blue Hell*), an interest in the individual (*Welcome to Blue Hell, The Last Link*), but also in the collective (*Lovers, The City*). In the later years, theatre also becomes a practice that symbolizes civilized society, a need within the urban, educated community to use culture to set themselves apart from the agressor (perhaps most visible in *The Last Days of Mankind and The City*). The cases in this chapter are all examples of how theatre
can productively participate in the discourse of belonging and community during war. Even those productions that did not amass a following, such as *The Last Days of Mankind*, are significant in the way they initiate dialogue that is very much needed in extreme situations.
CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I set out to examine how and to what end theatre participates in the process of building community and negotiating belonging in a time of dissolution, armed conflict, and nation building. The aim was to ascertain whether theatre was able to find its own place in the cultural sphere amidst conflict during the final decade of the twentieth century in three interrelated Southeast European cities, and whether it played a significant role in the process of negotiating belonging and building community during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. I inquired how institutional theatre engages with the hegemonic powers, how it fits into the public discourse about belonging and community during the war, and searched for its strengths as well as limitations.

(Im)possibilities of Negotiating Belonging and Building Community

Using cases from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo, in this dissertation I showed that institutional theatre actively participated in the process of negotiating belonging and building community in all three places, and that when examined comparatively it is possible to discern four different frameworks. The approaches that I identified are different, but can be grouped into four categories: 1) feeling (particularly affect and emotion), 2) embodiment and communion, 3) civil society (particularly notions of class, urbanity and civilized society), and 4) engagement with hegemonic notions of belonging (especially with the nation). Most cases in this study are hybrid combinations of two or more categories, which suggests a shared experience of belonging.
and community among the urban educated middle class citizens in Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Zagreb during this period. The framework of negotiating hegemonic belonging figures prominently in all cases from Zagreb (Ad HOC, The Last Link, and Welcome to Blue Hell), as well as in The Powder Keg and The Last Days of Mankind in Belgrade. Theatre as a place where communion emerges is found in all of the cases in Sarajevo (SARTR, Lovers, The City), in Welcome to Blue Hell and AD HOC from Zagreb, and in Dark is the Night and The Powder Keg from Belgrade. Theatre as a site for negotiating urban belonging permeates Dark is the Night and The Last Days of Mankind in Belgrade, The Last Link in Zagreb, as well as in The City and SARTR’s production of The Shelter in Sarajevo. Concerns with class issues figure into Dark is the Night in Belgrade, as well as in Welcome to Blue Hell and The Last Link in Zagreb, while the concern with civilized society is visible in The City from Sarajevo and in The Last Days of Mankind from Belgrade. Negotiating belonging through ritual pervades The City and The Shelter in Sarajevo, as well as Welcome to Blue Hell in Zagreb. In the end, in two cases in this dissertation we see how feeling plays into the reception of Lovers in Sarajevo and with Dark is the Night in Belgrade.

However, the comparative examination of nine theatre productions also enabled me to discern strong tendencies that are unique to each city, and which I suggest are related to the differences in the war experience as well as other internal and external social, political, and cultural factors that influence the path of theatre development in these three places. While there are many intersections, what emerges are anxieties about gender and the nation in Zagreb, preoccupation with the moral and physical destruction of civil society in Belgrade, and the need for communion in wartime Sarajevo theatre.
Continuities and Discontinuities

At the very beginning of the conflict, due to a variety of reasons, in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Sarajevo artists were unable to find a suitable place for responding to the war within the framework of existing institutional theatre. The solution was to form other institutions that would be more suitable to the situation and within which they had the freedom to engage with the ongoing conflict. While in Sarajevo and Zagreb, the new institutions were directly related to the war effort, and their impact on the discourse of negotiating belonging and building community was very different. Ad HOC Cabaret that was organized in Zagreb only fed into the overwhelmingly homogenizing rhetoric that was fabricated by the Croatian regime. The foundation of SARTR in Sarajevo and the production of the Shelter was much more significant for the urban community, and in a way paved the path of wartime theatre. By embracing the idea that theatre is the “shelter” of the spirit already in the first response to the war, Sarajevo theatre was able to achieve a significant connection with the community it serves. SARTR ignited the possibility of using theatre as a place for communion, away from extreme ideological discourse that was fueling the war.

Theatre and performance scholar Aleksandra Jovićević often states in her writing about institutional theatre in Belgrade that it was not prepared for what would come, and that it anesthetized and marginalized itself in a sociological sense during the period of Yugoslavia’s dissolution. The discourse about the role of institutional theatre is frequently focused on what theatre failed to do for the community during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. One of the aims in this dissertation was to determine why this is the case, and to compare it to the neighboring cities of Zagreb and Sarajevo. While it appears that Sarajevo theatre was able to mobilize a powerful response to the war from the very beginning, theatres in Belgrade and Zagreb struggled to do so
during the first years of the conflict. Productions from 1994, including *The Last Link* and *Welcome to Blue Hell* in Zagreb, and *The Last Days of Mankind* and the *Powder Keg* in Belgrade, signal an awakening within institutional theatre in the later years of the war. Besides serving as some of the immediate direct responses to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, these productions represent serious efforts to disrupt hegemonic notions of belonging.

**Sarajevo Theatre: A Model Community**

A comparative analysis opens the possibility of arguing that Sarajevo theatre was more successful in building community and negotiating belonging than was the case in Belgrade and Zagreb. In Belgrade and Zagreb, it appears that politics was often in the way of theatre. Ideology, inherited culture of restrictive measures and repertory politics played a substantial role in how theatre is shaped during the war, and how it answers (or fails to answer) to the needs of the community. The shattering of all institutional frameworks due to the siege resulted in more freedom in artistic and structural decision making under the auspices of institutional theatre. Theatre in Sarajevo became the media with most vitality in the city, and thus it was indispensable to the community; this cannot be said for Belgrade and Zagreb. In other words, during this period theatre became central to Sarajevo citizens in a way that it never was in Belgrade and Zagreb. Theatre offered what no other place in the city could offer, and because of that it thrived.

It could also be said that in Sarajevo there was, so to speak, an anthropological understanding of the role that theatre might assume in times of war. To clarify this I invoke Richard Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment theory outlined in Fig. 4.
Schechner argues that “whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends on the degree to which the performance tends toward efficacy or entertainment. No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment.” Furthermore, he states “in different societies, at different times, either efficacy or entertainment dominates, the two being in a braided relationship to each other.” Schechner uses the structure of a braid to show the relationship between ritual and theatre, “when the braid is tight - that is, when efficacy and entertainment are both present in nearly equal degrees-theatre flourishes.” If we position theatre in besieged Sarajevo on Richard Schechner’s braided efficacy-entertainment continuum, it is located in what he calls a tight braid, or even closer to efficacy. Sarajevo wartime theatre comes closer to ritual especially in the way the performers are possessed, in the manner in which the audience participates and believes, and in the understanding of time.

This feeds into the awareness of the potential therapeutic function of theatre that goes beyond the idea that work preserves mental health, and into the broader push for alternative...
ways of stress relief during the war. A professor and psychiatrist from Sarajevo wrote about theatre in this context:

Attending theatre assumes individual participation in a very specific group dynamic. Theatre audience forms a small community, a dedicated and ritualized collective which influences the psycho-social dimension of each individual. Notion of common danger brings individuals together to form a group, and this group carries therapeutic potential, whether to dilute our individual pain in the density of collective pain or to protect us and lessen the unbearable of our personal suffering.396

For example, the only running newspaper in besieged Sarajevo, Oslobodjenje, published an article with advice for stress management from the neuropsychiatric unit in a municipal hospital. The doctor quoted in the text, among other things, advises citizens “not to disregard physical appearance,” that people should at all cost try to be clean and well dressed, and that free time should be spent reading, listening to music, socializing and laughing.397

Dino Mustafić recalls a moment that illuminates this purpose:

Theatre – beginning with cosmetic appearance, because when you go to the theatre, people dress up – theatre became an exceptional event, or celebration, ritual. How else would you explain the following situation that occurred when the National Theatre was remounting The Fortress? A family of four was going to see this production – they were all dressed up, but then a mortar shell fell on the square right in front of the National Theatre. They sought cover where I was standing… The dust

396 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu, 67.
and smell of gun powder were still in the air, but I hear the father say: “Hurry up, we’ll be late for the performance!”

Theatre was also seen as a place where one can satisfy primary human needs. For example, during the siege fuel was hard to come by, hence people often had no heat in their homes. Actors testify that moving around while working on a production kept them warm, and bodies in the auditorium increased the temperature in the theatre, therefore making it warmer for everyone. Alternatively, when primary hunger could not be satisfied with the small rationings of lentils or rice, “spiritual food” could at least be found in the theatre. The scarcity of any other source entertainment, especially one that was dependent on electricity, was an added bonus.

Furthermore, power relations in theatre that so often drive and shape it were weakened due to a lack of financial resources. In other words, there were no wages to compete for, nor were there any ticket fees for the audiences. The citizens placed more value on theatre, thus creating a powerful tool for undermining hegemonic narratives to a degree that the other two cities were not capable.

The Politics of the Archive and Suggestions for Further Research

Based on evidence that I examined for this study, my argument favors Sarajevo as the hero of this story. There I find a consistent effort in and around institutional theatre to practice negotiating belonging and building communities that is strengthening, inclusive, and contributes to the peacemaking process. However, the conclusions I draw in this dissertation are based on my interpretation of the work that is often mediated by others, which is why I suggest this

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398 Diklic, Teatar u Ratnom Sarajevu, 194.
399 Diklić, Teatar u ratnom Sarajevu. 92.
argument merits further investigation. For example, it could be argued that in a way, I perform a textual distancing or mediating by choosing to analyze Sarajevo from an experiential stance, while the analysis in Belgrade and Zagreb is more text heavy. I attempted to listen to the various voices coming from local sources, and let them shape the discussion based on issues that seemed important to the communities surrounding institutional theatre in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb. I focused on interpreting not only the narratives that were told about belonging and community during the war in these three places, but also how they were being told. At this stage it would be meaningful to conduct an ethnographic, or interview-based study that would archive a variety of viewpoints, and to tease out information that was not available in the resources that were used in this study.

A subsidiary role of this dissertation has been to advocate for a comparative analysis of theatre and broader cultural trends in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia, including Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia. I believe it is important to persist in these efforts as a way of dealing with trauma in the region, as well as to use it as a tool for future cross-cultural collaborations in the post-Yugoslav space.
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