

IDENTITY, HOME, AND LOSS IN GORAN VOJNOVIĆ'S *ČEFURJI RAUS!*
(SOUTHERN SCUM GO HOME!)

by

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Abstract

“Identity, home, and loss in Goran Vojnović’s *Čefurji raus!*” examines how popular Slovene writer Goran Vojnović’s 2008 novel *Čefurji Raus!* (trans. 2012) reconceptualizes the self/other divide between the relatively homogeneous Slovene majority and diasporic Fužine community, which lives in Slovenia’s capital city Ljubljana and is comprised largely of immigrants from the former republics of the ex-Yugoslavia. More specifically, this work explores how the two communities exist in a continuum of apparatuses, for example discursive, institutional, and state apparatuses, that are themselves encompassed by an overarching trauma apparatus. Here, the paper discusses etymological and discursive references to past traumatic historical events as well as the narrator-protagonist’s Marko Dordić direct references to the more recent Yugoslav Wars. The paper then goes on to address common Slovene responses to the novel. The paper concludes by suggesting that the novel is successful in helping individuals and communities work through stereotypes and xenophobia linked to trauma because, as a non-didactic or confrontational tool, the novel can serve to gently invite the reader into an experience of discomfort and uncertainty he or she may be unwilling or unable to engage with directly. In this way, the paper argues, Vojnović’s novel plays or can be used to play a key role in helping the Slovene communities work through, or perhaps more accurately, acknowledge and “sit with” their feelings of pain, discomfort, mistrust, and hate. Vojnović’s novel produces enough discomfort to cause reflection, but not enough to alienate or directly blame the reader. In doing so, *Čefurji Raus!* destabilizes the emotional response to the other constructed by our prejudices and ideology.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Špela Grašič. Also worth noting, unless otherwise indicated all translations from Slovene to English are the author's own.

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Thank you! Najlepša hvala!

Dedication

To my family and loved ones for reminding me to trust myself.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the early 2000s my family drove through Bosnia-Herzegovina, as we took a detour on our way back home to Slovenia from the Croatian island Hvar. I was told to look out the window. I will probably never forget what I saw – churches riddled with bullet holes; towns with only one house standing, the rest abandoned and pockmarked with bullets; towns full of lights, except for that one, bullet covered house.

Goran Vojnović's 2008 novel *Čefuji Raus!*, [*Southern Scum go home!* (trans. 2012)] tells the story of seventeen-year-old narrator protagonist Marko Đorđić (hereinafter Marko) and his three friends, Aco, Dejan, and Adi,ⁱ members of the diasporic *Fužine* community – comprised largely of immigrants and refugees (as well as their descendants) from the former republics of ex-Yugoslavia – in Slovenia's capital city Ljubljana. Praised by many, the novel is "Slovenia's most read book since independence" (Kmetec). Many have commended it for exposing Slovenia's ongoing and serious xenophobia and stereotyping of the southern Yugoslav minority living within its borders, as well as the minority's "lack of adaptation and . . . impermeability" (Zagoda 548).ⁱⁱ As critics point out the Slovene community's xenophobia and the minority's maladaptation is exposed by the author's use of language and the narrator protagonist's acceptance of his *Čefur* identity. Moreover, although the novel does not directly engage with the Yugoslav Wars or the Wars' immediate effects, it nevertheless illustrates the ways in which the relationship between the Slovene community and immigrant communities from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia is influenced by a history of trauma. As such, the following study illustrates the subtle echoes of historical and personal trauma in *Čefuji Raus!* and suggests that the novel presents a compassionate and

inclusive tool for exploring and working through memories of trauma in the former republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

1.1 *Čefurs*

Čefur – *Čefurji* (plural) and *Čefurka/e* (feminine/feminine plural) first appeared in the late 1980s, early 1990s, and referred to a youth subculture – youth found (usually in groups) on Ljubljana’s city streets dressed in “track suits, bomber jackets, and brand name runners”; their hair was usually styled in a “mushroom cut” (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 185-186). However, “the term revealed itself as universally extendable ... among some speakers, to easily include all members of the classification ‘na –ić’” (186), that is, those from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia. (The letter “ć,” like “đ,” does not exist in the Slovene alphabet, and rarely, if ever, appears in Slovene words, so encountering someone whose last name ends in “ić” immediately alerts the Slovene reader that this person is an other).

Vojnović uses the term *Čefur* in its widest sense to include all immigrants and their descendants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia (186). The term is presented as derogatory. According to the novel's first epigraph, *Čefurs* are easily identified by their physiognomic characteristics – their “low foreheads,” thick eyebrows, and “prominent cheek bones” (Pešut qtd. in Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 8). The term characterizes the men in this community group as “beastly,” “vulgar,” and “mysogynistic” (Pešut qtd. in Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 8). The term connotes, as the definition in the first epigraph outlines, and as Urban Zorko reminds us in the afterword, immigrants who are usually uneducated with a low standard of living. These immigrants are (according to the stereotype) usually employed in manual or low wage, physical jobs. They often attend trade schools and “live – typically and most famously – in the *Fužine*” (“Vodič po vesti” 186). These immigrants are stereotyped as “badly assimilated in Slovenia’s bureaucratic and national society” (186).

1.2 Tracing the Socio-economic and Historical Subtext

In fact, given the ethnic nationalist and xenophobic undertones that color the narrative and Marko's dialogue – his references to the 1990s Yugoslav war, nationality, and historical paramilitary groups – it quickly becomes clear that the novel is predominantly about a minority group's struggle in the face of the majority's xenophobia, and, paradoxically, the majority group's struggle to accept a minority group that seemingly persists in continually reaffirming the derogatory stereotypes ascribed to it. As Lejla Švabić puts it “Marko is already the second generation in Slovenia, but his parents, who are from Bosnia, never managed to really grasp the Slovenian way of life, [and] the Slovenians were never able to accept the southern way of life.” Thus the importance of the novel's socio-economic and historical context cannot be understated, especially given the novel's title – *Čefurji Raus!* I am choosing to use the original title for this specific reason. I believe that although the English translation gives a general sense of the phrase, it fails to capture the same socio-historical tensions as “*Čefurji Raus!*” As has already been mentioned, *Čefur* is a derogatory and slippery term that commonly refers to a specific sub-culture, but may be extended to include all immigrants and their descendants from the former republics of ex-Yugoslavia. The second term in the phrase, “*Raus*,” is German for “get out!” The phrase was a popular graffiti slogan (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 8) that appeared on Ljubljana's streets in the 1990s around the same time as the slogan “Slovenia for Slovenes.” It is significant that this was the current political party's election campaign slogan (Blatić 310). The appearance of the two slogans coincided roughly with the violent break up of the former Yugoslavia that up until the late 1980s/early 1990s consisted of what are now Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Although the length of this work as well as the complexities of these wars exclude the possibility of a detailed analysis – a discussion of the

causes alone would exceed the space available – suffice it to say that the 1990s Yugoslav wars, which played on economic, political and social tensions in (the former) Yugoslavia, as well as memories of historical injustice (on all sides), forced many families and communities to relocate and caused tremendous suffering and death on all sides. In fact, there are many who will never return to their homes and who will never know the fate of their loved ones. To borrow Meg Coulson's phrasing, the wars left behind the echoes of “death and destruction, the vicious process of ‘ethnic cleansing’ involving bombing, shooting, arson and other forms of intimidation including systematic rape of women and girls” (Coulson 91).ⁱⁱⁱ

In comparative terms, Slovenia's transition was relatively peaceful. This may be in part because the Slovene national identity is younger than that of Yugoslavia's other former republics. The Slovene national identity did not begin to actively develop until the 1700s and 1800s (Prunk 7, 59). Indeed, it would not be a stretch to suggest that Slovenia has almost always aligned itself more closely with the West than the Balkans or the East. Nevertheless, although Slovenia's war for independence lasted approximately ten days and cost the lives of forty-five people (127),^{iv} significantly fewer than those lost in the other ex-republics, the Slovene conflict had its own controversies, some of which are referenced in the novel and the novel's title – the graffiti slogan “*Čefurji Raus!*” Following independence in 1991,^v Slovenia erased approximately 30 000 permanent residents who were living in Slovenia at the time of independence, but who had the citizenship of one of Yugoslavia's other republics, each of which is now a separate country (Ramet, “Serbia, Croatia and” 273).^{vi} The group is known as the “erased.”^{vii} As Admir Blatić explains in his 2008 study of the presence of multiculturalism and linguistic bricolages in Ljubljana's rich graffiti culture, the presence of the two graffiti slogans “*Čefurji Raus!*” and “Slovenia for Slovenes” – particularly when

they appeared together – sounded threatening to those Slovenes “who were here not really as citizens of this country nor really citizens of another” (310). Regardless of whether or not Blatić means to refer to the “erased,” the large number of refugees Slovenia took in as a result of the war, or both, he is right to remind the reader that the ominous nature of such statements was further intensified because “the actual war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina reminded us how quickly radical nationalism moves from words to horrific actions” (310). Blatić’s observation is particularly uncomfortable since such slogans are also uncannily reminiscent of the anti-Semitic rhetoric associated with Hitler’s Third Reich. I draw our attention to this history because Vojnović captures this tension when he chooses the slogan “*Čefurji Raus!*” as the title of the novel with which he takes the reader into the intimate, at times gut-splittingly hilarious, at times tearfully heartbreaking, tale of Marko, his family, his friends (some of whom were “erased” or who have a parent who was “erased”) and their community. All of them, Marko tells us, “were affected by the war in Bosna” and had family members or friends who stayed with them (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 13).

1.3 Xenophobia: Discourse and Trauma in Vojnović’s *Čefurji Raus!*

My own work seeks to explore traumatic traces inscribed in both the narrative and the protagonist-narrator’s (and his community’s) identity. In this sense, my work is interested in the ways in which social processes, memories, and knowledges are embodied in and through the self. While I acknowledge that our identities are socially constructed, I wish to explore how such social constructs play out as “natural” – “gut” – “authentic” (re)actions and responses in the self and in encounters with the other. Only by recognizing both processes can we begin to recognize and choose our responses to painful (historical) events and memories. As such, my work is founded on that of Foucault, who proposes “that the body is neither biologically given, nor outside of culture and history. It is represented and used in

specific ways as a result of specific historical power relations” (Trisk 44). More specifically, I am interested in the ways in which the institutions, discourses, and histories that surround Marko and the two communities – Slovene and diasporic – that he interacts and engages with, shape Marko’s stereotyped diasporic identity. In addition, I will explore how the novel may be used to open up spaces that cultivate empathy and encourage compassionate and inclusive dialogue rather than agonistic competitions among societies, groups, and individuals. As such, my exploration of Vojnović’s novel will seek to answer three guiding questions: how does Vojnović’s novel represent the role of difficult diasporic experience and traumatic memories of historical injustice in identity formation; in what ways does the novel offer a medium for problematizing, subverting, and exposing ethnic stereotypes that are the product of displacement and trauma in Slovenia and ex-Yugoslavia’s other former republics; and, finally, what role might this work play in the process of working through this troubled history?

My first section draws and builds upon the Slovene literary critics’ responses to the novel, particularly Urban Zorko’s commentary in the text’s afterword, Louis Althusser’s theory of interpellation, and Michel Foucault’s conception of the apparatus – “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions” (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 194). This theoretical discussion is then followed by a close reading that focuses on sections of text where Marko performs his *Čefur* identity as well as those sections where Marko “argumentatively shows us the reasons for the world he is tangled up in” (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 198). In this way, I illustrate that Vojnović’s protagonist not only accepts the stereotype (and is proud of it) (187, 192), but he

also continually reaffirms it by mimicking both the characteristics inscribed on the othered *Čefur* identity and the meanings inscribed on the Slovene self – the (perceived) difference between the two groups as always already negative, undesirable. In other words, Marko is interpellated into a position of negative difference that discourse displaces onto the other. I contend that Vojnović successfully reconceptualizes the self/other divide between the relatively homogeneous Slovene majority and diasporic *Fužine* community because he exposes the apparatuses dictating the invisible ideology of mutual distrust and fear, and, in doing so, he erases the stereotype:

The idea “čefur” disappears [...] like a dried leaf not because Marko resists the stereotype, but because somewhere in the novel, the stereotype loses its object. And we cannot, for the life of us, find him amongst the Fužine anymore. (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 199)

Indeed, “[w]hen we step back and examine the ambient of Vojnović’s novel in its entirety, we come face to face with the terrifying fresco of broken homes, drugs, mutual ignorance and nearsightedness of a hopeless adolescent” (197). As Zorko so astutely puts it, “Vojnović uses Marko's narrative to disseggregate a collection of stereotypes, where every ‘truth’ on the tongue has its obvious reasons in reality” (199).

In the next section, I do a close reading of those parts of the narrative that either directly refer to the most recent Yugoslav War or contain terminology that subtly resonates with historical trauma. It is not only Marko but also his communities that are haunted by a traumatic past. To outline how this occurs, I examine the term *Čefur*, focusing particularly on the term’s linguistic and physiognomic relationship with anti-Semitism; terms such as *četnik* and *ustaša*, which refer to Serbian and Croatian radical and paramilitary groups that date

back to World War One and the interwar period; as well as the term *turčine*, which means “hooliganisms” / “vulgarity” in English, but which can also be translated as “Turkish words” / “Turkishisms.” In addition, I focus on Marko’s direct references to the most recent war and the areas affected by it, as well as his allusions to the war’s key players. Drawing on discussions by key trauma scholars and theorists, I explore the lingering presence of intergenerational trauma that dates back as far as the Ottoman invasions in the 14th and 15th centuries and includes both World Wars as well as the most recent Yugoslav Wars. More specifically, I build upon Foucault’s notion of the apparatus by examining the ways transgenerational and intergenerational trauma, which Hirsch suggests occur through a process of postmemory, shape and limit the institutions and discourses represented in the novel. I refer to this as the functioning of a “trauma apparatus.” In other words, I postulate that Marko is hailed by an ideology and a continuum of ideological apparatuses that are haunted by echoes of historical trauma.

I conclude my analysis of Vojnović’s *Čefurji Raus!* by answering the last of my three guiding questions: what role might Vojnović’s novel play in the process of working through this troubled history? As many Slovene scholars have noted, *Čefurji Raus!* presents us with a look into a minority culture that exists on the margins of Slovene society, erases the stereotype, and presents us with an image of life in the *Fužine* we cannot ignore (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 185, 199). Indeed, as Zavodnik and Zorko explain, Vojnović makes no attempt to find the causes or solutions to the tensions between the Slovene and immigrant communities; rather, he explores “how we go forward” (Zavodnik). Thus, it becomes the “individual’s responsibility” to decide whether he or she “will break open the surface of the stereotype and surrender to the human chaos behind it” (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 199). I also

discuss the Slovene communities' responses to the novel, focusing in particular on blog commentary surrounding language, the police reaction to the novel's depiction of them, as well as the novel's subsequent appearance in Slovene schools. I postulate that, although the novel generated considerable negative commentary, overall, the discourse generated around and as a result of the novel has functioned as a catalyst for important discussions surrounding the treatment of minority groups, or at least this minority group, in Slovenia. Given the novel's overwhelming success in generating dialogue surrounding the treatment of immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia in Slovenia, I suggest the possibility of using the novel as a tool for exploring and working through the subtle echoes of historical trauma that reverberate throughout the narrative. Here my work relies on recent discussions of the presence of personal and historical trauma in a culture. These discussions are indebted to Freud's distinction between melancholia and mourning.

Consequently, I apply Dominick LaCapra's discussion of trauma, absence, and loss where he states that "[m]ourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again" ("Trauma," 713). This can be achieved only if the processes of working through "loss and historical trauma ... allow for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal" (713). LaCapra asserts that "certain forms of nontotalizing narrative and critical, as well as self-critical, thought and practice" (714) are useful modalities for working through. Here, I also draw on current mindfulness discourse, such as Pema Chödrön's discussion of "sitting with" and approaching affect "with curiosity and humor" ("Getting Unstuck"), to elucidate LaCapra's discussion of working through as a form of existing with historical trauma, but being neither engulfed by it, nor transcending it

completely. I suggest that a more useful way of thinking about “working through” is to think of it as “sitting with.” Lastly, by engaging with Sarah Ahmed’s discussion of affectivity and emotion, I assert the efficacy of Vojnović’s novel not only as a tool for challenging xenophobia but also as a tool for healing. I do so by demonstrating that the very subtle echoes of trauma and the depiction of pervasive structural traumas, as opposed to graphic depictions of traumatic events, make the novel a compassionate and inclusive space for exploring and sitting with historical traumas. I argue that literature initiates dialogue and provides a medium for reconceptualizing and working through, that is, sitting with, historical rifts within the larger global community. In doing so, I suggest the novel participates in “socially engaged memory-work”, which LaCapra identifies as the process through which “one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one’s people) back then that is related to, but not identical with here and now” (713).

Endnotes

ⁱ For similar summaries refer to Slovene scholars Urban Zorko (“Vodič po vesti” and “Zakaj so Vojnovčevi...”), Lejla Švabić, Marko Stabej, Đurđa Strsoglavac, Jasna Zavodnik, Dženana Kmetec, and Urban Vovk.

ⁱⁱ See also Tomislav Zagoda, Jasna Zavodnik, Urban Vovk, Urban Zorko (“Vodič po vesti” and “Zakaj so Vojnovčevi...”), Lejla Švabić and Marjan Horvat.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more specific information about the wars, who belonged to which side (since this shifted over the course of the war), what happened, why, and when refer to the following: Sabrina P. Ramet’s *Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia in Peace and at War*; David Storey’s “Territory and National Identity: Examples from the Former Yugoslavia;” Meg Coulson’s “Looking Behind the Violent Break-Up of Yugoslavia;” Dawa Norbu’s “The Serbian Hegemony, Ethnic Heterogeneity and Yugoslav Break-Up;” and Aleksander Pakovic’s “The Puzzle of Yugoslavia: An introduction.” Also worth examining are Laura Silber and Allan Little’s *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* and Dusko Doder’s “Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds.” While *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* is designed to hold the reader’s attention, and thus is perhaps a bit sensationalized, it gives a fairly broad overview of the conflict. While Doder’s article is intriguing and makes some interesting points, keep in mind that he tends to rely heavily on the problematic “ancient ethnic hatreds” theory.

^{iv} I have seen different numbers. I have chosen to go with ten because my father (*oči*), who was called up when fighting started, said he “was scared for ten days.”

^v On June 26th 1991, Slovenia announced its succession from Yugoslavia (Prunk 127). On December 28th 1991, Slovenia officially “became a sovereign state” (128).

^{vi} Under the new law enacted at the time, these residents were given a set amount of time to apply for citizenships. Of the 173, 000 individuals who applied, “171, 000 were granted Slovenian citizenship” (Ramet 273). It is also worth noting that there were “30, 000 permanent residents [who] *were said* not to have filled out their application forms” (273). However, as Matevž Krivic, a former constitutional court judge who interviewed many of the erased explains, 80 – 90% of those interviewed indicated that they did in fact fill out application forms (qtd. in Ramet 273). These individuals (and those who applied for, but were not granted citizenship) were subsequently “erased from the citizenship rolls, with consequent loss of rights to jobs, to pensions, to medical care, to schooling for children, etc.” (273). The law was controversial, particularly because many of those who were erased say “that they did in fact file applications in time” (273). As Ramet points out, this “would mean that the erasure was premeditated, deliberate, and illegal” (273).

^{vii} Mehmedal Alić’s memoir *Nihče* tells the story of a Bosnian who lived in Slovenia at the start of the wars and who was subsequently erased. This man also had family members and schoolmates killed during the war, and found the remains of a mass grave (from World War Two) in *Huda Jama* – a mine, where he worked in Slovenia. I was alerted to the book and this man’s story when I watched a TV interview with him on *RTV Slovenia* (“Intervju,” *RTV SLO*).

Chapter 2: Interpellating Identity

Identity in Ideology: The Boy in an Empty City Square – Circle?

Stereotyping is not the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, over-determination, guilt aggressivity; the masking of ‘official’ and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositions of racist discourse.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (117)

Bhabha’s analysis of the stereotype invites the reader to consider how the interplay of power, knowledge, narrative,ⁱ the psyche and the body shapes how individuals and communities make meaning as well as how we experience ourselves and others. The task may at first appear daunting and unnecessary—almost like following the intricate workings of one’s blood vessels and muscle tissues. After all, on the whole, our daily lives and our bodies, if we belong to (or pass as) the majority in our society function just fine without our thinking, that is, until something goes wrong, until we are wounded, until something – obvious or subtle – demands our attention. However, how do we attend to “pains” and “aches” in the world around us? How do we respond within and to the myriad of systems, institutions, ways of knowing, and ways of being that silently and invisibly frame our identities and our relationships with others as something essential, predetermined, originating from a “true” essence we must constantly strive back to or towards? Vojnović’s *Čefurji Raus!* depicts “the interactive processes and power relations that inform [identity and the] interchange between groups of people” (Azoulay 97).ⁱⁱ I postulate that the novel uses its representation of Slovene institutions as well as its characterization of Marko to demonstrate that Marko’s *Čefur* identity is “essential” only insofar as Marko exists in an ideology that interpellates him into that image. I also argue that Vojnović simultaneously exposes Marko’s

identity as a symptom of ideology and something that he, as an active agent who accepts and engages in a series of actions, which entrap him in the negative *Čefur* stereotype, is not a passive victim of. Thus by displaying the complicated interplay that hides behind Marko's experienced "essential" identity, Vojnović refuses to assign blame. He erases the "essential" and exclusionary stereotype leaving the reader with a complex but addressable interplay of systems (of knowledge and meaning making, and so on) and institutions that one can choose to become aware of and choose to approach differently.

2.1 The *Čefur* Stereotype

It is important to consider the term *Čefur* in greater detail. It refers to immigrants from the former southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia and their descendants (Zorko, "Vodič po vesti" 185-186). The novel's first epigraph sums it up:

... . Čefurs are those individuals who live within the borders of a country but who are not part of that country's national majority. In our case, they are those individuals who come from areas south east of the Kolpe River. In most cases, the descendants of these immigrants are also recognized and referred to as Čefurs. They differ physiologically from the majority population by their low foreheads, uni-brows, and strong cheekbones. Their personality characteristics include: loving the easy life, swearing, love of alcohol, misogyny, and soccer. They are obsessed with kitsch and gold jewelry. They are beastly and are often aggressive without cause. Their assimilation is often long.

(Robert Pešuta Magnifico qtd. in Vojnović *Čefurji Raus!* 8, italics in original)

This definition actually comes from Robert Pešuta's, commonly known as Magnifico, song "[Gdo je]ⁱⁱⁱ Čefur" that satirizes the racist undertones of the term. However, for the purpose of this study, I am interested in the assumptions the song reveals about *Čefurs*. These

assumptions are that *Čefurs* are “essentially” different and inferior, evident in both physical and psychological characteristics. They are also seen as dangerous and uncultured, “beastly and ... aggressive without cause,” in love with swearing and alcohol, and misogynistic. According to the song, a *Čefur* will inevitably always already have these characteristics; it is in their “nature.” The Slovene and *Čefur* identities are “identities of difference” (Bhabha 5) – negative difference. They exist on a binary defined by “Cartesian dualism[that] assumes two mutually exhaustive categories, one of which (. . .) is assumed to be inherently superior to the other” (Trisk 41). The problem is not the binary oppositions, per se, but the assumption that one side of the binary is better than the other. Thus, I suggest that a series of apparatuses – specifically, interpersonal discourses, media discourses and institutions, the school system, the judicial system, and architectural structures – hail Marko into the *Čefur* identity. Marko is successfully interpellated when he accepts this identity as his own. As Zorko explains, “Vojnović’s hero does not reject the series of associations ascribed to the *čefur* community, he fulfills them, he explains them, and he is proud of them, since they are part of his identity – an identity he did not have the opportunity to choose himself” (“Vodič po vesti” 187). Marko engages in a series of practices and rituals that (re)confirm his *Čefur* identity as his essential nature. Indeed, although Marko’s *Čefur* identity may not be essential in and of itself, Marko is nevertheless interpellated so that he experiences the negative difference inscribed on his body as inherent. However, in spite of this interpellation, Vojnović never denies his protagonist agency. It is as much his responsibility to instigate a change of perception as anyone else’s.

2.2 Defining Methodology

When I refer to ideology, I am thinking of both Louis Althusser’s notion of ideology and Michel Foucault’s notion of the apparatus. For Althusser, ideology is an

“illusion/allusion” (162), “not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (165). Ideology, in other words, is how one imagines and perceives the world and one’s place within it. This imagining and perception is simultaneously shaped by the ways in which one has learned to imagine and perceive through one’s interactions with others. Foucault’s notion of the apparatus, which is defined most clearly by Giorgio Agamben and Stephen Thierman, is similar. For Agamben, the apparatus is “anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (qtd. in Thierman 91). For Thierman, the apparatus “outlines the field of interactions that enables a particular kind of experience (or perception)” and “causes us to ‘see’ in a particular fashion” (90). The two, ideology and the apparatus, cannot be differentiated. I suppose one way of thinking about it is that the apparatus, or, as Foucault calls it, the “continuum of apparatuses” (*The History of* 144) functions like a sort of membrane, which attempts to contain and frame how individuals and groups view the world. Ideology is the result of a particular shaping. Ideology, and indeed apparatuses, since one presupposes the other, therefore refer to the hidden interplay of knowledge/power; institutions; systems of knowing, being, (re)acting, and responding, that make our (re)actions, responses, and (pre)conceptions appear natural, or predetermined.

The second theory that I rely on is Althusser’s theory of interpellation. For Althusser, ideology functions primarily through the successful interpellation of individuals into subjects (170-171). A subject is interpellated, or, to borrow another of Althusser’s terms, “hailed” into ideology, when he/she and those around him/her accept and then participate in actions that (re)confirm his/her identity, a sort of semi-permeable membrane (172-173). A semi-

permeable membrane, in this sense, is most simply the assumption that the individual in question will have an identity, and that there will be a certain number of rituals (for example, birth, attending school, church, sports practices) that are to a large extent dictated by the ideology one finds oneself in. To this end, Althusser draws two important conclusions. First, “you and I are *always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects” (172-173). Second,

the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (. . .): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by material rituals, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief. (170)

Identity is experienced as true or essential, part of our core self. Althusser asserts that although our identities feel obvious to us, they are in fact mediated by an ideology that “always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (166). These practices involve common rituals –actions that have turned into practices, which have turned into rituals, which are subsequently used to (re)affirm the belief that instigated the chain of actions that began the ritual in the first place (168). Such rituals, for example those around birth and death, hail us into the world in a particular manner – into a particular identity. The consequent actions → practices → rituals that we and those around us engage in continually (re)affirm the semi-permeable identity that we were hailed into and which we recognize and (re)affirm as our own by engaging in the actions → practices → rituals associated with it (168-171, 173, 176, 181). As Judith Butler puts it in regards to gender identity, “[identity] is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory

frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (*Gender Trouble* 33). In other words, according to Althusser’s theory of interpellation, ideology creates a series of identity expectations, semi-permeable identities that make up the structure of and are structured by ideology. The individual becomes a subject – an individual with an identity, when he or she “cannot *fail to recognize*” their membrane and exclaim, “That’s right! That’s true! ... It’s me[!]” (172). I suggest that Marko’s subject position is (re)enforced, (re)affirmed, and indeed legitimized by a continuum of apparatuses which he recognizes, accepts, and (re)confirms. The apparatuses are comprised of interpersonal discourses, media discourses and institutions, the school system, the judicial system, and architectural structures that hail Marko into the derogatory, always already undesirable, lesser *Čefur* identity.

2.3 Looking in the Mirror^{iv} - “The Continuum of Apparatuses”

When the Slovene reader opens *Čefurji Raus!*, many know almost immediately that Marko is a *Čefur*. This is in part because Marko, who is complaining that there is no soccer team^v he can cheer for, tells the reader that this predicament is caused by his *Čefur* identity. But I will get to that eventually. This reader also knows that Marko is a *Čefur* because of his name – Marko Đorđić – and his lineage. Marko’s surname includes the letters “ć” and “đ,” which exist in the Serbian (Cyrillic) and Croatian (Latin) alphabets, but do not exist in the Slovene alphabet, although the sounds themselves are not completely foreign to Slovenes. Nevertheless, the presence of “ć” and “đ” in Marko's surname automatically marks him as an other who hails from “south of the Kolpa River,” and thus as a *Čefur*. In addition, Marko tells us that his father cheers for “*Zvezda* (‘Star’ – a Serbian soccer team, from Beograd), because although he is Bosnian, he is a Serb” (12). Here we begin to see the complicated relationship between ethnic and national identity in the ex-Yugoslavia. Marko, who was born

in Slovenia, is not considered a Slovene. He is a *Čefur* other. His father, who is a Bosnian, presumably born in Bosnia, is a Serb. Marko tells us that he [Marko] would be a *Zvezda* fan, but “[he] can’t. [He] doesn’t know why” (12). He says, “It’s all complicated, fuck your mother’s cunt” (12). The implication is that Marko can’t be a *Zvezda* fan because he is not a Serb, although his mother and father are.

The reader immediately knows that Marko is a direct descendant of people from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The *Čefur* identity thus becomes Marko’s semi-permeable identity membrane. He is hailed into the *Čefur* identity. In the epigraph that introduces this section, Bhabha asks the reader to consider “[s]tereotyping not [as] the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices”, but as “the masking of ‘official’ and phantasmatic knowledges to construct the positionalities and oppositions of racist discourse” (117). I am intrigued by Bhabha’s observation and begin my close reading of Vojnović’s novel with his thoughts in mind. I also align myself, once again, with Foucault who is interested in the ways in which “a particular discourse can ... function as a means of justifying or masking a practice, which itself remains silent, or as a secondary reinterpretation of this practice, opening out for a new field or rationality” (*Power/Knowledge* 195-196). How does Vojnović’s novel expose the play of discourse as part of the “background” and “stor[ies –] the causes and effects[,]” (Zavodnik) of the self/other divide in Slovenia? What is hidden behind a superficial reading of the novel that processes only the derogatory images and presumptions associated with its discourse?

In a lecture on January 14th 1976, Foucault sketches out the significance of discourse. He explains that “there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established,

consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse” (*Power/Knowledge* 93). In other words, discourse shapes how one responds and (re)acts to the world; however, how we respond and (re)act to the world also shapes our discourse. Drawing on Slovene scholar and novelist Andrej Skubic,^{vi} Đurđa Strsoglavac explains that limited knowledge of Slovene or the incorrect usage of Slovene is one of the first indicators of immigrant or other status. These linguistic differences quickly identify individuals as belonging to specific groups, especially when it comes to “nations, which are connected to economic migrations (which is characteristic of immigrants from the former ex-Yugoslav republics)” (312). For example, near the beginning of the novel, Marko describes how the old *Čefurs* used to bring nets to the football field and play. He states “the funniest thing was, of course, listening to those who had learned a little bit of Slovenian and forgotten a little bit of *čefurian*, and now spoke some sort of mixture. *Fužinian*” (15). To illustrate his point, Marko provides a few examples – “*Zvio sem si gležanje*” and “*Jebala te Milka Planinc u usta*” (15) – which mean roughly “twisted I my ankle” and “fucked Milka Planinc you in the mouth.” The syntax, as well as the occasional Bosnian term, for example “u” instead of “v” (“in the” in English), identify the wording as other.^{vii} As is perhaps obvious from these examples, particularly the more vulgar second example, *Fužinian* is more often than not, likely to be associated with graffiti slogans, usually peered upon with disgust and distaste, associated with hooligans or trouble makers, than with official print materials, such as Marko Snoj’s *Slovene Etymological Dictionary*, designed to preserve and maintain the Slovene language. In fact, one need only turn to some of the negative commentary surrounding the novel – for example, a blog post that asserts the novel is “unreadable” or the Slovene priest who notes, with what comes across a lot like disgust, that one counts thirty

swear words in the first three pages (qtd. in Stabej 301) – to ascertain that the language recorded in *Čefurji Raus!* exists, at least in Slovenia, as a marker of (negative) difference. Discourse functions here – in the form of Marko’s surname and the term *Čefur* – as an indicator of negative difference, which is always already attached to the two communities’ cultural and national identities. In this example, then, discourse participates to solidify an ideology that privileges the Slovenes.

In other words, the difference is not often “explicitly examined as the product of structural inequalities and asymmetrical social relations” (Azoulay 91). The letters in Marko’s surname and the term *Čefur* present the illusion that the negative difference associated with them was always already there, that is, an “obviousness.” Consequently, the term masks the discursive (and other) structures that present it as such. That said, Vojnović’s protagonist is not blind to them. As Zorko puts it in the novel’s afterword, “Marko argumentatively shows us the reasons for the world he is tangled up in” (“Vodič po vesti”198). For example, in the chapter titled “Why Slovenia Pisses Me Off,” Marko outlines the more subtle mechanisms of discourse that serve to position *Čefurs* on the ‘other’ side of the binary. He begins by comparing life in Bosnia with life in Slovenia. He states, in regards to Slovenia, “what pisses me off the most is that they write Marko Djordjič” (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 67). He goes on, “today I went to the post office for the first time in my life, and there is mail under the name Ranka Djordjič” (67). He continues, “they are always fuckin whinin at me at school, bitching about these agreements and conjugations ... and so on, but they can’t write a single surname? Is it that hard? Six letters. You have them on every fuckin key board” (67). Although Marko’s enunciation may leave something to be desired (although perhaps that is just my own bias surrounding vulgarities), he has a point.

The letters “đ” and “ć” are relatively easy to find on the keyboard, and the sounds they make are similar enough to the Slovenian sounds “dj” (similar to a “d” and soft “g” sound) and “č” (similar to a fast and long “ch” sound), to not be too much of a hindrance. Moreover, considering that Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia (whose languages these letters come from) were once a single country, one would be hard pressed to find a Slovene who does not know the 'đ' and 'ć' letters. However, as Marko explains “this is that nationalism” (67). But, what is really going on? Could one not argue that since this group is in Slovenia, they must abide by the Slovene alphabet, even if their letters make sense given Slovenia’s history?

Yes, one could argue that. However, doing so ignores the subtle mechanisms of power that manifest themselves in this particular “discursive formation.” For Foucault, “a discursive formation is defined neither in terms of a particular object, nor a style, nor a play of permanent concepts, nor by the persistence of a thematic, but must be grasped in the form of a system of regular dispersion of statements” (The editors of *Hérodote* qtd. in *Power / Knowledge* 63). Foucault’s hypothesis suggests that when examining the interplay of discourse and power, one should pay attention to how discourse works in practice to produce knowledge – an idea and understanding of the world, which becomes an “obviousness,” a “truth” (63). In this case, the negative difference associated with *Čefurs* is the “obviousness” under affirmation by discourse. The affirmation occurs paradoxically, at least in the first example. At the post office the Đorđić’s (negative) ‘other’ identity is simultaneously hidden (disavowed) and reinforced. On the one hand, the disappearance of the “đ” and “ć” eliminates the visual indicators of difference. However, substituting in the “dj” and “č,” maintains the phonetic difference. The silencing, which is only partial, is significant here. In

the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault states: “[a]s if in order to gain mastery over it [sexuality] in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present” (17). By “Slovenianizing” Đorđić, the post office and indeed the general discourse that does so on a regular basis, “subjugate[s]” the surname “at the level of language”; it controls it. However, this control is “rendered” invisible. The difference continues to be present – it is heard; however, it ceases to exist – it is not seen. The shadow of difference becomes the invisible other one can sense but cannot see. The very attempt to control, that is, eliminate the difference, serves to intensify it. The difference becomes not something that is “different” but something which is uncanny, and thus frightening. The selective use and elimination of different alphabets becomes part of, to borrow Foucault's terminology, “not one but many silences, ... [that] are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (27), which in turn shape one's perception of the world and one's subjectivity.

Consider Marko's second example, which he provides just after his outburst about the post office. He tells the reader that “when you read the criminal pages [in the newspaper] ... all of the Hadžihafisbegović's and Đokić's and all of the čefurs have nice 'đs' and 'ćs” (67). In the sports pages, however, “all of the Nesterović have a nice hard č. And all of the Bečirović's and Laković's and ...” (67). But you can bet, he concludes, “that if that Radoslav Nesterović robbed an exchange store, he would have soft ć across the whole page” (67). The surnames, which identify individuals as immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia because of the letters used, are left intact in news reports that outline criminal behavior. However, surnames belonging to the same community group

are Slovenianized when they refer to this community groups' sporting success. The result is that good deeds are associated with Slovenes and Slovene sounding/looking names. Bad deeds, on the other hand, are associated with the other – the non-Slovene. Indeed, by outlining the varying representation of *Čefurs* in the newspapers, Marko exposes the ways in which the media, or at least the newspapers, use discourse to (re)affirm and legitimize the self/other divide.

The school is another institution that subtly reinforces the binary. Like the discussion of newspapers above, this is in part caused by the power that can be channeled through discourse. To illustrate how this occurs, Marko describes the first day of school, an important scene when it comes to exposing the continuum of apparatuses that interpellate the two communities into a self/other binary as follows:

when you come to school on the first day, all of the Slovene moms are banging on the doors and taking pictures with their cameras, and all the Slovene youngsters are *ready* and smart, and they all know each other, and they all know everything already, and so they are all smart, and they crowd around the first bench, so they will be closer to the teacher and become little keeners. And they are all talking to the teacher and having a great time. But *one* Ranka and the other *čefur* moms stand all scared shitless with us little *čefurs* in the back, and will only look when someone will ask them something, because they themselves *screwed up* school, because it never clicked for them, and because they never learnt to speak Slovene great, so then they hope that no one will ask them anything. And then they wait silently while all the Slovenes get set up, and then they secretly push their young into the classroom

and hightail it out of there. And the young, scared just as shitless as their mothers, plop themselves down in the back row, as far away from everyone as possible, because they are just as scared as their mothers that someone will ask them something. Then they sit in the back row in total terror until the end of the fifth or sixth year, when they lose it because of all the fear and fucking bullshit, so then they go crazy and start with the bullshit and fucking everyone in a row on the head. (Vojnović 123, italics indicate term was originally in Bosnian)

Responding to this scene, Zorko postulates that Marko explains the significance of this first day by suggesting that the students are ashamed, frightened of a new environment, and unable to adapt because their parents do not know how to help them bridge the gap in their new environments (“Vodič po vesti”195). Zorko’s point is worth noting. On the first day of school, the most glaring indicator of difference between the two communities appears to be the different treatment the children receive from their mothers. The Slovene mothers are presented as excited and supportive, if somewhat crazed. Their children are presented as excited and prepared, if perhaps a tad obnoxious. The *Čefur* mothers, on the other hand, are presented as unsupportive, though the critique is moderated by the fact that Marko acknowledges their fear. Their children are presented as frightened, unhappy to be there, and unprepared. However, the mother’s lack of support is only the surface problem. The main indicator of difference, and the one that perpetuates the cycle, is actually much more subtle – discursive, invisible, but always already present.

As Marko tells us, the mothers are terrified that someone will ask them something, and that their response – in badly spoken Slovene – will identify them as other, but not only

other, an undesirable other. The mothers are presented as almost cowering. It seems that they cannot wait to get out of there, not because they don't love their children, but because they are so terrified of being identified. The implication is that the experience of being othered – that is, marked as undesirable, by the gaze of the Slovene self, is paralyzing. The mothers' fear does not allow them to give their children the skills and support they need to succeed in the classroom. As a result, the children do not learn and they act out in the school system. They get sent to the Trades high-school, which Marko asserts the "Slovenes created ... because they didn't know what to do with all the *čefurs*" (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 122). Consequently, the *Čefur* children are less educated than their Slovene peers and thus less likely to receive equal paying occupations. As such, the stereotype that immigrants from the south are only capable of doing low paying, physically demanding jobs is reaffirmed. The stereotype and its reaffirmation suggest that the stereotype merely (re)produces an inherent truth. However, the perpetuation of difference, which in this example begins because of a linguistic difference, is (re)enforced, that is, (re)produced by the school system, which further others the *Čefur* children and does not provide them with the safe and comfortable environment necessary to provide them with the skills they would need to participate in all sectors of Slovenia's socio-economic sphere.

In fact, the school system intensifies perceived negative difference by drawing attention to the differences between the two communities and highlighting the *Čefur* identity, which is indicated by cultural signifiers such as language, as something shameful and undesirable. For example, Marko explains that he hates being asked if his surname is spelled with a soft or hard "č" or "where his parents [are] from" (97). He also refers to the awful feeling when the grammar teacher handed back his assignment and "announce[d] in front of

the whole class that he used Croatianisms in his essay” (97). Thus, while Marko admits that he rarely goes to school (122) and admits that the *Čefur* school children eventually begin wreaking havoc (123), I cannot help but feel that there is a relationship between the way he is (or perceives he is) treated in school and the acting out he describes. As such, one can see how the various components of the apparatus, in this case discourses, the educational institutions, and the socio-economic institutions which require an education are all intertwined and mutually reinforcing. If one is limited or positioned as an other by one, then one is continually repositioned in this way. Thus, in this way, Marko’s characterization of the school system demonstrates the ways in which a series of mutually re-enforcing apparatuses position Marko and the other members of the *Fužine* community on the margins of Slovene society.

Marko further describes the tension between the two linguistic communities and the lack of recognition given to immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia for their contributions to Slovene society as follows:

Slovenians get all fuckin riled up if someone doesn’t know how speak Slovenian, but I don’t know how it would help them if all the Pešiči [Pešičs] knew Slovenian. Would they like to talk to us? To me these are completely irrelevant, useless, discussions. I mean that, that these Pešiči [Pešičs] should know how to speak Slovenian out of respect to Slovenia and all that. Pešiči [Pešičs] work on construction sites, they built all of Slovenia, in their lives they respect only Miroslav Ilić and cold beer. If all the Pešiči [Pešičs] spoke Tungastanian, no one would notice. Makes your dick hurt. But the Slovenians suffer because of that and are constantly whining and I don't know what. That

is part of their complex, because they never learned to play football [soccer].

(Vojnović *Čefurji Raus!* 136)

Although Marko's description is bitter and angry, if humorous, he makes a solid point. Slovenes do tend to be very critical if someone from the south does not speak proper Slovene. They are not so critical if other immigrants struggle with the language. Marko's point is also significant because, as Slovene commentators have suggested, both the Slovenes and the immigrant community are complicit in this relationship, the Slovenes because, as Marko's description of the first day of school shows, they make no (or very few) attempts to provide a comfortable and inclusive environment for the immigrant children to learn in, and, the čefurs, because they don't go to school. (For example, Marko once tells us he is going to school for the first time "after a hundred years" and that he is just going to sit in the "back row and nap a little" (122)). Also important is Marko's observation that the Slovene community lacks respect (or appears to lack respect) for the work the immigrant community does. Again differences are not valued; they are put on a hierarchical scale, where people are not appreciated for their contribution to the greater whole.

Up until this point, I have mainly been concerned with the ways in which Vojnović uses Marko's narrative to expose the subtle functioning of the Ideological State Apparatuses, that is, systems and institutions, which do not overtly function through repression, although their "actions" may well be experienced as violent by the bodies they are imposed onto. However, Marko also "harshly tackles the Slovene police ... and their tendency to ignore the law" (Zorko, "Vodič po vesti" 195). Marko meets the police on two occasions. The first time, Marko and his friends are drunkenly singing "We are the Champions" followed by a nationalistic Serbian song into the apartment intercom system. The police, who just returned

from delivering a warning to Radovan (Marko's father), who was drunkenly celebrating Marko's winning three-point buzzer shot in the national basketball tournament, pick them up and throw them into the back of a police van (Vojnović *Čefurji Raus!* 20-21). Marko explains that he doesn't know "how they flew in there" (21). All "[he] know[s] is that Adi was lying under [him] and Dejan on top of him. And that then they closed the door" (21). The boys are thrown about the back. Marko says that "[he] covered [his] head and waited for this mad house to be over" (22). When they stop, they are thrown out in the middle of some forest and left to make their own way home. They eventually do, but first they ransack an old cottage (23-24). Their second encounter with the police happens right after Marko's expulsion from the basketball team Slovan. Marko explains that "as a reward for punching one of Olympia's Kangaroos left right on the beard, I was suspended for a week" (Vojnović 44). When he returns, late for practice, his coach is waiting for him. The coach sees Marko drop his smoke, and tells him to pick it up. Marko refuses. Marko is subsequently told "Good bye. When you want to play basketball, come back" (44-45).^{viii} These are good examples that Marko is not a black and white victim. He often makes choices and acts in ways that do not present him positively. During this second example, Marko is really upset and the boys get very drunk (46, 47-50). They end up "tearing up" a bus and harassing a girl who is on it (51). The driver calls the police, and Marko and Aco are caught (52). The boys are abused. Aco leaves the police station with cracked ribs (69), in addition to the broken arm, which he broke on the bus (72). Marko is kicked/punched in the kidney and forced to jump up a wall (53-54). He is also forced to sign a document stating that he was not beaten (54). The behavior of both – the boys and the police – is, to say the least, problematic. My analysis of how the police institution serves as a Repressive State Apparatus, part of the "continuum of apparatuses,"

which intermingle and function covertly to position *Čefurs* as the undesirable other, is not meant to justify or excuse the behavior of either. I am not suggesting the boys should not have been arrested – that is a question for an entirely different debate. However, I would argue that the punishment far exceeds the crime and that the police actions were not justified. Therefore, I suggest that these scenes, like the previous ones, ask us to pause upon the subtle mechanisms of power that inform the interaction.

To explain how this occurs, I turn once again to Foucault. In his discussion of the developing prison system, Foucault suggests that one must not only address “discourses *about* prisons,” one must also examine the various discourses within the prisons. He also asserts that the prison’s “covert discourses and ruses, ruses which are not ultimately played *by* any particular person, but which are none the less lived, . . . assure the permanence and functioning of the institution” (*Power/ Knowledge* 38). In Marko’s case, he never once says that the police made any overt indications that they were targeting him and his friends specifically because they were *Čefurs*; however, Marko’s lived experience, given that he makes it clear that the Slovene police did this, is that this is the case. The scenes are also telling because later on, the reader finds out that the newspapers’ representations of *Čefurs* emphasize the association between *Čefurs* and criminals and minimize, that is, hide, the associations between *Čefurs* and sports heroes. It is not much of a stretch to read the events in this scene as predetermined. The police are interpellated into a culture that perceives *Čefurs* as always already criminal – dangerous, no gooders. Thus the police actions are “justified” within a sphere of knowledge that positions the *Čefurs* as always already a hindrance to Slovene society. Ironically enough, or perhaps it is to be expected, the police behavior also reinforces this behavior. After the first time the boys are abused – arguably

sadistically toyed with – the frightened, sick, and yes, drunk group vandalize a cottage. Although it must be acknowledged that the boys are responsible for their own actions, it is nevertheless clear that their actions were instigated and intensified by the way the police treat them. Similarly, after Marko and Aco are released from prison, Aco decides he must beat up the bus driver who reported them. Again, Aco is responsible for his own actions. The novel makes no attempt to justify or excuse his behavior. However, the police brutality acts as a catalyst here as well. In other words, the actions of the police, “which are not ultimately played *by* any particular person,” but are a series of events caught in a complicated dance that seemingly cannot be broken, “serve to assure the permanence and functioning of” in this case, not the institution of the prison, but the ideology that positions the immigrant from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia as always already negative – undesirable and dangerous.

2.1 Hailing the Self – Marko accepts his interpellation? – and Mimicry

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha makes a similar observation. He states that “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (64). By exposing the ways in which Marko actively participates in maintaining and performing his interpellated subject position, Vojnović refuses to allow Marko’s position to be only that of a passive victim. In fact, in *Čefurji Raus!*, Marko is no longer the comical stock character that most often represents the immigrant community from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia in Slovenia (Zorko 194; Švabić). Marko becomes a round and dynamic character. By illuminating the ways in which Marko is interpellated and consequently acts out this identity, Vojnović gives agency^{ix} back to the *Čefur* and illustrates that although both the reader and Marko may experience Marko's

identity as essential (unchangeable), such a perception of his identity is merely an illusion of ideology.^x

However, before outlining how this occurs, it is useful to emphasize the paradox that underlies both ideology and xenophobia. Strsoglavec explains, “[i]n public spaces, immigrant dialects are a source of comedy, which is often belittling, but is at the same time an auto referential source” (312).^{xi} Her point is intriguing because it illustrates the chicken and egg conundrum of interpellation. One is hailed into a particular identity, and the more one accepts and engages in actions, practices, and rituals that (re)affirm this identity as “true,” that is, essential, the more “obvious” this truth appears. Vojnović’s novel illustrates that Marko is not only interpellated into his *Čefur* identity, but he is also interpellated into an ideology that accepts as given that one's identity is inherently based on one's ethno-national origins, both of which appear to be (to a greater extent) understood as biologically or spiritually essential (i.e. unchanging) characteristics. Marko accepts this as his “essential” (biological) identity. Indeed, although Marko appears convinced throughout the novel that “We [Slovenians and *Čefurs*] do not have the same things in our blood, and that’s that!” (67, translation mine), that is not that. Marko is not genetically predetermined (or guaranteed) to behave in this way because he belongs to an “ethnic” group or “race” of people referred to as *Čefurs*. Paradoxically, however, because Marko believes and exists in an ideology that requires him to do so, Marko is right: “[Slovenians and *Čefurs*] do not have the same things in [their] blood, and that’s that!” (67). Indeed, Marko’s identity is *inherent* only insofar as it is constructed and interpellated as such. However, what holds more weight: the fact that Marko’s *essential* (ethnic, national, *Čefur*) identity lacks solid footing; or, that Marko experiences his interpellated identity as *essential*?

2.1.1 Practice and Ritual

Marko begins the novel ranting and raving because there is no football [soccer] team he can call his own. He cannot, he explains, cheer for any of the soccer teams other than Serbian *Zvezda*. He doesn't want to cheer for the Slovene team *Slovan*, because, as he puts it, "that's Czech" (11).^{xii} He has a little more trouble explaining why he can't cheer for the other Slovene soccer team Olympia. First he tells the reader it is because he plays basketball with another Slovene club *Slovan*. Then he states that he actually does cheer for them, but he just can't be a fan. He doesn't know why: "I don't know why. It's stupid really. *Fuck it*. Maybe the problem really is that *I'm a Čefur*. But *it is also because I am a Čefur that I am so upset I don't have a club. I have that in my blood*" (11, italics mine). In addition to the fact that Marko appears to associate identity with one's "national" and "ethnic" affiliations, there are two points worth noting. First, by stating "I'm a Čefur," Marko recognizes and accepts the *Čefur* identity as his own. Second, Marko, who is successfully interpellated into the *Čefur* identity immediately also recognizes and begins (re)affirming the characteristics associated with the identity. He swears. He makes it clear that soccer is really important to him, and he asserts that he would not be so upset if he wasn't a *Čefur*. And, perhaps most importantly, Marko states that his passion is something biologically "essential": it is in his blood; it makes up the very foundation of his being. Thus, for Marko, the *Čefur* identity exists as an "obviousness" – always already there.

Marko continues to (re)produce and in doing so legitimize the negative characteristics assigned to *Čefurs* throughout the narrative. He tells the reader that after his team won the basketball game against Olympia, he ran up and down the gym screaming; all he wanted to do was pull his pants down, show the opponent his penis, and tell him to go "fuck it" (18). He states that when the ball drops into the basket and the buzzer goes, you lose all of your

nervousness, your adrenaline spikes, “and you become an animal” (18). He describes his actions as

the *čefur* primitivism, fucked, vulgar, disgusting, sick, this morbid Balkan narcissism that is for some reason always cool, when this animalistic tendency comes out or when you are drunk as fuck. This is something genetic in us, at least in *čefurs*. And that’s why you scream: “We are the heroes, we are the heroes! We are the gypsies, we are the gypsies.” (19).

For Marko, his behavior, which he recognizes as inappropriate, is natural – obvious! His experience, at least in this scene, is that he has no control over it. It “is something genetic in [him]” (19). In other words, Marko *believes* (practices) his interpellated *Čefur* identity. Here, I would draw our attention to Althusser’s paraphrase of Pascal: “Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe” (168). Althusser argues that practice equals belief, “that the ‘ideas’ of a human subject exist in his actions” (168). In other words, Althusser maintains that if an action is completed often enough, it becomes a practice; once this practice is completed often enough, it becomes a ritual. Eventually, when the ritual is repeated often enough, it becomes a belief, or a “tenacious obviousness[]” (166-169, 128), something that is always already recognized as true. The reader sees this occur throughout the novel. First, as I discuss above, Marko accepts his *Čefur* identity. Then, Marko participates in a series of practices that reaffirm this identity, for example, in the scene at the basketball game discussed above; when Marko and his friends get belligerently drunk (20-21, 48-52); when Marko and his friends run out on the restaurant bill (32-33); as well as when the boys use vulgar and misogynistic language when interacting with girls (41-42, 50-52). Consequently,

Marko repeats the actions assigned to the *Čefur* identity he is hailed into, continually presenting them as always already there, obvious and essential.

Or does he? In the first example, Marko states that he acts violently after the basketball game because there is something genetic in *Čefurs*, that is, those who hail from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia. However, later on, his narrative, while still engaging in a series of practices and rituals that (re)affirm the imposed identity, also challenges it. For example, although Marko's narrative critiques the Slovene police who once left the boys in the middle of the forest (20-21) and beat them another time (52-55), Marko acknowledges that he too might have called the police if there were three hooligans ransacking his bus (101). This suggests that he believes he deserved to be punished, if not beaten for his actions. In addition, while Marko acknowledges the ways he and his friends talk to and about girls, he also mentions that he always felt uncomfortable with this sort of language (41).^{xiii} Similarly, when describing the restaurant scene, Marko acknowledges his own problematic behavior (he and his friends do not pay for the bill); however, he also outlines that the waitress looked at them "like they were the biggest hooligans from the very beginning" (34, 33). Indeed, despite the fact that the novel implicates Marko and his friends as being deserving of, or at least living up to, the derogatory stereotypes that they are hailed into from birth, or to borrow Zorko's terminology, which are "predestined" for them ("Vodič po vesti" 187), the novel is an open minded but firm critique of the way the Slovene public treats the immigrant community that hails from the former southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia.

The strongest reason for the novel's success is its ability to evoke empathy and restrain from directing blame. Going back to the restaurant scene, as Zorko points out, "in the same breath that he [Marko] rages because the waitress looks at him like he is criminal, he

admits that he ran out and escaped without paying the bill” (196). The scene is perhaps one of the most complicated and thought provoking scenes in the narrative. The boys decide to go to the restaurant because Marko won the basketball match and now he has to treat them. (In Slovenia, the person celebrating an event or success pays for the celebration, not the other way around as it is in Canada). The other reason, of course, is that they do not want to go home. Marko tells us they went to the restaurant Babnik “because they have really reasonable prices, if you are fast and bust it out of there when the waitress isn't looking” (32). He goes on to say that “there is only one problem with this restaurant, you can only go once” (32). “I don't know,” he says, “if there is a Čefur anywhere in the world who has been to this restaurant more than once. Every weekend someone comes hightailing it out of Babnik stuffed like a pig” (32). So far, Marko has not challenged any of the stereotypes leveled against *Čefurs*. Instead, he has blatantly confirmed them. Then Marko points to something that should give us pause:

But is it my fault, that the Fužine are so close and that the waitresses don't run after us through the suburbs.

Fuck her mother, the waitress kept staring at us from the very beginning like we were the most criminal of them all. Just because we looked like little čefurs, or what? I even saw the look in her eyes, as she watched us, and thought that we were gonna piss out of there as soon as we were done. We did piss out of there, but that's not the point. The point is, that she couldn't have known we were gonna piss out of there, but she kept glaring at us and giving us shitty portions. (32)

He adds, “what if we had paid? What then? She would have looked at us just the same. And that's just it! Fucking cow!” (33). Leaving Marko's colorful language aside, he has a point. The scene almost seems to convey the chicken and egg dilemma. What came first, the negative perceptions and stereotypes surrounding the *Čefurs* which cause Slovenes to stare and glare at them, like they were really the worst hoodlums and criminals in the world? Or was it the *Čefurs*, who, Marko admits, rather frequently “piss off” without paying the bill? As he puts it, “what would have happened if we paid at the end? She would have still looked at us this way. And that’s the *keč* [catch]!” (33-34).

Significantly, in this scene, the reader is invited to empathize with both the waitress and Marko. We can empathize with waitress because she has reason to suspect that she will not get paid for this order. Moreover, the language Marko uses to describe her suggests the boys were not the most pleasant or respectful customers. However, we can also empathize with Marko. Even if we tend to belong to the dominant demographic, we can imagine or at least be open to attempting to imagine what it would feel like to be looked at with disgust and distrust. We can imagine, or at least the novel invites us to imagine, what it would feel like to walk into a room or a restaurant and immediately sense that we are not wanted and that the people around us think we are lesser. Basically, the scene tells us that *someone*, the narrative does not seem to care who, is going to have to break the circle. Either the waitress will have to step out on a limb and treat the “*Čefurs* as she would any other customer, or the *Čefurs* represented by the boys, will have to start paying the bill. Of course, I would not delude myself or the reader of this thesis into thinking that such an approach will change the established pattern. Rather, I would like to emphasize that by indicating both the waitress and Marko and his friends as guilty of wrongdoing, Vojnović has left both with the responsibility

to fix it. Neither is innocent here; however, we also cannot say that either is completely guilty. However, it is only because Vojnović sets up the scene so that the context as well as the cause and effect of each character's actions are illustrated that we are able to empathize with both. These scenes are important because they demonstrate that although Marko appears to engage in a series of practices and rituals that (re)confirm and legitimize his *Čefur* identity – sometimes he is even successfully interpellated into this identity – his actions suggest that he is not so much interpellated into an ideology that positions him as the undesirable other, as he is partially interpellated and engages in a sort of mimicry of this identity.

2.1.2 Mimicry

Bhabha defines mimicry as “a sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the other as it visualizes power” (122). I use the term similarly. I understand the term *Čefur* to function as “a complex strategy” meant to “regulate and discipline” the other. It is an appropriation of the other, insofar as it dictates the other's identity. However, I understand Marko's mimicry of the *Čefur* identity as a variation on Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Unlike Bhabha's definition, in which the other mimics the self and (re)affirms the self's position by being “*almost the same but not quite*” (127), Marko mimics the identity of the other, as it is defined and positioned by the self. Or, as Albert Memmi explains (in relation to the colonizer/colonized binary), “the colonized emerges as the image of everything the colonizer is not” (ref. in Hartsock 160). I understand the relationship between Slovenes and *Čefurs* similarly. Slovenes (the novel's ethnically homogeneous majority) occupy the position of the self, while Marko and the *Čefurs* (the ethnically diverse minority) occupy the position of the other. In this way, the *Čefurs* are positioned to represent everything (bad or negative) that the Slovenes are not. Marko, thus, mimics the stereotype of a *Čefur* in the first epigraph that describes *Čefurs* as

using vulgar language and having a visceral, animalistic need for violence. Marko does not try to repeat and (re)present the self; rather, I view him as trying to repeat and (re)present (mimic) the defined and constructed other, which is the necessary opposite in an ideology grounded by an either/or dichotomy.

That said, I am perhaps a tad hasty in asserting that Marko mimics only the identity of the other. It is true that Marko does not attempt to mimic the image of the Slovene self. In fact, he considers being called a Slovene an insult (68). Marko always already accepts, acknowledges, and even fulfills his personification of the imagined other. However, Marko is not a passive object in this dichotomy. On the contrary, he actively participates in the very process that others him. One could say that while Marko does not mimic the image (identity) of the Slovene self, he does mimic the actions of the self. For example, some time after Marko and Aco get released from the police station, Marko goes with Aco to stalk Damjanović, the bus driver, who reported them to the police. They sit in front of his apartment building. Marko is just about to leave because, as he puts it, he does not “have time for this bullshit”, when Damjanović comes out. Marko tells us that Damjanović “looked completely ridiculous, and [that] he had a real *čefur* face” (131). At this point, Marko pauses to explain that he and his friends once got in an argument “because [he] claimed that you can tell a *čefur* apart from a Slovene, by their face” (131). He then tells the reader that “Damjanović proved [this] theory” (131). “You really couldn't screw him up. Harsh facial features, thick whiskers, some blurry look, half crooked teeth, he was just missing a toothpick in his mouth” (131). Here Marko is actively participating in a ritual that positions one group, in this case his own *Čefur* group, as other. If one breaks down Marko's description of Damjanović, it is clear that his description is not so different from the

derogatory assertion that *Čefurs* are “*are beastly and are often aggressive without cause*” (Pešut qtd. in Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 8). Damjanović has “kostmat[e],” which suggests thick hairy, almost furry, whiskers. In addition, Marko describes Damjanović's eyes as having a sort of “blissfully blurry” expression which, given the other descriptors and subsequent analysis of his teeth as “half crooked”, is closer to the English colloquial expression “creepy” than anything else. One is invited to think of a dangerous male who preys on women and children. The point, of course, is that Marko is actively participating in the “complex strategy” meant to “regulate and discipline” the other. In fact, Marko’s hypothesis and his “experiment” accept and reproduce the pseudoscientific theory of physiology encapsulated by the first epigraph that maintains that *Čefurs* “*differ physiologically from the majority population by their low foreheads, uni-brows, and strong cheekbones*” (Pešut qtd. in Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 8).

In Bhabha’s theory, the self appropriates the other’s identity in order to dictate it. Here, Marko appropriates the actions of the self in order to maintain and legitimize his own other identity as real and definable. Since I agree with Zagoda, who argues that the novel functions as a “form of resistance which Bennet qualifies as ‘conservative praxis committed to the defence of subordinate culture’” (549), I do not believe we can read this phenomenon as simply an indicator of the dominant culture’s all-pervasive power. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that by practicing the action of differentiating *Čefurs* and Slovenes based on their physiology – that is, mimicking the actions of the self – Marko is not only accepting the derogatory characterization of his *Čefur* identity as an “obviousness” – a truth – his ritual actions make it thus, despite the fact that Marko’s narrative allows the possibility that it may not really be quite so obvious – always already there.

I would like to pause a moment further on the ways in which Marko *believes* (practices) his interpellated *Čefur* identity. However, I am not thinking about such obvious events; rather, I am intrigued by the moments when Marko not only interpellates his other identity as essential, but where he also actively participates in this othering process. One example is the scene with the bus driver discussed above. Another is the scene that immediately precedes it. Marko is grumpy with Aco, who is “sociolosifizing,” psychologizing, and philosophizing about the differences between *Čefurs* and Slovenes. Marko explains that ever since Aco put the neighbors who were trying to take advantage of his mom Marina straight, Aco thinks “he knows everything about everything” (129). Ironically Marko, given that he was just complaining about Aco’s philosophizing, explains, “that is a typical *čefur* characteristic. When something goes well for you, you become smart [a smartass], so it hurts your head. Your self-confidence grows by the minute. You puff up to the max. And then you walk around the Fužine in the biggest peasant-*čefur* way” (129). In this passage, Marko states that Aco is acting in a “typical *čefur*” manner. In other words, Aco is acting in a way that is typical of a certain group, the *Čefur* group. Aco is acting unlike another, in this case, Slovene, group. Moreover, Marko describes Aco’s actions (behavior) with if not scorn and disgust, at the very least dislike. Consequently, since Aco is doing something undesirable, and his actions are typical of *Čefurs*, the reader is left with the follow association: *Čefur* equals something negative, something lesser. In fact, Marko accepts the “essential” *Čefur* difference, and, he engages in a series of actions (practices), which eventually serve to (re)affirm the “essential difference.”

2.2 The Abjection

What is particularly interesting here is that Marko is interpellated into an ideology that always already assumes a binary opposition based on negative difference. In this

ideology, Bosnian becomes the signifier for different – the undesirable different. Zagoda refers to this phenomenon in another Slovene text *Pseći tango* by Aleš Čar. To illustrate how the term “Bosnian” functions in the Slovene language, Zagoda describes a scene in the novel where the two main characters wish to rent a flat. Although one of the characters Viktor finds an affordable flat, his partner Anita states that she is “not moving to Fužine” “[b]ecause Bosnians live there” (qtd. in Zagoda 548). As Zagoda explains, “[w]e can say that the word ‘Bosnian’ has become the . . . signifier for ‘the Other’ and it can signify a Croat, Serb, Muslim, or even a Jew or Roma – the ethnicity is not important for the general signifier of ‘the Other’” (548). Marko uses “Bosnian” in a derogatory fashion similar to Anita’s use of the term. For example, in the chapter titled, “Why I don’t get out of bed on Sundays,” Marko explains that his parents always argue on Sundays. On this particular day, Marko tells the reader that his father is upset because the sarma (cabbage rolls) are on the balcony and not in the fridge. Marko explains,

[o]f course, it is pretty fucked up that the sarma is on the balcony, but that you get pissed about that is for the nut house. The thing is that his head hurts and he is hung over, so now he wants to eat sarma for breakfast. Fuck sarma for breakfast. If that isn’t the most Bosnian thing in the world. (Vojnović 25)

Bosnian, here, is used to refer to something negative – undesirable. In this sentence, Bosnian no longer indicates someone of another nationality; rather, Bosnian indicates someone who is inferior, gross, strange. Marko, himself the descendent of two Bosnian-Serbs, who at other points in the novel romanticizes his Bosnian relatives and their way of life (66), uses this term as an insult. Thus, although Marko’s narrative indicates that he is aware of the continuum of apparatuses that (re)inforce and (re)produce his identity, he is nevertheless

fully interpellated into an ideology that positions his assigned identity as always already negative.

Indeed, despite the fact that Marko is, as Zorko notes, a proud *Čefur* (“Vodič po vesti” 187), Marko simultaneously appears to reject – expel his “otherness,” his other-self, so to speak. I am thinking, here of Franz Fanon’s essay “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” (1952) and Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection. In Fanon’s essay, Fanon encodes his lived experience in the face of the white man’s stare. When faced with the white man’s stare, the white man’s image of him, Fanon feels “Nausea” (423).^{xiv} He exists “in the triple: I was taking up room. I approached the Other ... and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea” (423). Fanon becomes the white man in that he experiences himself as the white man experiences him; he is the other in that he exists in relation to the white man; and, he is the non-existent – “not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished” – object in his lived experience of himself in the face of the white man’s gaze. In the face of this experience, Fanon explains that he “transported [his self] ... far, very far away from [himself], and gave [himself] up as an action” (423). In the face of the white man’s, the self’s, gaze, Fanon experiences himself as abject – that undesirable something, which is not recognized as a something, but an uncanny meaninglessness, that which is “opposed to I” (Kristeva 2) – which he must expel from himself. I think something similar happens to Marko in *Čefurji Raus!* Marko is interpellated into an ideology that positions the identity he is hailed into as an undesirable other. Most importantly, Marko is interpellated into an image of himself, the *Čefur* self he identifies with, as it is present in the face of the self’s (the Slovene’s) gaze. As such he accepts it as both something associated with him and something negative, and acts accordingly. Thus, when he engages in actions that mimic those

of the self – i.e. using “street” eugenics to differentiate between Slovenes and *Čefurs* and describing things as “typically *Čefur* or “so Bosnian” in a way that indicates their undesirability, their negative difference, Marko is effectively expelling the signifiers associated with the identity he has interpellated (internalized) as his essential self. In other words, Marko is expelling himself as abject. To put it simply, Marko is not interpellated into an identity, his identity; Marko is interpellated into an image of himself, as it exists in the fearful and disgusted gaze of the self that shapes his identity.

Endnotes

ⁱ For a discussion of narrative and identity, as well as meta-narratives, refer to Andreea Deciu Ritivoi’s “Explaining People: Narratives and the Study of Identity.”

ⁱⁱ Jasna Zavodnik states that “[a]lthough Vojnović emphasizes that many different people live in the Fužine, in his award winning narrative, he was thinking mainly about stereotypes surrounding *Čefurs* which he generally did not break open but showed their background” (italics around *Čefur* mine). She goes on to say that “the novel evolved through the exploration and understanding of specific occurrences and events”; and, “[Vojnović] believes that behind the behavior of certain groups there exists a story, the causes and effects of this behavior.” Similarly, Zorko explains that Vojnović presents the reader with a group of people in a very tight spot. He gives us a sense of their experiences. However, he does not provide explanations of the causes for and the effects of their actions and attitudes. Nor does he provide us with the cause and effect of the relationship between the Slovenes and *Čefurs*. Rather, Vojnović presents the reader with the humorously sad/catalytic view, almost cinematic, and explains the basic characteristics (Zorko, “Vodič po vesti” 194-195, italics around *Čefur* mine).

ⁱⁱⁱ The title here is ironic. As is pointed out by commentator “Musica TheMusica” on the YouTube comments section, it should be “kdo” je *Čefur*. “Gdo” is not correct Slovenian grammar.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSmPkrwGMQI>

^{iv} The idea for the subsection heading “Looking through the Mirror” comes from the following statement from Urban Zorko: “We find ourselves in front of a mirror, and in it Vojnović tackles the whole spectre of *čefur* existence in Slovenia” (“Vodič po vesti” 194).

^v Marko makes reference to a number of soccer teams and sport clubs in Slovenia and Bosnia. His references to *Zvezda* (star) also called *Cervena Zvezda* (Red Star) indicate a Serbian soccer team from Beograd. Marko tells the reader that these fans are called *Delija* (12). *Zvezda* is technically a sports club, and there are basketball teams e.t.c. that use the name. However, Marko refers only to the soccer team. *Olimpija* and *Slovan* are names of sport clubs in Slovenia. Each club includes a soccer and basketball team among others. Marko talks about the soccer teams from the *Olimpija* and *Slovan* clubs. He plays on the basketball team for *Slovan*. Green Dragon refers to a fan of *Olimpija*. Red Tigers are *Slovan* fans.

^{vi} Skubic is credited with being one of the first, if not the first, writers to use dialogs specific to Ljubljana in his writings, particularly his 2001 novel *Fužinski bluz* (Strsoglavec 311-312). The difference between Skubic's and Vojnović's novels is, among others, that Vojnović is mostly concerned with immigrants, which also influenced his choice of social dialect, or more correctly, speech" (Strsoglavec 312).

^{vii} The actual creation of this language received considerable attention in Slovenia. It is indeed a linguistic feat. The hybrid dialect has "two levels" (Zorko, "Vodič po vesti" 188; Strsoglavec 311). The first level uses predominantly Slovene terminology and grammar, while the second level mixes Slovene words with Bosnian syntax, mixes Slovene words with non-Slovene words, and mixes non-Slovene words with Bosnian grammar and syntax (Zorko 188; Strsoglavec 311). In general, as Vovk explains by referring to Zorko's afterward, the Slovene heavy language "dominates at the level of narrative, while the non-Slovene syntax and wording is central to the narrator's intimate surroundings" (Vovk). The language can also be used, Strsoglavec explains, to distinguish between first generation immigrants (Marko's parents) and second-generation immigrants (Marko and his friends) (311-312).

^{viii} Zorko states that the official reason for Marko's expulsion is the fact that he hogged the ball during the state championship ("Vodič po vesti" 187). Zorko identifies this point as the catalyst that sets off Marko's maturation (187).

^{ix} Zorko alludes to another way Vojnović gives Marko back his agency. He explains that Vojnović manages to record the treasure chest of sayings, wisecracks, and judgments the Slovenian ethos cooks up at the expense of their neighbors from the former Yugoslavia. His hero, Marko Đorđić does not reject them. He fulfills them, he explains them, and he is proud of them, since they are part of his identity – an identity he did not have the opportunity to choose himself (187). In other words, Marko appropriates them.

^x Althusser states that "ideology = illusion/allusion" (162).

^{xi} Here Strsoglavec once again draws on one of Skubic's observations.

^{xii} Slovan is actually a Slovene team. Czech here is used in a derogatory fashion.

^{xiii} Urban Vovk states that Marko appears sensitive to the plight of "passive female characters" in the immigrant community throughout the narrative. Vovk suggests that it is in his interactions with these female characters that Marko most appears as "down to earth and sensitive character."

^{xiv} Thank you to George Grinnell whose classroom discussions helped me to formulate this idea.

Chapter 3: The Mist of Trauma

The (learned) gut feeling: the imposition of trauma on the self and the body....

Experiences of unsettlement, loss, and recurring terror produce discrepant temporalities – broken histories that trouble the linear, progressivist narratives of nation-states and global modernization.

(Clifford 317, italics mine)

In this section, I postulate that Vojnović's *Čefurji Raus!* exposes two communities that exist within a continuum of apparatuses framed by a larger trauma apparatus. In other words, I contend that the novel illustrates a series of interactions that appear to stem from, but are not often consciously tied to, a complex interplay of historical and personal traumas that encourage (re)actions and responses that occur in the present but that are learned (re)actions and responses to past traumatic events. I argue that the novel elucidates the ways in which the traumatic past, characterized by pain and mistrust, is imposed – consciously and unconsciously – onto the present through the (re)production of knowledge, for example, through discourse, public names and figures, the state apparatus, as well as accounts of personal experiences, behaviors, and memories. *Čefurji Raus!* depicts the ways in which the trauma apparatus impose a feeling of “naturalness” onto the encounter with the other, yet, paradoxically, creates learned “instinctive” responses and (re)actions of discomfort, anxiety, and dislike. Marko's story reveals how the trauma apparatus limits one's self-awareness.

3.1 Defining Trauma

Aporia: a perplexing difficulty

(The OED, italics mine)

The complicated and confusing term – traumaⁱ – requires further nuancing. In *Trauma: A Genealogy* Ruth Leys traces the genealogy of trauma from its conception as a “physiology of shock” in the late 1800s, a mental reaction caused by extreme physical shock (3); to its re-

conception as “the wounding of the *mind* brought about by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock” (3-4), a way of thinking about trauma that is associated with thinkers such as “J.M Charcot, Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, ... Sigmund Freud, and other turn-of-the-century figures” (3-4); to more recent neurobiological as well as literary and philosophical discussions associated with thinkers such as Bessel A. van der Kolk and Cathy Caruth.ⁱⁱ However, when one speaks of trauma today, he or she is most often referring to PTSD – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. As a disorder, PTSD, which outlines some of the most common, though certainly not exclusive manifestations of trauma, has only been recognized by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, since 1980. The most recent publication of this manual – the DSMV– defines PTSD as either the direct “[e]xposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence”, witnessing such an event, learning that such an event has occurred to a family member or close loved one, or having been exposed to the immediate effects of such an event. In order for one’s response to such an event to be labeled PTSD, the individual must experience “one (or more) of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s)”: intrusive thoughts, images, or flashbacks related to the event in either nightmares or other forms; trouble sleeping, emotional numbing, amnesia, and violent outbursts; avoidance of stimuli associated with the event; depression, difficulty concentrating, and/or hypervigilance; persistent feelings of guilt and shame; the inability or lack of desire to form interpersonal connections, and so on. If such symptoms persist for more than a month and hinder the person’s functioning and ability to pursue fulfilling activities, the individual will be diagnosed with PTSD (American Psychiatric Association).ⁱⁱⁱ As such the DSM gives a relatively useful sense of how trauma manifests. However, as trauma scholars remind us, no two individuals suffering with PTSD exhibit the same symptoms. Moreover, while some individuals experience PTSD, others may experience an extreme event but

not have traumatic responses. Thus, defining working through and sitting with trauma require a multidisciplinary approach that includes not only the “social” and “hard” “sciences,” but also a myriad of non-academic forms of knowledge. However, I will focus largely on the discussions of trauma from cultural and literary critical studies.

Dominick LaCapra, building on Sigmund Freud’s discussions of trauma, defines “[t]rauma as a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in the existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered” (*Writing History, Writing* 41). Cathy Caruth describes it as “wound of the mind” (*Unclaimed Experience* 4), more specifically, a “crying wound” (8), “the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world” (4). Trauma, she states, “is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (3-4). This point is interesting because trauma, its experience, and its responses, can take many forms. One can be unaware that an experience has been traumatic until one re-experiences it in such things as flashbacks and nightmares and so on. One can have an extreme experience and perceive it without symptoms initially, only to find that it has a large psychosomatic effect later. Similarly, one may experience the event as traumatic initially, but not be able to imagine the long-term effects and affects of the trauma.

Moreover, trauma is not always the result of a specific event. Trauma can also be historical or structural. To quote LaCapra, “[h]istorical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or even entitled to the subject position associated with it” (78). A historical trauma, in other words, refers to a specific event or occurrence, for example, enduring or witnessing torture, loss of a loved one or home. When it comes to structural trauma – for example poverty,

sexism, and/or racism – however, “[e]veryone is subject to” it (79) where these things exist. The two are also not mutually exclusive, and one may find that his or her experiences move between the two. However, the subtle distinction is worth pointing out, not only because it hints at the ways in which specific historical traumas may slide into and be absorbed by structures of knowledge, but also because of the ways in which structures of knowledge or apparatuses may move between and stick to historical traumas in ineffectual attempts to explain absences with historical losses.

LaCapra elucidates that an absence refers to something that is lacking but which never existed in the first place. Here one might look at the events in post-War Germany. In *The Inability to Mourn* Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich argue that after World War One the Germans were susceptible to Hitler and the Nazi ideology, because “[w]orld-redeeming dreams of ancient greatness arise in peoples in whom the sense of having been left behind by a history evokes feelings of impotence and rage” (12). The absence, here, is the loss of “ancient greatness” that has the power to “redeem” the world to some perfect whole. After World War Two, the Germans never carried out processes of mourning for the loss of lives, land, Hitler, economic and social power, or the identities of a rational self lost as a result of World War Two. The authors suggest that all responsibility for the war was left in the hands of Hitler and a few high-ranking Nazi officials (xvi). As a result the fact that many Germans participated in the euphoria of the Third Reich was neither acknowledged nor explored. Writing in the 1960s, the Mitscherlich’s explain that

“although, rationally speaking, it should have been the most burning problem in their minds, Germans have shown a minimum of psychological interest in trying to find out why they became followers of a man who led them to the greatest material and moral catastrophe in their history” (9).

Instead, they have sought to move forward without ever coming to terms with or even acknowledging their own pain or the pain their regime brought upon others. They avoided acknowledging or addressing the concrete losses associated with the war. This is in part because they did not wish to acknowledge the shame associated with their country's role in World War Two. The problem is not only that "a very considerable expenditure of psychic energy is needed to maintain this separation of acceptable [for example the loss of home and loved ones] and unacceptable memories", but also that "what is consumed in the defence of a self anxious to protect itself against bitter reproaches of conscience and doubts of its own worth is thus unavailable for mastering in the present" (16). There was a sense of absence, but specific losses were not acknowledged. When losses were acknowledged, they were reduced to loss of territory to the Russians without taking into account the complexities of the war and its myriad of losses. In other words, the past was repressed, numbed out, buried, unacknowledged. Remaining trapped in this manner can have serious effects, especially when the memories repressed manifest themselves as guilt and/or shame. Many children of those complicit in Nazism attested the impact of this on social and family life.

Sabrina P. Ramet discusses shame in the context of former Yugoslavia, specifically Serbia:

[w]hile shame may have multivarious sources, one of them is feeling that one is considered *guilty* of something terrible in the eyes of others. In other words, there is, in some cases, a strong link between guilt and shame. Shame is a powerful force that tortures those it affects. But shame may be repressed, giving rise to the phenomenon of *unacknowledged shame* in which a person might seem '... not to be in pain, revealing an emotional response only by rapid, obsessional speech on

topics that seemed somewhat removed from dialogue.’ (Ramet and Scheff qtd. in Ramet, *Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia* 137).

In Serbia this phenomenon in conjunction with xenophobic nationalism produced “a powerful concoction in which the society is able to escape to a mythic reality in which a people (in this case the Serbs) are portrayed as simultaneously heroic and victimized” (136). The absence in this sense is the mythic reality to which the people escape. The losses are whatever events initiated the feelings of guilt and shame that have been repressed. In Germany, similarly, the Germans were prepared to grieve for the land they lost to the Russians, but not, for example, the loss of Jewish lives, or their own loss of hope and faith, national power and prosperity offered by Hitler (xvi, 5-6, 22-24). These losses, then, are experienced as an absence of wholeness. Looking forward in this sense is not about acknowledging the past, learning from it, and then making choices in the present based on an awareness of how this past may affect reactions in the present. On the contrary, looking forward, in this respect, means pretending the past did not occur and refusing – consciously or not – to become aware of how the past affects reactions in the present. Indeed,

[w]hen psychic defence mechanisms such as denial and repression play an excessive role in the solution of conflicts, whether on the individual or the collective level, perception of reality inevitably narrows and stereotyped prejudices spread; in reciprocal reinforcement, the prejudices in turn protect the process of repression or denial from disturbance. (Mitscherlich 14)

To quote LaCapra, “absence is not an event and does not imply tenses (. . .). By contrast, the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as of specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present or future” (49). In other words, absences, for example “ancient greatness,” control, or “mythic reality,” were

always already absent, whereas losses, for example loss of land and lives, were but are no longer. An absence is more closely linked to a structural trauma, for example the desire for a whole and homogeneous state, while a loss is more closely linked to a specific event. The problem occurs when the two are conflated:

losses cannot be adequately addressed when they are enveloped in an overly generalized discourse of absence, including the absence of ultimate metaphysical foundations. Conversely, absence at a “foundational” level cannot simply be derived from particular historical losses, however much it may be suggested or its recognition prompted by their magnitude and the intensity of one’s response to them. (46)

Nevertheless, the terms are not exclusive: “losses may entail absences, but the converse need not be the case” (48).

Part of trauma’s transferability and stickiness, so to speak, is that trauma is not limited to PTSD in an individual. As Luckhurst points out, “[t]rauma ... leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients (...), between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference or suggestion, and between victims and their listeners or viewers who are commonly moved to forms of overwhelming sympathy, even to the extent of claiming secondary victimhood” (3). Traumatic memory in this sense can be, and often is, passed down and transposed onto others. Marianne Hirsch refers to the development of shared trauma as “postmemory.” She states that

postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and

creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can neither be understood nor recreated. (22).

Here she suggests that in some cases, children or close acquaintances of trauma survivors will remember or experience the trauma survivor's memories as viscerally as if these memories were their own, and that these memories can overshadow their own experiences. In this sense, the experience of trauma can be intergenerational. Historical trauma occurs when traumatic memories and/or associations, emotions, and responses are transmitted or passed down to present communities. Nevertheless, regardless of how the effects and affects of trauma come about, and whether or not their intensity is modified and/or manipulated, the resulting experience can have negative effects. Thus, LaCapra is correct in bringing attention to the fact that although certain memories may be factually problematic or not derived from first-hand witnessing, they are certain forms of truth (13). One cannot address trauma and its affects and effects without acknowledging both trauma's, particularly historical and community trauma's, fluidity and its undeniable presence, regardless of how this reality is or has been mediated.

That said, as LaCapra puts it, "trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel" (*Writing History, Writing* 42). Like any personal and internal experience, one will most likely never be able to fully convey and completely understand it. Indeed, trauma may never be fully transcended. However, one may be able to work through and sit with trauma as opposed to being stuck in it. LaCapra explains that "working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend,

but may to some viable extent counteract, a re-enactment, or acting out, of the disabling dissociation” (42). One must acknowledge and engage with trauma, which may include forms of representation, if one wishes to work through, instead of being merely awash in it. Certain modes of representation, LaCapra seems to suggest, can enable one to begin to work through the trauma, that is “remember – perhaps to some extent still compulsively reliving or being possessed by – what happened then without losing a sense of existing and acting now” (90). Thus, I suggest that one thinks of working through trauma as “sitting with” trauma, becoming aware of the affect, but being able to work independently of trauma, and respond to the here and now from the here and now.^{iv}

3.2 Thinking Trauma – Trauma as a Tool

I argue that Vojnović’s novel can show the reader the ways in which past traumatic events seep into relationships in the present. Vojnović’s depiction of both structural and event-based trauma functions as a tool to help the reader distinguish between the past and the present – between the affective response instilled over time by a series of traumatic events, encounters, their transmission, on the one hand, and the processing of that transmission, on the other. I am not necessarily thinking of the transference of memory in the sense that Hirsch proposes, although I do believe such a process plays an influential role in shared trauma. Rather, I am interested in how Vojnović’s novel exposes how the trauma functions as an apparatus itself. I call this the trauma apparatus. I suggest that the novel illustrates the ways in which trauma is passed down onto another, through a series of stages, which one can also think of as parts of an apparatus. The first generation to experience trauma may have responses such as those defined by the DSMV. The second generation may experience a form of their parents’ or close associate’s trauma. For example, if the parent fears a certain event or action, the child may also fear it; the child may, or may not, understand the foundation of this fear. Children may also have nightmares

based on their parents' experiences. Here the transference is direct and heavily embodied; the memory and fear responses are visceral and automatic. Thus, the first and second generations provide the basis of a trauma apparatus. Both generations have a series of reactions and responses – ways of understanding and interacting with the world – that are informed by their or their parents' traumatic experiences and subsequent responses to that trauma. These are passed on to subsequent generations through private and public memories, somatic responses, as well as through discourse; it is these that the novel engages with most actively. Over generations the link to a specific event is lost. All that is left of the connection is a structure of knowing and being that I term the trauma apparatus. This trauma apparatus “imposes, without appearing to do so” (Althusser 172), a series of embodied (re)actions such as hatred, anger, fear, mistrust, and self-preservation that appear authentic and real, that is, linked to some core bodily truth, but are, in fact, learned and passed down, the result of an event or action that happened in the past, but which has seeped into the present.

Given this definition, one may be tempted to think of the trauma apparatus as a loop of return and reenactment of the repressed— a perpetual state of what Freud called melancholia that traps individuals and groups in a state of acting out. However, I propose that we approach the trauma apparatus as something that must be recognized and approached with awareness if we wish to move on from melancholia to mourning, a process of engaged memory work. By gradually becoming aware of the trauma apparatus, one may simultaneously recognize its presence – that is a series of knowledges and ways of being linked to a past event and trauma response – *and* acknowledge one's embodied (re)action/s and experience/s, which may itself /themselves be mediated by the trauma apparatus. The trauma apparatus stops functioning as a loop or trap. The trick, so to speak, is that by recognizing, acknowledging the trauma apparatus and the loop, one may choose one's own response to embodied (re)actions, for example to the

other, as opposed to allowing the trauma apparatus to frame this (re)action and response as well.^v It is here that I see Vojnović's novel playing a central role. *Čefurji Raus!* crafts a world infused with both historical and personal traumas. By examining the ways in which these traumas appear in the narrative, one can begin to uncover the subtle, but pervasive effects of trauma not only on and in the individual, but also on the communities with which he or she interacts.

3.3 Training Anxiety – The Imposition of the Trauma Apparatus

3.3.1 Discourse and Terminology

Although trauma's affects and effects most often begin at the level of the individual or the family, I would like to begin by examining the presence of trauma in discourse. While discourse may appear insignificant, to a large extent, it constitutes the very frame of any apparatus, sort of like the skeleton of a car or animal body, which is more or less useless by itself, but essential to the body's ability to function. As Michel Foucault puts it, "there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (*Power/Knowledge* 93). This is relevant to the term *Čefur*. The term has much greater linguistic and historical significance than previously discussed. According to the Marko Snoj, the author of Slovenia's *Epistemological Dictionary*, the term is "probably derived from the Croatian and Serbian *Čift, Čivut 'Žid'* [Jew]" (qtd. in Vojnović 9, italics mine). The association of the term *Čefur* with the term Jew is disturbingly uncomfortable, especially when one considers that the first epigraph explains that *Čefurs* can be recognized by their physiognomy, "their low foreheads, unibrows, well defined cheekbones and strong jaw bones", as well as their way of life, their tendency to laziness, their constant swearing, their abundant use of alcohol, their predisposition to unprovoked violence, and the pursuit of women – "the weaker sex" – by the men (Pešut qtd. in Vojnović 8). In other words, *Čefurs* are physically

distinct; they have bad social habits; and are dangers to the body politic, especially to the women. One assumption is that they are morally corrupt. In the past, most famously during Hitler's Third Reich, Jews were similarly portrayed. Among other things, Jews were associated with “distinctive noses,” “heavy body hair,” “large, fleshy ears,” and “converging eyebrows among men” (Steinweis 28). During the Nazi period, these sorts of physical characteristics were used in anti-Semitic propaganda to distinguish Jews from other members of the non-Jewish population. This propaganda also characterized Jews as a “demoralizing, amoral group” (Beller 46), painting them as “parasitic aliens” (76) or “parasitical sub-humans” (91).^{vi} One can hardly ignore the similarities, which are important for two reasons: the implication that these groups, especially their male members are dangerous, especially to women and the ways in which such rhetoric has been, and continues to be, used to justify discrimination and genocide.

Now, I am not suggesting that the Slovenia in Vojnović's novel is a few years away from the systematic genocide such as that which occurred in other parts of ex-Yugoslavia. Nor am I suggesting that anyone who uses the term is automatically unethical, unkind, or uncompassionate. However, I do think that one needs to be aware of the ideas he/she may be subconsciously and unintentionally (re)affirming when they use the term.^{vii} To borrow Foucault's terminology, the term *Čefur* is part of the “circulation and functioning” of a discourse that produces and accumulates certain forms of knowledge. The term's etymology can also evoke conscious and unconscious memories and images of systematic deportations and mass killings.^{viii} Such connotations extend beyond social knowledge of the Holocaust and the Slovene communities' own experiences during World War Two. As has already been mentioned, the novel's title first appeared in Slovenia as a graffiti slogan “*Čefurji Raus!*” in the early 1990s and served as a threat to non-Slovenes, who lived or had taken refuge in Slovenia, but were originally from one of Yugoslavia's warring republics. Similar graffiti slogans, for example “*Juden Raus*

(in German) and ‘Death to Jews and Gypsies’”, appeared in Serbia following the end of the Yugoslav Wars in the early 2000s (Ramet 144, italics).^{ix} All three slogans are infused with a sense of violence and death. A whisper of the genocides that occurred during WWII and the Yugoslav War always permeates the slogans. Thus, when Marko or his friends emphasize the difference between the Slovenes and *Čefurs*, or when Marko feels the impact of this distinction, for example, his references to the awful feeling when his teacher signals him out as an immigrant from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia (97), a *Čefur*, the assertion implies that immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia are not only different in a negative sense, they are also dangerous. In Slovene discourse, the *Čefur* is (re)presented as an unpredictable and volatile disgrace to society, one that may have to be dealt with accordingly if he becomes unbearable. For the *Čefur*, the Slovene represents a constant danger, a threat, which may at any point erupt and take drastic measures to rid the country of the undesired other. As such, the Slovene community and the immigrant community from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia exist within a discursive apparatus that continually (re)positions them on the precipice of fight or flight. The etymological link between the term *Čefur* and the term Jew persists as a constant reminder of just how violently and quickly such dangerous and undesirable “parasites” may be taken care of.

The terms “*ustaše*” (“ustashas”) and “*četniki*” (“chetniks”) are also interesting, if one wishes to examine the way trauma is inscribed in discourse. The *ustašas* were a radical nationalist group (political party) that first appeared in Croatia during the interwar period. They were in charge of Croatia's independent fascist state during World War Two and were active during the Yugoslav War. The *četniks* refer to a radical nationalist (paramilitary) group that first appeared in Serbia during WWI, but was also active during World War Two and the Yugoslav War. Both groups are known for their violent treatment of the other – who was defined as either the Serb, the Croat, and/or the Muslim. Unlike “*Čefur*,” the terms “*ustaša*” and “*četnik/i*” do

not appear intermittently throughout the novel. In fact, each term is used only once or twice. The term “*ustaša*” appears in a conversation between the boys. Marko tells the reader that his friends call him “an *ustaša*”, when he, in response to a conversation of who they would “fuck”, “usually says Severina”, a well-known Croatian singer (42, italics mine). Marko is referred to as an *Ustaša* because he likes a Croatian pop singer. The implication is that all Croats and those who like them are *ustaša* and are, thus, like the *ustaša*, responsible for the historical atrocities, such as the deportation and mass killings of Jews and Serbs during World War Two (Schminder 182).^x The term *četnik* appears when Marko tells the reader who cheers for what soccer team. He states that his friends Dejan and Aco cheer for the Serbian soccer team *Zvezda*. He implies that this is because “their old men are from Serbia. Serbs” (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 13). He explains, “[w]e Bosnians look at things a little bit differently” (13). He goes on to say that “these *četniks*, and Arkan [a Serbian assassin and war-lord, during the Yugoslav War (Alvarez 8-12)], and Ceca [a popular Serbian turbo-pop folk singer, who is also Arkan's widow], and Gurović [a Serbian basketball player], with his tattoo of Draže Mihajlović [leader of the *četniks* during World War Two (Banac 195)],.... piss Radovan off” (13, italics mine). In this case, Serbs, specifically Serbs from Serbia, are linked to the *četniks*, the historical group responsible for atrocities committed against Muslims and Croats during WWI and II (Banac 149-150, 377), and Arkan’s Tigers, the paramilitary Serb militia that “played an active role in ethnic cleansing” during the Yugoslav War (Alvarez 11). Again, the implication is that all Serbian Serbs, regardless of their actual involvement in the historical group, are responsible for and supportive of the *četniks* and Arkan’s actions. Here, discourse subtly expands and imposes the affective responses associated with a specific group’s actions in the past onto the larger community group that may only be linked to the perpetrators through birth, not necessarily individual beliefs or actions.

Here one is invited to consider Freud's discussion of the latency period and belatedness, where he argues that trauma is not always experienced as such during the actual event, but returns at some later time to haunt the subject (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 92, 101).^{xi} The experience of latency and belatedness is particularly significant in a discussion such as this that is interested in the ways in which a trauma apparatus frames knowledge and experience. Subsequent generations may not connect their present experience(s) and knowledge(s) with a series of historical events and (mis)perceptions, that is, those "[s]ubjugated knowledges[,] ... those blocs of historical knowledge, which are present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 82). Although the boys were not present for the traumatic events associated with these terms, and in fact may not have any conscious knowledge of them at all,^{xii} they are being interpellated by a trauma apparatus when they use this discourse. The terms "*ustaša*" and "*četnik*" are inextricable from their historical connotations. It is difficult to use either term in this region without evoking disgust, fear, anger, hate, and so on. When either term is used, outside of its historical context, the term's associations are imprinted onto whomever is on the receiving end of the term. Responses to the other are mediated by their associations. As a result, both the self and the other remain, to a large extent, controlled by a trauma apparatus that shapes relationships based on the here and now but on a here and now that is unconsciously – and here I mean without awareness – permeated by a past that may in fact bear very little relation to the present. The problem, if one can use such a term without assigning blame, is that the terms are being used not to refer to the historical group, but to convey the negative affect associated with these groups and extend it to an entire community or the receiver of the term. As such, the historical group and the historical significance of the terms disappear, or are at the very least rendered obscure, and the negative memories and events associated with the specific group are imposed onto an entire community group. The experienced affects of a series

of traumatic events, experienced at the hands of specific historical groups become discourses of truth used to characterize and define an entire nation. In Foucault's words, "[i]n the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying as a function of the true discourses, which are the bearers of specific affects of power (*Power/Knowledge* 94, italics mine).

The terms "*turčine*" and "*turčin*" work similarly. *Turčine* means "vulgar language" or "smack," but can also be translated as "Turkish sayings" or "bullshitisms." One of the boys uses the term, or more correctly phrase, when they are exchanging vulgarities with the drug dealer Peši. In response to Peši's yell, "*aide* [ayde – "let's go," "pick it up," "scat"], get out of here faggot", one of them responds with "Turčine, suck my dick" (74). *Turčin* is a bit different. It means a Turkish male. According to my father, who grew up in Slovenia while Slovenia was still part of the former Yugoslavia, "*turčin*" functioned much the same as "nigger."^{xiii} It is used when Radovan tells Marko about a "*turčin*" who stole his wallet on the train (170). In and of themselves, the terms, while clearly part of a vulgar discourse, are not particularly concerning. However, if one considers the terms within a historical context of trauma, one cannot cast the terms aside as mere vulgarities, words to be avoided in respectable Slovene conversation.^{xiv} Historically, the Turks are associated with invaders. As Slovene historian Janko Prunk outlines, "in the middle of the 15th century, Turkish raids into Slovene lands intensified and had dire consequences in the lives of the population who were pillaged, murdered, and taken into slavery by these 'Turkish' (in fact, Southern Slav-Balkan) raiders" (32).^{xv} In the examples from the novel above, no mention is made of these historical connotations, nor does there appear to be any awareness that the terms could also indirectly refer to Slovenes and immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia, since, at least according to Prunk, Southern Slavs comprised large numbers of these "Turkish" invaders.^{xvi} Again, it would seem that the terms have lost their

historical significance, and thus, one is merely nit picking to point them out at all. True enough. Nevertheless, the terms are both historically and linguistically linked to a traumatic historical event. The fact that the terms are now used to delineate a sense of worthlessness and disgust, and that their historical and linguistic origins are largely erased, points to both LaCapra's assertion that "[s]omething of the past always remains if only as a haunting presence, or symptomatic revenant" (*Writing History, Writing* 42) and the implication of Foucault's argument that "things work at the level of subjugation, at the level of these continuous processes, which subjugate our bodies, govern our gestures, [and] dictate our behaviors, etc." (*Power/Knowledge* 97). History may disappear as such; however, the affects of historical relationships remain encoded in the language, the discourse used in everyday relationships. The reason behind the dislike disappears. However, the strong aversion and disgust, as well as mistrust remain. If one remains unaware of this linguistic relationship, or chooses not to acknowledge it, one runs the risk of allowing the trauma of the past, which remains present, if only in the negative associations with the term, to dictate encounters and relationships in the present.

3.3.2 Public Names and Figures

When Marko gets off the train in Bosnia and sits looking at what he describes as desolate surroundings, he states "if this folk once believed, that Sloba, Franjo and Alija would improve their lives, then that, that they believe in pyramids, is small potatoes" (179). In this passage, Marko's reference is to the former Yugoslav presidents Slobodan Milošević (Slobo), Franjo Trudman (Franjo), and, Alija Izetbegović (Alija). His reference to pyramids is to the so-called-pyramid found in Bosnia by "Bosnian-American businessman" "Semir 'Sam' Osmanagic" but denounced by "a pantheon of archeologists" (Markey). The pyramid "found" in the early 2000s was in fact just a hill.^{xvii} Marko's comment is first and foremost a critique of the Bosnians'

gullibility and naiveté. However it also points to the ways in which the Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses are encompassed by a larger trauma apparatus.

If one is interested in how the trauma apparatus functions, public names, used in the narrative as nicknames, insults, or to imply betrayal, are also significant. Here one might examine Marko's references to the Yugoslav political police and intelligence service, the Orwellian big-brother type of institution OZNA; and the first female president of Yugoslavia, Milka Planinc (Klenke 1; Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 15).^{xviii} One might also wish to examine Marko's references to key players in the war, former Serbian president Slobodan Milošević, Croatian president Franjo Trudman, former Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović, Slovene president Milan Kučan, and the war-lord Arkan. In addition, one could examine Marko's references to later Slovene president Janez Janša,^{xix} as well as his references to pop icon Ceca, the basketball player Gurović, and Mitar Mirić, the Serbian singer, who sings what Marko calls “the unofficial anthem of the Serbian nation” (21). These figures and the institutions they are associated with are part of what Althusser terms the Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses (RSAs and ISAs).^{xx} Together, they are part of the apparatuses that create and maintain the official ideology or knowledge of the world. The presence of these public figures and institutions, as well as the historical, political, and nationalist meanings and memories associated with them in everyday discourse and conversation work to produce a certain form of knowledge and sense of the world.

For example, Marko references OZNA in the chapter headed “*Zakaj je OZNA sve dozna*” “Why is OZNA all knowing” (Vojnović, *Čefurji Raus!* 165). In this chapter, Marko and his father are waiting for the train to Bosnia. Marko's father is sending him back to Bosnia. Right before Marko gets on the train, Radovan asks him if he knows what happened to the bus driver Damjanović (166). Marko tells the reader, in Bosnian, that “his legs shook,” almost like they gave out. He states that “he started to shake and [that he] wanted to close his mouth but it didn't

work” (167). Marko tells Radovan that he did not do it. He tells the reader that Radovan believed him, but that “his look was so sad, it looked like he was going to burst into tears” (167). Radovan tells Marko that Damjanović is in a coma (167). Marko then says that he doesn’t know if Radovan is sending him to Bosnia to protect him or not (168). What is interesting to me here is that Vojnović heads the chapter that describes Radovan’s knowledge of the crime and Marko’s confession to his father with the title of Yugoslavia’s former secret police. While the two events are unrelated, and distanced by time and place, they nevertheless appear to convey the same affect – fear. As part of the discursive apparatus, the term OZNA is still infused with trauma of an institution that no longer exists. Moreover, the fact that Marko considers that his father may be sending him off to protect him also indicates that the fear of authority and the police, regardless of one’s actual guilt – Marko pulled Aco off of Damjanović and did not participate in the beating – remains. Similarly, references to Milka Planinc connote financial ruin and struggle, and, if the Wikipedia page on her is accurate, the reference extends beyond the financial trauma of the Yugoslav break-up to include the lingering memories of WWII. References to the wartime leaders, Janša, OZNA, and Ceca's husband Arkan evoke memories of repression, war, and terror. As such, the discursive presence of these names and figures serves as a constant reminder of fear, mistrust, and loss. These references, in other words, frame each community’s everyday experience that is, on the one hand, to be expected, given the region’s recent history, but which may also prove dangerous when the framed communities exist unaware of the pervasive framing. The frame is in and of itself not dangerous; the frame only becomes dangerous when we exist within it and assume our (re)actions are always already natural and in no way framed by our or our community’s previous experiences.

3.4 The Intimate and Public Components of the Trauma Apparatus – Diaspora and War

These strangers really bear no resemblance at all to us as we hold sway – remote control in hand – over the last refuge of our privacy. They're different from us, these refugees and nomads, migrant workers and displaced persons. As they flee repression and poverty, they pay the high price of diversity at every Western border they try to cross.

Aleš Debeljak, *Twilight of the Idols: Recollections of a Lost Yugoslavia* (13-14, italics mine)

In the above passage, Aleš Debeljak commenting on the collapse of Yugoslavia, describes the feelings of a western viewer watching refugees on a TV screen. He suggests that the self attempts to remove him or herself from an association with the other's pain and suffering – the other's experience of expulsion. The self does not wish his or her “safe haven” for example, his/her diverse spaces, to be tainted by those who flee oppression. The presence of trauma in Vojnović's novel is not limited to the structural and public traumas that reverberate through discourses, public figures, and institutions. Building on Zorko's assertion that in *Čefurji Raus!* “the author sculpts characters, that did not prepare themselves for emigration to a new setting, and who are just as unprepared for it now, after thirty years of life in Slovenia” (“Vodič po vesit” 198), I argue that the novel also fashions a world fissured by the traumas of a forced diaspora – a community group that lives outside its country of origin, but which is still intimately linked to that country.^{xxi} Although one often thinks of diaspora as community groups that were forced from their homes, there are less physically violent reasons for mass exoduses.

In the case of Marko's family who came to Slovenia before the start of the Yugoslav War, the push was economic, but still largely choiceless. Marko explains that Radovan came to Slovenia because his own father forced him to:

Do you know how I came to Slovenia? Do you know, eh? You don't know anything. That Sunday we had a game, and the coach of [the] Želja [soccer team] was watching. Everyone was saying that I had a chance to play for Želja. The premier League. Do you know what that is, the premier [soccer] league. On Saturday, listen, on Saturday, my old man says to me, "tomorrow you go to Slovenia." I said to him, "Old man, I have a game, what Slovenia!", but he goes "Pack, you got a job in Slovenia." And in the morning, off I went nicely on the train and to Ljubljana. What game, what Želja, what career (58, original in Bosnian).^{xxii}

Radovan's words ring with the pain and anger of dreams given up and hope lost. Radovan did not want to come to Slovenia. His father forced him to come, believing, it seems, that there would be greater job opportunities there. Radovan was forced to give up his dreams of being a star soccer player in Sarajevo's Premier League team for the chance of greater economic opportunity. The experience is one that James Clifford suggests is characteristic of many diaspora: "Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" (312). In this example, the trauma is not the result of a violent death or similarly violent experience. Traumatic loss is the result of forced exodus, and the subsequent inability to make connections, grow and develop, or find purpose in life in Slovenia. True, Marko, his family, and his community are not completely blameless for their situation. The problem, as has already been outlined, is multisided. As Zorko points out, Vojnović is careful to underscore that neither the Slovene nor the diasporic community is free of responsibility in this respect ("Vodič po vesti" 198). Nevertheless, regardless of who is responsible, or where one might lay this responsibility, the experience is traumatic in the sense that Robert Jay Lifton defines the term.

In “Encounters with Death: The Thought of Robert Jay Lifton,” August G. Lageman elucidates Lifton’s understanding of trauma: trauma may be defined as a break in one’s experience of the self and the world around one, an encounter with an absurd death, and the inability to achieve and maintain vitality. According to Lageman, Lifton identifies three components that are necessary for the self to experience itself as alive and not dead. These are, the ability to move forward, grow, and develop; the ability to make connections; and, the ability to make sense of life, that is, the ability to attach meaning to events and find a purpose in one’s (re)actions (302). For Lifton, trauma occurs when these components are cut short or abruptly paused, for example, when one witnesses an absurd death one cannot make sense of. He identifies five responses to such an experience, three of which are applicable here – “psychic numbing, that is, a diminished capacity to feel” (303); “counterfeit nurturance,” which can either take the form of aggressive outbursts or claustrophobic caring (304), and which are also outlined by the DSM V as symptoms of PTSD; and a difficulty finding meaning in experience and life.^{xxiii}

For Marko’s family and his community, these processes are halted. As Marko puts it, looking out over the *Fužine*, the day he tells his mother he is no longer playing basketball,

I sat looking at the *Fužine* and I thought this is the most depressing place ever.

Only here can this kind of shit happen. All of these *folk*, that live one on top of the other, all this crowding and nerves. And all of these *folk* work from dawn till dusk, half are retired, half don’t have jobs (86, words in italics written as they were in Slovene version)

The *Fužine* are [*sic*] (re)presented as, to borrow Zorko’s phrase, a sort of circular trap (“Vodič po vesti” 196), an enclosed area in which no one is happy. Moreover, the imagery of people stacked one on top of another brings to mind the image of a slaughterhouse – animals stacked one on top of the other, waiting to be used. This is perhaps an oversimplification. However, there is

something to be said for the mutually (re)inforcing apparatuses at work here. The implication is that despite working hard, the Fužine community is stuck, either because they do not make enough money, or because they have people they have to support. There is a sense that the work done by immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia is not acknowledged or respected. It is, in this sense, meaningless. It does not provide the community the space to develop. This is not because the work is not important, but because it is not acknowledged as such. Thus, the work is not acknowledged, perceived, or experienced as meaningful. In fact, in some scenes Marko alludes to the sense that the entire *Čefur* experience is static, undesirable, and worthless, that is, utterly meaningless:

In any one of these million flats, something could explode at any moment and that's it. Everyone is fucked, nervous, unhappy, and badly paid There are no happy and fulfilled Fužinians, because if they were happy and fulfilled, they wouldn't live in the Fužine. That's a fact. No *dete* [child] ever dreamed that they would live in the suburbs of Ljubljana, on the twelfth floor, in a two and a half bedroom apartment, with a five-member family, and a view into the next apartment building. No *dete* [child] ever dreamed that they would spend their life in front of the apartment on a bench, or in the Kubana [name of a bar], or that the best part of their life would be a meeting of tenants. No *dete* [child] ever dreamed that they would have a fifty-euro pay and that they would save all year so they could spend three weeks in Bosnia or Serbia. No *dete* [child] ever dreamed that people would look at it sidewise for thirty years, because they don't know how to properly pronounce these fucking Slovene words. (144-145, italics indicate original in Bosnian)

The community's experience in Slovenia is presented as a halted process of growing and developing, making connections, and finding meaning in one's actions – traumatic. This is not to say that the community would have had more success doing so in their home country, nor is it to say that they are not implicated in their own fate – Marko, for one, is very open about his less than admirable behavior. However, the intensity of the static and demoralizing experience Marko describes is intensified by the feeling of shame, suffered by Marko's community in the gaze of the self – the constant sideways looks one receives when he or she is unable to speak Slovene, or “those shitty feelings, [you have] ... when they ask if Đorđić is with a soft or hard č, and where are your parents are from” (97). Consequently, there is a pervasive sense of halted development, lack of meaning and purpose, a sense of trauma, so to speak, which is continually (re)enforced by the structural make up of the *Fužine*, lack of economic opportunities, and the school system – the trauma apparatus. *Čefurs* feel that their contributions to Slovenia are not acknowledged, and that they themselves are not respected. They in turn do not respect the Slovenes. They also do not learn Slovene, because they do not see the point, and the people they spend time with speak their language. In addition the Slovenes don't want to talk to them. Again, the problem appears to be multisided. As such, immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia are unable to make connections outside of their communities.

Nor are they able to do so at times in their own families: Marko and his father do not speak for a majority of the novel; Adi's father, described as a womanizer, used to beat Adi, his brother, and his mom (30-31, 41, 94-95); Dejan's father is an alcoholic, an event Marko connects to his erasure in the early 1990s (48, 78); Dejan's mother is divorcing him (140-142). It is clear that the community exists in a sort of trauma apparatus. As such, the experiences of trauma, which play out within the family and intimate community, as well as between the larger communities; the lack of communication; the mistrust of the other; and the violent outbursts

associated with this community group which is known for being “aggressive without cause” merely serve to reinforce the binary that itself perpetuates the trauma experienced by the diasporic group.

3.4.1 “A Lost Yugoslavia”^{xxiv} – The Smoking Tentacles

The trauma apparatus is also evident in Marko’s subtle and direct references to the Yugoslav War and its aftermath which illustrate the ways in which the collapse of Yugoslavia intensified the historical trauma, which is already present in the discursive, public, and intimate apparatuses, and which maintains and (re)affirms a sense of fear and mistrust. In regards to the war, Marko states,

We were all hit by the war in Bosna. At Adi’s they had seven relatives in their apartment. We had my cousin Zorka. It’s just that I don’t remember anything, because I was just a little guy. And then in grade three or something, we had this phase, where we argued all the time because of the war in Bosna. Totally fucked, but we were constantly debating and hassling each other on a nationalist level, and repeating what we heard our old men *pametovali*^{xxv} at home, and because our old men were spewing bullshit, we were also spewing bullshit. (50)

Here, Marko reminds the reader that he and his friends were secondary witnesses to the war and the displacement of those directly affected. They housed family members escaping from the war-torn southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia. In elementary school, Marko tells the reader, he and his friends engaged in a political and social argument they did not understand, an argument Marko suggests, their parents did not understand either. The point is that the war had a direct impact on their everyday lives, and affected their everyday actions. And it continues to do so.

Marko also occasionally evokes wartime imagery. For example, Marko, commenting on his and his father’s lack of communication, states, “[t]he silence will drive me mad. It’s like we

are in a bomb shelter, and the fighter planes are above us, and we have to be quiet, because, if they hear us, they will bomb us” (62). Marko’s phrasing suggests that he occasionally experiences a pervasive death image, another of Lifton’s five responses to trauma (303). While it is true that this sort of imagery is not pervasive throughout the narrative or particularly intrusive, it nevertheless illustrates that the war haunts Marko in subtle ways. Marko’s use of war as a metaphor suggests that he experiences his everyday life as a sort of mirror image to the war that took place in Yugoslavia just a few years before.

The haunting becomes more clear when Marko describes family trips back to Bosnia: “Radovan was always all nervous, when it was time to go. These are also these čefur ways. Fuck it, but you don’t know what sort of moron you will land on, when you are fucking around Bosna, and who will want to fuck your mother in Croatia, because your name is Radovan Đorđić” (160). The war may be over, but the communities are still positioned in a state of tension between fight and flight. One never knows, as Marko puts it, who they might meet, and how this individual might react. The war in Bosnia [and Croatia], the pervading sense of trauma, which I term the trauma apparatus, continues to haunt, that is, frame, both Marko’s everyday experiences, and his and his family’s ability to prepare for what lies ahead, and even what they might realistically expect in their encounters with the other.

3.4.2 Losing Home

A collective retreat into the past that is used to justify a bloody present makes others liable for the cost of its chauvinism, placing debt on the shoulders of those who do not share in the collective memory of the “ethnically pure” nation and are doomed to be its victims.

Aleš Debeljak *Twilight of the Idols: Recollections of a Lost Yugoslavia* (19, italics mine)

The political and structural effects of the war and dissolution of Yugoslavia have additional traumatic effects on the diasporic population. As a result of the war, the diaspora feel they are homeless, with no home to return to. For Marko's father, the trauma results from this sense of loss. Although Radovan has only been to Serbia three times in his entire life, and "the last time was more than twenty years ago", he feels like "it is his country or something" (102). Marko tells the reader that he knows what the problem is: "Radovan doesn't have his own country and that's what irks him" (102). Marko then elucidates the point by explaining that this

irks all Bosnians[, since] they like crossed out Bosna, and started gunning for Serbia, now they watch all these [politicians] and they wonder if maybe the Muslims and Croats aren't better than these morons. That's why Radovan looks to this Serbia and hopes that it will become a normal country, so that he can say this is his country. Because, right now, he is ashamed to say it is his country. (102)

According to Marko, Bosnian Serbs sided with the Serbs during the Yugoslav War, and in doing so betrayed Bosnia. Now that the war is over, they are unhappy with the situation in Serbia and are "ashamed" of what goes on there. However, they cannot return to Bosnia, the country they betrayed. Consequently, Radovan, typical of many diasporic subjects, seems to feel that he has no home to return to and most likely never will, at least according to Marko, who states, that "Serbia will never be a normal country. We all know that" (102). Marko's description of Radovan's inability to come to terms with his nostalgia for home and country reminds one of Freud's discussion of the accident: "the confrontation with death [in this case the death of a country or home] takes place too soon, too suddenly, too unexpectedly, to be fully grasped by consciousness" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 101). As Marko puts it, "they," by which the reader may assume he means either all Bosnian Serbs, or Radovan and his friends, abandoned Bosnia – "crossed [the country] out" and now, suddenly, they do not belong there or anywhere.

The collapse, Marko's observation suggests, happened "too soon, too suddenly, too unexpectedly, to be fully grasped." Moreover, even if the loss is grasped, it remains with the self, a haunting presence of both the pain of the present – the present loss – and, I would argue, the pain of a nostalgic past, which is an example not of loss, but of absence.

Radovan's experience elucidates the distinction between absence and loss. His erasure of Bosnia, as Marko describes it, is emblematic of a sense of absence – a desire to achieve a non-existent wholeness and purity [of state or nation] (La Capra, *Writing History, Writing* 50-51). Here, there are a few points worth reminding the reader about. Although there were many different reasons for the Yugoslav War, and despite the fact that ethnicity was a minor factor to begin with, and was only over the course of the war made central, there were attempts on all sides to carve out or "return to" previously "pure" and "whole" spaces (50-51), which, I might add, it is highly doubtful ever existed in the first place. Radovan's loss, on the other hand, is more concrete. As LaCapra puts it "losses are specific and involve particular events" (49). Radovan has lost a country, a home, and a sense of connection. Unlike the sense of absence, which LaCapra suggests is associated with absolutes that were never there to begin with (50), Radovan's loss is a loss of belonging, home, a loss which is linked to a specific event – the violent collapse of Yugoslavia. In other words, the loss of a country evokes the pain of the present, the recent past, the pains evoked by the war itself (memories of trauma attached to WWI and WWII, and, in the case of this war, also as far back as the middle ages). Radovan's loss is also an absence – nostalgic memories of the lost country itself, which while truly lost, was never as whole as memories may wish to make it.

3.4.3 Postmemory

And nobody ever whines, and they had a war, and they were all fucked to the core
Marko Čefurji Raus! (66, italics)

This trauma, this lingering sense of something lost, a loss that is at once silent and deafening. This absence is passed down to Marko. As trauma scholar Marianne Hirsch suggests, “[t]he children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and forcible separation from home and the destruction of that home, remain marked by their parents’ experiences: always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora” (242). In this passage, Hirsch refers to children of Holocaust survivors. Although Marko’s parents did not leave their homes under the same circumstances as Holocaust survivors or Yugoslav refugees, the transmission of trauma and forced exile, first by economic necessity then by actual war, nevertheless remains. For Marko, Bosnia functions as a sort of pastoral ultra reality. In Bosnia, he emphasizes, “they never give each other the silent treatment. It’s not that they don’t argue, but it’s not the same. At the end, they kiss each other, and they are still a family, they still love each other” (66). He goes on to explain that in Slovenia “people only look out for themselves, Folks aren’t open. That’s why they aren’t happy” (66). In Bosnia, however, he asserts, “if someone doesn’t have money, someone who does, gives it to him. Not lends. Gives” (66). His “grandmother would give you everything she has”, despite the fact that she only gets fifty euros a month (66). For Marko, at least in this scene, Bosnia is a wonderful and safe place where everyone loves everyone else. Not only can they survive a war, and live off nothing, they can do all that and still love each other. Such a feat is commendable. However, in this scene, Marko aches for an always already absent Bosnian setting. It may be rife with hardship, but this hardship is glossed over by the sense of family and belonging. It appears that Marko has, at least to some degree, romanticized the perseverance and durability of his Bosnian relatives. That said, Marko, like the reader, is aware of the chasm between his nostalgic desire for Bosnia and Bosnia’s actual reality: “Bosna is a country where everyone laughs and jokes around, because if they got serious, they would die from the misery in which they live[;] Bosna is the country from which all the

Bosnians escaped, only the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims stayed” (172), he says.^{xxvi} The juxtaposition of family and belonging with war, destruction, and ethnic cleansing leaves a sense of uncanniness. As Zala Volcic so astutely puts it,

Yugoslav identity is remembered as an uncanny feeling of belonging, whereby that which has been familiar becomes suddenly and inexplicably strange and alien, but this is then the strangeness of that which is most familiar. Yugoslavia is remembered as something terrifying which is at the same time strange and familiar. (76-77)

Marko’s description suggests that one is left with an irreconcilable reality, a sense of something violently lost and destroyed, which nevertheless remains as a haunting presence in Marko’s and his communities’ intimate narratives.

3.4.4 The Erasure

Yugoslavia’s collapse has an even greater effect on Marko’s friend Dejan and Dejan’s family. Marko tells the reader that Dejan’s father Dušan (Duško or Dule) Mirtić came to Slovenia in order to go to school (47). Dule finished the first three years of school at the architecture/building faculty (47-48). Then he met Slovene Sonja and had Dejan and his sister Nataša. The three – Dule, Dejan, and Nataša – were erased after Yugoslavia's collapse. Sonja was not erased, because of her Slovene nationality (48). Dejan and Nataša eventually got their citizenships returned. Dule, however, did not. As such, he would have suffered the “loss of rights to jobs, to pensions, to medical care, to schooling for children, etc.”, which Ramet explains is what happened to the approximately 30 000 individuals “erased” from the citizenship and residency books in the early 1990s (*Serbia, Croatia and* 273). Regardless of how one views the actions of the Slovene government, which are generally understood as dubious on both legal and

ethical grounds, Marko's narrative elucidates the negative effects the government's actions had on his friend's family and their community.

After he was erased, Dule, who Marko admits was a heavy drinker to begin with, falls into alcoholism. He drinks, Marko explains, "like a freakin idiot" (48). It is often left to Dejan, sometimes with the help of Marko, to get him home from Kubana, the bar he drinks at. Marko describes one such scene for the reader:

And then you have to deal with these alcoholics and I look at *jadnega* [one] Dejan, as he pulls Dule by the hand, so he gets up, *i tako sto puta* [and like that over and over], and then I always remember myself, when I, as a little guy went with Radovan on his recreation, and then I went with him and his friends for a beer afterwards and I, after the first round, after I had finished my Coca-Cola and I had gotten bored, started to tug on his sleeve, begging, '*Idemo kući, tata, molim te, hoću koći*' [basically, 'can we go home dad, please, I want to go home'], and all night he kept repeating, '*Evo sad ćemo, samo da popijem do kraja*' [essentially, 'yes, we will go, just let me finish drinking'] (76, words in italics are the original Bosnian, the rest of this passage is in Slovene).

The scene is painfully sad. Dejan, the grown child, who is now responsible for getting his father – a seemingly broken man – home from the bar, is juxtaposed with the young Marko, begging his father, who is also drinking, to be allowed to go home. In both cases the two boys are helpless in the face of their fathers' drinking. In Dejan's case, his father's drinking habits are connected to, though Marko acknowledges not wholly caused by, his erasure in the early 1990s. In fact, one might suggest, as I propose to do, that Dule's drinking is a form of psychic numbing – a desire to block the erasure's unpleasant, emasculating, and painful affects.

Here, the reader is once again faced with a sort of trauma apparatus. The RSA (the government and army) participated in both the violent collapse of Yugoslavia and the questionable erasure of a significant portion of Slovenia's diaspora from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia. In both cases, the systems that enabled such actions were based on fear and mistrust and, I would add, desire for power. The actions – the war and erasure – in turn (re)produce these feelings, and continually (re)impose themselves in the (re)actions and perceptions of the general public. For example, Dule drinks as a response to the erasure, which in turn confirms the stereotype that *Čefurs* love alcohol, which in turn promotes the idea that *Čefurs* are lazy and that they love alcohol. Dejan, at a loss about what to do because his parents are splitting up, ends up kicking and screaming at Adi, who, likewise, is at a loss of how to help Dejan, and ends up rolling on the ground laughing when Dejan tries to talk to him (140-141). As Marko puts it “Adi understood that Dejan was fucked. But Adi never learned how to talk seriously. He just got nervous” (142). Here, Marko links the fact that Adi has probably never had a serious conversation at home (143) to his inability to communicate with Dejan.^{xxvii} The result, which is caused by both the larger governmental, military, and social apparatuses, as well as the more intimate family apparatus, is the (re)affirmation of at least two, if not more, “*Čefur*” stereotypes – “*Čefurs*” love alcohol and are “often aggressive without cause.” As such, the after effects of the war and erasure serve to reinforce negative stereotypes, which themselves reinforce xenophobia – fear and mistrust of the other. This process is captured in Marko's thinking when he and his friends are driving around Ljubljana, honking and yelling, and he addresses the bystanders:

All of you, who watch us like we just escaped from the zoo, and think to yourselves, why didn't we erase all of them, not just eighteen thousand. (97, italics mine).

Endnotes

ⁱ My understanding of trauma and the related concept Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is heavily indebted to Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and *Trauma in the Ashes of History* and Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. I have also been influenced by Roger Luckhurst's *The Trauma Question*; Ruth Leys's *Trauma: A Genealogy*; August G. Lageman's "Encounter with Death: The Thought of Robert Jay Lifton" (1987); M.J. Larabee, S. Weine, and P. Woollcott's "'The Wordless Nothing': Narratives of Trauma and Extremity" (2003); Karein Goertz's "Transgenerational Representations of the Holocaust: From Memory to 'Post-Memory'" (1998); Eduardo Duran, Patricia Grant Long, Barbara Ellen Smith, and Talmage Stanley's "From Historical Trauma to Hope and Healing: 2004 Appalachian Studies Association Conference" (2005); Bina Toledo Friewald's "Social Trauma and Serial Autobiography: Healing and Beyond" (2007); Susannah Radstone's "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics" (2007); Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917); and Eduard Klain's "Intergenerational Aspects of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia" (1998). This last source could benefit from some further research and nuancing. At times it seems to rely too heavily on theories of ancient ethnic hatred and biological determinacy. That said, it nevertheless provides an interesting take on the role of traumatic memory in the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

ⁱⁱ Leys is critical of Caruth and van der Kolk accusing the latter of "slippages and inconsistencies" (305) in his argument, which the former builds on.

ⁱⁱⁱ For the full entry, please refer to the DSM <http://dsm.psychiatryonline.org/content.aspx?bookid=556§ionid=41101771&resultclick=1#103438457>. The section on PTSD and other related stress disorders also defines other Traumatic Stress Disorders, which are similar to, but are not defined under PTSD.

^{iv} Here I am thinking of Pema Chödrön's discussion of meditation and the Buddhist understanding of "shen pa" (Getting Unstuck).

^v My conception of the trauma apparatus is heavily indebted to the works of both Foucault and Althusser. My thinking and argument around the idea of using the novel as a tool for becoming aware of the trauma apparatus is similarly heavily indebted and informed by recent work on mindfulness, for example the courses on mindfulness offered at UCLA; Russell Harris' work in the *Happiness Trap* and "Embracing your Demons: an Overview of Acceptance and Commitment Theory" as well as the conversations I have had with Stacey Kuhl Wochner, LCSW, regarding my own OCD.

^{vi} Beller points to these examples in his monograph, *A Very Short Introduction to Antisemitism*. However, one can also see the manifestation of similar conceptions of the propaganda images of Jews from the third Reich era displayed on <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/images/sturmer/ds34-40.jpg>. In "Aryan and Jew," Hitler writes "the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl who he defiles with his blood" (Rabinbach 191).

^{vii} In fact, many may not even be aware of or consider the link at all.

^{viii} Memories of mass killings and deportations could include the mass killing and deportation of Jews as well as the mass killing and deportation of Serbs by the *Ustaša* governments during World War Two (Schminder 182, see also Ben Shepherd's "Bloodier than Bochem: The 342nd Infantry Division in Serbia, 1941" and Alexander Korb's "Integrated Warfare? The Germans and the Ustaša Massacres: Sylvania 1942"); the mass killings and deportations that occurred in Slovenia (see Joseph Kranjc's "Propaganda and the Partisan War" in Ljubljana 1943–45, especially pages 233–234; and Janko Prunk's *A Brief History of Slovenia: Historical Background of Slovenia*); and the mass killing of Domobranci in Slovenia after the WWII. Also see John Corsellis and Marcus Ferrar's *Slovenia 1945: Memories of Death and Survival after World War II*, and Sabrina P. Ramet's "Confronting the Past: The Slovenes as Subjects and as Objects of History," (his source is largely interested in different Slovene narratives about the Yugoslav break up); as well as the *četnik* treatment of Muslims during WWII (Banac 377).

^{ix} The Yugoslav Wars had ended at this time. However, the Kosovo War continued into 2008. For more information on the Kosovo War refer to James Ker-Lindsay's *Kosovo: The Path to Contested Statehood in the Balkans*.

^x See also Ben Shepherd's "Bloodier than Bochem: The 342nd Infantry Division in Serbia, 1941" and Alexander Korb's "Integrated Warfare? The Germans and the Ustaša Massacres: Sylvania 1942"; Sabrina P. Ramet's *Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia at Peace and at War* (38) and Laura Silber and Allan Little's *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (85).

^{xi} Caruth states that "[i]n its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (*Unclaimed Experience* 91). She goes on to explain that in her view, "[t]raumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically may take the form of belatedness. The repetitions of the traumatic event – which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight – thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing" (*Unclaimed Experience* 91–92). While I do not necessarily agree that one is not fully conscious of the trauma, during the event of trauma, as Caruth drawing on Freud suggests (though I would be cautious of excluding the possibility), the idea that one may be unaware of the long term affects of a traumatic experience is important.

^{xii} That said, it is worth noting that during World War Two Slovene communities were deported or relocated. Similarly, in the fascist Croatian government actively participated in the genocide of both Jews and Serbs. See notes viii and x.

^{xiii} The correct term for a Turkish male is "Turk." *Turčin* effectively objectifies the male in question.

^{xiv} This sort of language belongs with, as commentator Jože Bartolj writes in the Catholic newspaper *Družina*, the more than thirty words found "on the first three pages ... which we would avoid in any sort of respectable Slovene conversation" (qtd. in Stabej 301) – assuming, of course, that one could agree on an unproblematic 'respectable' use of Slovene.

^{xv} Even today, social memory maintains these associations. My grandfathers were always found of pointing out that the churches built on hills with rock walls around them, which Prunk refers to as "tabors" (33), were used as protection against the Janissary invasions long ago. And, just a few months ago, I heard an older Slovene lady proclaim that her daughter-in-law used to smoke like a Turk. While the second example seems like a relatively harmless stereotype, though I am sure it warrants closer analysis, the first example points to a more traumatic shared social memory.

^{xvi} It would be worth noting here, that the Janissaries kidnapped boys from across all the former republics of Ex-Yugoslavia, so these Southern Slav invaders would have included the Slovenes – a point Prunk neglects to acknowledge, and which may be worth addressing elsewhere.

^{xvii} For more information refer to the National Geographic story:
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/05/pyramid-bosnia-1.html>

^{xviii} Milka Planinc is associated with Yugoslavia's economic collapse (Chossudovsky 2). She is also, according to the Wikipedia page on her, associated with the killing of Domobranci, *Četniks*, and *Ustašas* after World War Two. I was unable to confirm the Wikipedia citation, because the original source was in Serbian, a language and alphabet I cannot read.

^{xix} During the 1980s, the question of language played a central role in the controversial military trial that occurred in Ljubljana (June 1988). In this controversial trial, the military court put “four young Slovenes (journalists Janez Janša, David Tasić, and Franci Zavrl, and army Staff Sergeant Ivan Boštner) on trial. The charge was betrayal of a military secret. ... Earlier in May, *Maldina* had published in its pages documented evidence of Army preparations to arrest large numbers of Slovenian liberals and thereby put a lid on Slovenian democratization” (Ramet, *Serbia, Croatia, and* 228). The trial was conducted in Serbo-Croat. Technically, because the army was a federal institution, the use of Serbo-Croat was in line with the constitution (Bertsch 89, 92; Coulson 88). It was a federal army trial. However, the constitution also allowed the republics to conduct affairs in their republics according to their own laws, using their own languages (Ramet, *Serbia, Croatia, and* 228-229). The problem, consequently, was that although the army could “legally” use Serbo-Croat, the use of a language other than the Slovene mother tongue, effectively “othered” the Slovene community on their own land. As such, Serbo-Croat became the language of agency, thus, the language of power, and, by implication, the language of supremacy. The trial, therefore, is of interest for two reasons. First, the late 1980s trial of four in Slovenia demonstrates that while the republics were equal on paper, tools such as language could be used to render this equality void. Second, the trial demonstrates how language is, paradoxically, not only a key component in constructing national identity, language plays a role in legitimizing or at least enforcing one nation's power. Indeed, in the areas that comprised the former Yugoslavia, as elsewhere in the world, language has been used as a form (or weapon) of control. The point is worth pausing upon because we see this occur in Vojnović's novel in two glaring ways. Vojnović exposes the ways in which language positions Marko's diasporic community on the margins of Slovene society. In the novel, this occurs because the community's inability to communicate in Slovene limits their access to education and income, and moreover, it limits their ability to be accepted. On a structural plane, this occurs because, as mentioned elsewhere, Vojnović creates a literary record of the “*Čefur*” language (Zorko 189-192), a feat that must not be understated as it brings what is most commonly associated with “low culture” on par with “high culture,” a point that I believe has been recognized in Slovenia as well. Therefore, in *Čefurji Raus!*, Vojnović uses both the content of the novel, that is, Marko's story, and the structure of the language, that is, the use of that demographic's discourse, to challenge tensions between the homogeneous Slovene community and the diasporic *Čefur* community. These observations have also been engaged with, if not necessarily explicitly stated in this manner, by Slovene intellectuals and the Slovene media.

^{xx} The RSAs include “the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, [and] the Prisons” (Althusser 142-143). The ISAs include the “religious ISAs ..., educational ISAs ..., the family ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties), the trade Union ISAs, the communication ISA (press, radio, television, etc.), [and] the Cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.)” (143).

^{xxi} In a footnote on the first page of her article, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (2013), Cristina-Georgiana Voicu defines diaspora as follows: “Diaspora (namely a collective memory and myth about the homeland) refers to those social groups who share a common ethnic and national origin, but live outside the territory of origin. These groups have a strong feeling of attachment to their ‘homeland’, making no specific reference to ethnicity, or to a particular place of settlement. ... “ (VOICU, footnote, 161). In “Diasporas,” James Clifford, by drawing on William Safran's essay “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” (1991), explains that “the main features of diaspora[] [are] a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (...) country, desire for return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (305). Diaspora, importantly, are a forced exodus. As was concluded in one of my second year English classes with Dr. Lisa Grekul, regardless of whether the “push” factor is violent or aggressive, or the effect of economic and environmental change, one could argue that people rarely leave their homes by choice; they are “pushed” out (Grekul). In James Clifford's words, “Diasporas usually presuppose ... a separation more like exile” (304).

^{xxii} *Jel ti znaš, kako sem ja došo u Sloveniju? Jeli znaš, a? Ništa ti ne znaš. Te nedelje smo imali utakamico i trebo je doć trener Želje, da je gledal. Već se govorilo, da ću ja ić igrat za Želju. U prvu ligu. Znaš ti, šta je prva liga? U suboto, pazi, u suboto meni stari kaže* "Sutra ideš o Slovniji." *Ja mu reko: 'Stari, imam utakvicu, kakva Slovenija!', a on: 'Zaboravi, dobio si poso u Sloveniji.' I ja jutro fina na voz i u Ljubljanu. Kakva utakmica, kakav Željo, kakva kariera.* (58, original in Bosnian, italics mine)

^{xxiii} The other two are the death image and a pervasive sense of guilt (Lageman 303).

^{xxiv} The idea for this subtitle is taken from Aleš Debeljak's monolith *Twilight of the Idols: Recollections of a Lost Yugoslavia*.

^{xxv} No direct English translation exists. The term is similar to philosophizing, "talking shit," "bullshitting," acting like they have it all figured out, are all-smart, playing cool.

^{xxvi} Zorko is correct to point out that in Marko's description of Bosnia at the end of the novel "we once again discover the land through stereotypes, born with reasons" ("Vodič po vesti" 199).

^{xxvii} Zorko makes more or less the same observation when he states "Adi does not know what to say to Dejan, who is struggling with family problems" (Vodič po vesti 198).

4 Chapter: And Your Point is? – Accepting Discomfort

Critical thinking is not the same as self awareness . . .

Let's face it: in times of crisis we're all at least a little inclined to take atavistic refuge in proven survival strategies of the sort that helped our ancestors weather the changing of idols without actually having to change themselves. Isn't the power of collective memory chaining us to inherited formulas, as it's strongest precisely when we face the challenge of new cultural horizons, the collapse of old regimes, the royal road to a more promising future?

Aleš Debeljak, *Twilight of the Idols* (18, italics mine)

In order to elucidate the importance of acknowledging how the (trauma) apparatus mediates our affective responses, I would like to share a very uncomfortable personal experience. Waiting to board an airplane, I noticed that there were a number of dark skinned men, some with turbans. I felt anxious and uncomfortable. I was scared and nervous; I felt relieved when the security guards spent just a moment longer on these individuals. *I was disgusted with myself.* I, the humanities student, the student trained in recognizing racism and xenophobia, was having a “gut” reaction that I can only explain as racism and xenophobia. *I was appalled with myself.* I tried rationalizing it. The guards are only trying to keep me safe. There are more Muslim fanatics than white or Christian fanatics. Muslims do tend to be darker. I grew continually more horrified, but *I was horrified with myself.* My ex-boyfriend could pass as Arab. I have Muslim friends. I have friends from Middle Eastern countries. I have never had any reason to fear them, or be anything but curious about our difference. In fact, I probably know more dangerous white people than black or brown people. Yet, there I was, terribly uncomfortable, which my supervisor tells me is symptom of my “whiteness.” Of course, there was nothing to fear. My “gut” feeling was the only monster present. However, the experience taught me something important, and brought

my attention to the phenomenon I have attempted to elucidate in regards to the relationship between *Čefurs* and Slovenes in Vojnović's novel. Instincts and gut feelings are not necessarily natural, that is, based on some inherent truth; rather they are things we learn to know and feel.

I refer to this anecdote because it illustrates the ways in which affect and justification twist and turn into each other. It is important to be aware of both our affective and critical responses in any encounter with the other – regardless of whether or not this other is an individual or an idea. Although our fearful and racist (re)actions may be justifiable, this does not make them unproblematically true. The same, of course, can be said of our compassionate and inclusive (re)actions, for example, when we engage with another whose views we respond to as problematic. The tendency in my experience is that we try to find the answer – the right answer, the truth. What I forget is that life, like any other experience, is not black and white. So no, there is no perfect/happy future, no solution – as if we could ever agree on one anyways. The way forward, the solution, so to speak, is filled with contradictions, paradoxes, and discomfort. The solution will ask each of us, every side, to sit with aporia. However, this is not necessarily as discouraging, as may at first appear. I argue that novels such as Vojnović's *Čefurji Raus!* open up a space that both instills a sense of discomfort and, at the same time, paradoxically, invites moments of curiosity and empathy. In this way, the socio-historical frame enters the reader's awareness, but does not dictate the reader's (re)actions and responses. The novel asks the self and the other to be aware of and acknowledge the past as well as the socio-economic contexts or apparatuses, but to respond in the present.

4.1 An Uncomfortable Slovene Response

Before continuing, it is worth pausing a moment further on the ways in which knowledge is formed and experienced. In *The Inability to Mourn* social sociologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich state that “[o]ur conscience is formed as an internal censoring agency in

which external experience is stored and which directs our behavior” (79). They go on to quote Nietzsche who contends that “[t]he source of conscience is faith in authorities; thus it is not the voice of God in man’s breast, but the voice of some men in man” (80-81). Not everyone believes in authority or God, or another spiritual power or series of powers. However, Nietzsche’s point is nevertheless worth reiterating. Conscience is not formed by some innate internal belief or guiding compass; rather it is created by a series of external factors, largely dependent on the individual and society, and then internalized as a morality. Often, this internal guide leads us well. Socially constructed or not, killing is most often not a viable solution. However, as my own airport experience shows, our “gut” reactions, a form of knowledge, can also lead us astray.

Take for example, one mother’s response to *Čefurji Raus!* Upon learning that the school required her daughter to read Vojnović’s novel, the mother, whose screen name is “*obogatitveno branje*” [assigned reading], asks why. Reading the post, I sensed concern and disbelief. The mother states that the text illustrates a group of frightened, less fortunate individuals who do not wish to participate in Slovene society, but who, at the same time, blame Slovenes for anything/everything bad that has ever happened to them. She also contends that the text presents the characters as brave because they get drunk. She goes on to ask how a novel that is full of Serbian, half of it profanities and depictions of hooliganism can be considered “art” (obogatitveno branje, ponovi).ⁱ While I empathize with the mother’s concern, it appears that she read the novel literally, paying attention only to that which would have been most immediately accessed by her frame of reference, most likely prominent stereotypes, and has missed the (more subtle) potential work done by the novel.ⁱⁱ The mother is suggesting that the novel does not meet the requirements for the quality of literature students should be required to read. The difference, which it must be noted is on a continuum and always subjective, is summed up in Slovene scholar Alojzija Zupan Sosič’s book *On the Quay of Contemporaneity: Literature and the Novel*

[*Na pomolu sodobnosti ali o književnosti in romanu*]. Zupan Sosič suggests that the difference between literary (“quality”), which she considers Vojnovič’s novel to be, and nonliterary or, “fun” fiction,ⁱⁱⁱ is that while both types use common literary devices, clichés, symbolism, suspense, and so on, literary works actively pay attention to the use of language, characterization, and other literary devices to defamiliarize the familiar and suggest something more than what is at first apparent in the plot and literary devices (17-43, 44-74).^{iv} The “catch,” of course, is that while a novel can be considered to be of greater or lesser quality, one can also read more or less actively, paying attention or not paying attention to the subtle shifts and narrative moves.

Perhaps more importantly, although the mother’s critique “misses” some aspects of the novel, her concern, given her frame of reference, is understandable. In fact, I think her concern, that is, discomfort, and her willingness to share it is part of the reason the novel is so successful. Here I am thinking of the conversation, which reflects the overall conversation in Slovenia following the novel’s release that ensued after the mother posted her comment. Two of the parents (with the screen names *kgfš* and *ponovi vajo*) who respond to her suggest that she is focusing too much on the dialogue and reading with preconceived notions (*obogatitveno branje, ponovi*). Similarly, responder *beda* suggests not saying anything to her daughter and letting her (the daughter) make up her own mind (*obogatitveno branje, ponovi*). In both cases, the mother is essentially being asked, to borrow a term from current mindfulness and psycho-therapy discourse, to “sit with her discomfort,” to not respond to the immediate thoughts and emotions evoked by the novel’s language and the characters’ actions. In other words, she is being asked to open up, to allow different insights and experiences, experiences that she does not understand, and which she can not incorporate into her own experience. The novel requires the mother to respond with empathy. Empathy, here, means, “attending to, even trying, in limited ways, to recapture the possibly split off, affective dimension of the experience of others” (LaCapra,

Writing History, Writing 40). LaCapra notes that “[e]mpathy in this sense is a form of virtual not vicarious experience . . . , in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one’s own” (40).^v This can lead to a sort of “empathic unsettlement”(41). That is, the mother is not being asked to identify with or even understand the experiences presented in the novel; however, she is being asked to remain open to and compassionate toward the experiences of others that she can never fully fit into her own experiences. As the other parents remind her, this process may not be easy and it may require her to pause in her response and approach her discomfort and the novel with wonder. Wonder in this sense is defined as

an encounter with an object that one does not recognize; or wonder works to transform the ordinary, which is already recognized, into the extraordinary. As such, wonder expands our field of vision and touch. Wonder is the precondition of the exposure of the subject to the world: we wonder when we are moved by what we feel. (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of* 179)

While the experience may not be easy, it is one that allows the possibility of something new; it allows the possibility of expanding one’s ability for empathy and awareness. Indeed, through what Sara Ahmed calls wonder,

[t]he body opens as the world opens up before it; the body unfolds into the unfolding of a world that becomes approached as another body. This opening is not without risks: wonder can be closed down if what we approach is unwelcome, or undoes the promise of that opening up. But wonder is a passion that motivates the desire to keep looking; it keeps alive the possibility of freshness, and vitality of a living that can live as if for the first time. (*The Cultural Politics of* 180)

This process, that is, this willingness to experience the uncomfortable, this unsettlement, so to speak, seems to me a crucial component of approaching the novel as a tool for working through difficult and traumatic past and present experiences. When engaging with *Čefurji Raus!*, I find it difficult to overcome the belief that language and stereotypes play a key role in, as Judith Butler reminds us in *Frames of War*, that “certain framing of reality, both its constriction and its interpretation” that makes some lives grievable and others not (xii, xviii-xix).^{vi} I find myself turning again and again to Marko Stabej’s discussion of the novel in “Prišleki in Čefurji” [“Prišleks and Čefurs”]. Stabej explains that “[t]he public’s response to that linguistic difference [the lack of formal diction / academic Slovene] are symptomatic of the Slovene language community, where top literature is still conceptually tied to standard Slovene” (297). As Stabej points out, this position is not always limited to the general public. In a footnote, he quotes Slovene scholar Tina Vrščaj who states that “good grammar should go without saying when it comes to *Kresnik* finalists, but it surprisingly doesn’t” (qtd. in Stabej 300). However, Stabej makes an important point when he states that “the stereotypical understanding, that the only possible carrier of quality Slovene literature are those with untainted book Slovene ... most likely limits the general public’s preparedness to understand and accept literary worlds mediated through different forms of language” (303). Importantly, he adds “we cannot get rid of the suspicion, that such a stereotypical perception [of what can be considered quality literature worthy of reflection] does not stop merely at the rejection of literary works, but that it is also tied to the lack of desire to accept others and different speakers, different language groups and speakers in the Slovene space in general” (303). One need only consider the Slovene police response to the novel, or the words of one internet commentator “*sladoledčebula*” [icecreamoniion] – “this southerner in the novel really insults Slovenes” and “[S]ick nation, this Slovenia” (24.ur) – to ascertain that the two are related.

To this I would add a surprising piece of wisdom I encountered while taking a break from my research: “be wary of holding onto any belief too tightly. We all have beliefs, but the more tightly we hold on to them, the more inflexible we become in our attitudes and behaviors” (Harris, *The Happiness Trap* 47-48). The value, and I use this term loosely, of literature or any form of expression and communication is its ability to open up spaces of empathy, that is, our willingness to engage with contradictions, emotions, beliefs, and experiences that we do not and cannot have full access to. As a non-didactic or confrontational tool, narrative can serve to gently invite the reader into an experience of discomfort and uncertainty he or she may be unwilling or unable to engage with directly. In fact, I argue that Vojnović’s novel plays or can be used to play a key role in helping the Slovene communities work through, or perhaps more accurately, acknowledge and “sit with” their feelings of pain, discomfort, mistrust, and hate. This occurs because *Čefurji Raus!* destabilizes the emotional response to the other constructed by one’s prejudices and ideology. Vojnović’s novel produces enough discomfort to cause reflection, but not enough to alienate or directly blame the reader. However, I would not delude myself or the reader of this thesis into thinking that the novel encourages each and every one of its readers to approach the other with empathy and curiosity. As I imagine is clear from the blog examples listed above, not everyone experiences the novel in this way. Nevertheless, the novel allows this possibility, and thus, it is worth examining how it does so.

4.2 Sara Ahmed’s “Affective Economies” and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*

In thinking through these uncomfortable conundra and how one might exist within them, I find it helpful to draw on Sara Ahmed’s discussions of affect and embodiment. In her work, Ahmed suggests that rather than existing inside us or the objects and individuals we interact with, emotions circulate in between (“Affective Economies” 117). Emotions, she explains, “circulate between bodies, ... [and] ‘stick’ as well as move” (*The Cultural Politics* 4). Ahmed goes on to

explain that “emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation” (45). She then clarifies this point: “[s]igns increase in affective value as an affect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become” (45). Here, one is invited to think back to Foucault’s discussion of power, which circulates between and through bodies, but does not exist within them. It is in this in between space, in the site of circulation, that I see the novel playing a key role. However, I think one should be wary of making the assumption that a narrative will bring complete, unproblematic, or transcendent closure. As LaCapra so eloquently puts it, “working through” or as I, drawing on mindfulness discourse, prefer to call it, “sitting with” is not the same as transcendence:

The processes of working through, including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice, involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulations that are recognized as problematic but still function as limits and as possibly desirable resistances to undecidability, particularly when the latter is tantamount to confusion and the obliteration or blurring of all distinctions (states that may indeed occur in trauma or in acting out post-traumatic conditions).

(Writing History, Writing 22)

4.3 Opening Up – Spaces of Curiosity and Empathy, Spaces of Difference – Framing the Narrative

In *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*, Jo-Ann Episkewnew argues that the “first step towards healing is creating awareness and understanding” (155). Although complete awareness and understanding may prove impossible, beginning the healing process by expanding one’s awareness and understanding seems like a good starting point. This may be particularly true for the oppressor, or the self, who is (I would suspect) more

likely to be unaware, or unwilling, to accept and acknowledge his or her role in someone else's struggle.^{vii} *Čefurji Raus!* asks the reader to do this. Summarizing a discussion with the author, Kmetec states that "Vojnović's intention is to encourage critical thinking and deeper reflection into things that deserve our attention." Indeed, although Kmetec's observation comes from a discussion with Vojnović about his second book *Jugoslavia moja dežela* [Yugoslavia my world] (2012), *Čefurji Raus!* also encourages the reader to think more deeply and critically about immigrants from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia in Slovenia. The book begins by providing the reader with a series of epigraphs that alert the reader to the novel's seriousness. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the epigraphs remind the reader to pause before making judgments. The first epigraph is taken from the Serbian-Slovene singer-songwriter Robert Pešut's (commonly known as Magnifico) song *Čefur*. Given that the song is written and performed by a Serbian-Slovene singer-songwriter,^{viii} who could be identified as a *Čefur* because of his parentage, and who in his other works challenges sexual identity stereotypes (Matos), I suspect the song is meant to be ironic, a reappropriation of the term. In fact, the *YouTube* video of the song, which is titled "Gdo je "Čefur" confirms my reading (Zi Ga). First, the title is ironic. The "proper" Slovene phrasing would be, as one *YouTube* commentator pointed out, "Kdo" not "Gdo" "je Čefur." Similarly, the song rings with satire. The song begins with the artist reading the definition. This is followed by the phrase "*Čefur raus!*" and then with phrases such "look there is a Čefur," "look at the Čefur." The song continues with lines such as "ah! fuck it if I'm a Čefur," "who is a Čefur," "I am a Čefur," "you're a Čefur," and "we are all Čefurs" (Zi Ga). The song refuses to be ashamed of its *Čefur* identity. The song challenges, to use Homi Bhabha's terminology, the enunciation of the stereotype. It asserts, look, this is the definition of a *Čefur*, and clearly it is derogatory. By saying "we are all *Čefurs*," the song reminds me that we all sometimes display the negative characteristics discourse displaces onto the other.^{ix} The irony here

serves to remind the reader that stereotypes are, most simply, simplifications that function as a form of structural violence. Such a reminder, then, warns the reader against processing the characterizations provided by the epigraphs, particularly the first epigraph as fact. In other words, the song that frames the narrative asks the reader to consider what sorts of emotions and beliefs circulate through and between objects and their signs. Readers are asked, that is, to pause and consider how this sticking of emotions works on them and their (re)actions and responses.

4.4 If You Wanted a Solution, I Have One, But You Are Not Going to Like it

As Slovene scholars have noted, “*Čefurji Raus!*” shows awareness of the problems. It doesn’t necessarily say people need to change things. It simply says they need to be aware of what is happening, and how it affects their perception of the other. In other words, the novel asks the reader to become aware. What does one miss when an apparatus one is not conscious of frames one’s experience of the other? In order to make change, to act, if one wishes to, one must be aware of the frames that frame his or her experience, and he or she must make room for a series of uncomfortable feelings. It is only by becoming aware and opening up to all sorts of feelings that one can begin to exist in the present. One must first feel and acknowledge his or her feelings and responses; however, before one (re)acts, he or she must pause, to consider the frame. This, however, does not mean only the state apparatus. The novel asks the reader to consider how his or her own actions, his or her own (pre)conceptions, and his or her everyday encounters with institutions, others from his or her own groups, and others, shape and are shaped by the sticky seepage of emotions and beliefs that he or she is not aware of. How does one’s everyday (re)actions and discourses “*evoke[] a history [a belief, a sense] that is not declared*” (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics* 47)? For, as Foucault once said,

one of the first things that has to be understood is that power isn’t localized in the State apparatus and that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of

power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses on a much more minute and everyday level are not also changed (*Power/Knowledge* 60).

At this point, I wish I could provide a clear answer – a solution with steps that need to be implemented. I do not have such clear answers and/or steps. However, I can propose a way in which novels, as well as other forms of expressions, can be used as tools for working through, that is, sitting with, experiences of trauma. The novel offers the reader a place where the reader can, to once again borrow mindfulness discourse, sit with and approach his or her anxiety with curiosity. Anxiety is an important emotion and response. However, it is an emotion that both alerts one to a moment that may necessitate further reflection, and which may often delude one into (re)acting in very unhealthy ways. LaCapra explains that

[a] crucial way of attempting to allay anxiety is to locate a particular or specific thing that could be feared and thus enable one to find ways of eliminating or mastering of fear. The convergence of absence into loss gives anxiety an identifiable object – the lost object – and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome. (*Writing History, Writing* 57)

As he notes elsewhere, absence cannot be overcome, because while what is missing is absent, it is not lost; it never existed in the first place (48-49). As such, an anxiety based around absence “may never be entirely eliminated or overcome but must be lived with. It allows for only limited control that is never absolutely assured; any cure would be deceptive” (57). In fact, LaCapra cautions the reader that attempting to come to terms with or find a solution for this anxiety may prove dangerous:

Avoidance of this anxiety is one basis for the typical projection of blame for a putative loss onto identifiable others, thereby inviting the generation of scapegoating or sacrificial scenarios. In converting absence into loss, one assumes

that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security or identity that others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made “us” lose. Therefore, to regain it one must somehow get rid of or eliminate those others – or perhaps that sinful other in oneself. (57-58)

That is, one might wish to eliminate the dangerous, vulgar, and lazy other – the *Čefur* encapsulated in the epigraphs at the start of the novel. One might also, ironically, in the same manner, wish to eliminate the filthy member of one’s own community who continues to use such demeaning and clearly derogatory language when referencing the other – the one in a position of privilege who uses terms such as *Čefur*. In both cases, one individual or group is attempting to alleviate its anxiety about the absence of the world they wish to exist in by locating the fault in the presence or actions of the other.

Is one position better than another? Maybe. I certainly have my preferences. However, I cannot ask nor accept someone else’s empathy, that is, I cannot ask someone else to sit with their discomfort and their inability to understand, if I am unwilling to do the same. As such, I propose that Vojnović novel functions as a tool for working through both trauma and xenophobia because it asks both groups to pause for a moment and consider the other and the other’s experience. The fact that one cannot ever really know the other only serves to intensify the discomfort people feel when they are asked to suspend their beliefs and open themselves to the unknown of the other. This process is further intensified when people know or sense that they may be implicated, either directly or indirectly, in the other’s struggle. Yet, despite the discomfort and resistance such an openness may evoke, I wish to suggest, by aligning myself with Ahmed, “*that an ethics of responding to pain involves being open to being affected by that which one cannot know or feel*” (*The Cultural Politics* 30, italics mine). *Čefurji Raus!* invites the reader to do just that.

4.5 A Few Final Thoughts

[A] book (or other artifact such as a film) cannot be adequately defended on the basis of the mere fact that it keeps an issue alive in the public sphere and somehow forces people to confront its past. A great deal depends on precisely how a book (or any other artifact) accomplishes this feat and what it contributes to public discussion of sensitive, indeed volatile, issues – issues that bear forcefully on contemporary politics and self-understanding

Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (121)

Thus, I would leave the reader with a few final disclosures and thoughts. I have often commented in frustration on Slovene memory and Slovene politics. For example, I often groaned in response to references in news discussions to what was Slovene or Croat land/sea, or my grandfathers reminding me that this used to be Slovene land not Italian or Austrian land before WWI and II. Can't they just get over it already, I grumbled to whomever would listen. It's over; we have to look forward I raged. Ironically, this is very similar to my grandfather's statements that all this talk about WWII and the Partisans after the collapse of Yugoslavia is just stirring up trouble. To paraphrase, he suggests that Tito and his communists did a good job of eliminating discussions of the wars and the hashing up of blame. In part, I agree with my grandfather, and I still feel that hashing up things that occurred almost a hundred years ago is utterly pointless. However, I only feel this way when memories of the past are acted out as if they are still present. For example, I think that reducing current political battles to who fought on what side of the war and which side is more guilty of atrocities is an utterly useless exercise when, that is, it used as an attempt to ascertain which side suffered more or which side was right and which side was wrong. At the end of the day, I imagine all sides participated in ways they wish they could forget, and made choices they wish they had not had to make at all. However, I do think that hashing up old memories and suffering, regardless of whose hands the suffering was caused by, is useful when this hashing up initiates a form of working through, a way of acknowledging the other's pain, which can never be taken back or be wholly justified or compensated. Should there be talk about

who did what, to whom? Of course. Should it be used to assign blame, or to create a calculus of pain? Perhaps. There might even be a “truthful” conclusion. But nothing useful can come from this.

It is true that my naïve and radical, paradoxically childish self, wants to change the world. I want people to rethink their relationships. I want to help communities engage with each other in ways that open up inclusive and empathetic dialogue that encourages alterity but does not reduce it to oppositionally based binaries, predetermined by the presence of an always already negative difference. However, I am not so naïve, nor so radical. While I dream of grand gestures and sudden wholistic changes, in my experience, the changes that stick are those silent subtle tweaks that make one pause for just a moment. Thus, my goal is not radical change, a new world order, or even a new sort of relationship between groups and communities. I do not aim to heal trauma or even, necessarily, to help communities work through it. I wish all these things but I do not strive to achieve them. That would be like striving to swim a mile in a choppy sea without first learning to cross the calm swimming pool. Rather, the individual succeeds if he or she can encourage just one person, to just one time, rethink his/her automatic (re)action to the other ... to consider how his/her perception in this particular instance is filtered through a series of apparatuses, not the least of which is a trauma apparatus.

Thus, I partially agree with Episkenew, who contends that “[c]onverting the residual pain of traumatic events first into language and subsequently into text enables us to distance ourselves from trauma. We can then examine the text of traumatic events to understand the emotions it triggers, a process that allows us to diminish its negative effects” (70). While I believe that trauma and pain may need to be converted into text or another medium before they can be examined, or for that matter engaged with at all, I am not sure the negative effects and affects of

trauma can be totally eradicated. In fact, I am not sure they should be. To once again borrow Ahmed's words,

A good scar is one that sticks out, a lumpy sign on the skin. It's not that the wound is exposed or that the skin is bleeding. But the scar is a sign of injury: a good scar involves healing, it even covers over, *but the covering always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body*. Our bodies have been shaped by their injuries that persist in the healing or stitching of the present. This kind of good scar reminds us that recovering from injustice cannot be about covering over the injuries, which are effects of injustice; signs of an unjust contact between our bodies and others. So "just emotions" might just be the ones that work *with* and *on* rather than *over* the wounds that surface as traces of past injuries in the present (*The Cultural Politics* 201-202).

Scars make us who we are. Some scars we learn from; others we live with. Our own scars remind us of what we have done to ourselves and what others and morality have done to us. The scars of others remind us of what they went through, and sometimes, what we forced them to go through. While picking at scars often makes them worse, and hiding scars only serves to obscure a part of ourselves, a past that made us who we are, living with and learning from our scars reduces the possibility that we will receive or inflict the same wounds and scars, on ourselves or on others, again.

"And Your Point is? / Moving Beyond Trauma in Trauma – Accepting Discomfort"

¹ It would be prudent to note two considerations here. First, the mother is mistaken in assuming the "foreign" text in the novel is Serbian. While some sections are Bosnian, the parts of the novel not written in Slovenian are predominantly in a specific *Fužin* dialect. (You cannot translate them by looking up individual words in a Serbian-English or Serbian-Slovenian dictionary, or on Google translate. I tried.)
<http://med.over.net/forum5/read.php?151,8177814>

ⁱⁱ Here, my work draws upon Zupan Sosič's discussion of what makes a literary text and what makes a nonliterary text, and when this occurs, as well as what determines a literary text (so called "quality" work) and a trivial or non-literary, "fun" text (so called 'non-quality' work), which was useful in working through some of my thoughts on why and how this novel works. I have noted that Zupan Sosič considers *Čefurji Raus!* a literary text because she listed it as one in one of her class lectures.

ⁱⁱⁱ I make this distinction because, as Zupan-Sosič notes, "nonliterary" can also refer to other sorts of writing (textbooks, reports, some essays, official documents) (18).

^{iv} Zupan Sosič also postulates that how a text is classified (and valued) depends not only on how the reader him or herself reads, but also on the reader's context (17, 39-42).

^v LaCapra states that "[a]s a counterforce to numbing, empathy may be understood in terms of attending to, even trying, in limited ways, to recapture the possibly split off, affective dimension of the experience of others. Empathy may also be seen as counteracting victimization, including self-victimization. It involves affectivity as a crucial aspect of understanding in the historian or other observer or analyst. As in trauma, numbing (objectification and splitting of object from subject, including self-as-subject from self-as-object) may function for the historian as a protective shield or preservative against unproblematic identification with the experience of others and the possibility of being traumatized by it. But objectivity should not be identified with objectivism or exclusive objectification that denies or forecloses empathy, just as empathy should not be conflated with unchecked identification, vicarious experience, and surrogate victimage. Objectivity requires checks and resistances to full identification and this is one important function of meticulous research, conceptuality and the attempt to be as attentive as possible to the voices of others whose alterity is recognized. Empathy in this sense is a form of virtual, not vicarious, experience related to what Kaja Silverman has termed *heteropathic identification*, in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one's own" (*Writing History*, *Writing* 40).

^{vi} Of course, I am also implicated in this frame, and it would be foolhardy and irresponsible of me to suggest that my feelings, senses, and beliefs are somehow outside of these frames. Thus, I can only attempt to proceed aware of my own prejudices, feelings, senses, and beliefs, recognizing that mine are just as real and just as experiential as the mother's, quoted above, regardless of whether or not I agree with her, or experience the same events and experiences in the same ways

^{vii} It would be equally ineffective, I believe, for a member of the dominant culture, to identify too closely with members of a minority, that is, take on their struggles as their own. See LaCapra's discussion of empathy in *Writing History*, *Writing Trauma*.

^{viii} For more information (in English) on (the eccentric) Robert Pešut refer to <http://www.last.fm/music/Magnifico> and <http://www.mladina.si/91512/robert-pesut-magnifico/?cookieu=ok> (in Slovenian).

^{ix} My reading here is informed by Bhabha's discussion of the 'Self,' 'Other,' and colonial discourse in *The Location of Culture*.

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