Social bodies

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Chapter 2

ANATOMIZING CONFLICT – ACCOMMODATING HUMAN REMAINS

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Anthropological accounts of the body and person have recently begun to undergo a reorientation, with a shift of attention from the body understood as an integral unit to an idea of the body as sometimes made up by dead or dismembered body parts. While this study joins the debate on body parts (see Lock 2002; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2003; also Kaufman et al., in this volume), it does not, however, address the phenomenon of the booming market in human organs destined for transplantation, whether to extend lives or modify bodies. Instead, the bodies and body parts emerging at the centre of this analysis are medically unusable, human remains whose use-value is clearly extinguished, but which, despite their 'uselessness', continue to offer sites for new scientific, medical and technical interventions.

More specifically, the chapter will examine a range of material practices and rhetorical strategies constructed around bones and other human remains in postconflict Serbia. In present-day Serbia (as in other postconflict areas of former Yugoslavia), the recovery, identification and return of shattered bodies and body parts (the common fate of bodies in war) to families has been identified by divergent political interests as potentially healing or restorative. Remains are articulated in such a way as to build and sustain communities in grief and to posit continuities between past and present. Yet the forms in which body parts circulate in these situations – as a means for reconciliation, as commodities, as private mementos, and as DNA-coded information – are, as this account reveals, more various than the official narratives of attribution and assignment suggest.

Drawing on fieldwork carried out in 2003/04 in Serbia and Bosnia-Hezegovina.[1] the text sets out to explore how narratives of the conflict,

enacted through human remains and their evidentiary traces, play themselves out in postconflict practices of intervention into, and collection and classification of, body parts. My analysis shows how war, as a highly sensitive period in a group's cultural memory, becomes medicalized, lending itself to appropriation, in peacetime, through the operation of a large-scale forensic and generally scientific apparatus. In this process, the study suggests, arguments over the meaning of human remains can serve as metonyms for debates over the justification for conflict and the subsequent negotiation of the postconflict political order.

Human Remains in Serbia

The political deployment of mourning has a history in the former Yugoslav republics going back well beyond its most immediate occasion in the conflicts of the 1990s. Typically, the rhetoric of grief involves the invocation of a symbolic form, or a symbolization of the materiality, of the dead body, which is used to rally identification with a historical heritage or putative ethnic identity. In the late 1980s, political propaganda in Serbia (as well as in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and Macedonia to a lesser degree) repeatedly appealed to certain legitimating myths of descent in seeking to make up a national *ethnos* or serviceable political community. Such a community was held together rhetorically by the postulation of biologically traceable kinship relations, as imaged in dead bodies, graveyards and bones. Proponents of war in Serbia invoked the ancient motif of bones – magical caskets, according to folk religion and local mythology, lodging the soul of Serbian people – in order to activate pro-war political feelings and to make territorial claims.

The importance of customs, ideas and practices about death, burial and the proper processes of bereavement in Serbia has been amply documented since the early twentieth century.[2] Anthropological and ethnological testimonies show, for example, that it used to be a common Orthodox practice to exhume the dead a certain time after burial (three, five, or seven years), to then wash the bones [3] and to rebury them with a special liturgy.[4] Thus, two years before the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo,[5] in which Serbia lost its autonomy to the Ottomans with the death of Prince Lazar, Lazar's remains were taken on a ceremonial tour[6] of Serbia, with the majority of the locals extending a proud welcome to the procession. The remains were first taken from the patriarchate in Belgrade (the latest of Lazar's various abodes over the last six centuries) and then borne to rest temporarily in monasteries in all the regions where the Serbs had churches.[7] Critics of this act claim that it was the highly political portage of the Prince's bones

that drew up the boundaries of 'Great Serbia', on the principle that 'wherever the bones of Serbian ancestors lie, that is Serbian land'. Though evidently anachronistic, the archaic principle served crucially to forge pro-war political alliances in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. In other words, certain territories figured within imaginary conceptions of the land as being specifically imbued with mythic value, and unnameable ancestors interred in those places started to function as real persons as they retrieved or symbolically reconquered the ground in which they lay.

Importantly, the rituals and practices as documented did not exclusively bear out the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, but formed part of Serbian popular religion[8] or the so-called 'folk religion of Serbs'.[9] Unwritten rules – about how to treat the deceased – have been passed from one generation to another through oral folkways as a form of local knowledge about death.

Spending a lot of time on the grave-sites in 2003/04, I had the chance regularly to observe how 'folk religious practices' inform contemporary public memorial techniques. A comparable etiquette of administering burial properly seemed shared by religious and supposedly secular methods. Family members in Serbia buried their dead with regular elaborate prayers and mortuary feasts held according to a fixed temporal pattern (on the first-falling Saturday or seven days after death, after forty days, within six months and one year); these ceremonies were understood to propitiate the dead and ensure their contentment, acting, further, as a failsafe against their becoming a vampire (see Jovanović 2002).[10] Many of my respondents assured me that they still held tightly to received patterns. Serbian funerary practices, as both documented and extant, are informed by the belief that the souls of the deceased remain alive so long as any part of his/her body, especially their bones, persist on the earth, given that the skeleton is the abode of the soul (Čajkanović 1994: 417). Whether or not contemporary Serbians would actually profess these beliefs, they remain alive in turn in people's remembrances of their forebears, in their imprecations and in their solemn recitation of religious incantations.

Needless to say, the period of my fieldwork was one during which I both observed as an ethnographer and was observed. I would regularly see a woman, in her fifties and always smartly dressed, resting under a slender white birch overshadowing a family vault in one of Belgrade's city cemeteries. One day this woman introduced herself as Ružica and asked me whom was I visiting. It turned out that she had spotted me as I habitually walked around, rather than keeping myself to only one grave. When I told her about the theme of my research, she let on that her whole family was buried in her dark marble family vault: both her parents, her father's parents, and her grandfather's two sisters. She had recently

buried also her 26-year-old son there, she confided, indicating the darker heaps of earth around the vault and its newly planted flowers. 'My son died whilst serving his military conscription', she said somewhat stoically, seeming disinclined to offer further information. As we stood in silence for a while, I noticed that different surnames had been engraved into the ledger of the family vault. The names of the dead were (or could have been) of both Croat and Serbian origin. Ružica explained that in the early 1990s she had got a phone call informing her that everyone in her son's squadron had perished in a military operation, most likely he included. The army, though, had never officially confirmed her son's death. After a fruitless wait and period of searching for her son, or his remains, lasting eleven years, she had engraved his name on the ledger – thus symbolically burying him – and planted some new flowers, last month, 'so that at least his soul could find rest'.[11] In a lugubrious, but also slightly hectoring way, she intoned, 'What counts is showing respect'. Properly administered burial still counted – even if it meant people conducting obsequies over empty tombs.

But to return to the early 1990s, it was not so much the joining with ancestral mourning practices, or traditional Serbian (re)burials,[12] as the rediscovery of Serbia's World War II dead that was crucial in igniting warfare in 1991. During the latter part of the Second World War, in which Yugoslavia resisted German occupation, war atrocities were inflicted on Yugoslavs not just by the Reich but by groups of their fellow countrymen. More than a million Yugoslavs died in the war, mostly at their compatriots' hands. Committed by numerous groups, and on all sides (the perpetrators being Croatian fascists known as Ustaša, against Serbs; partisans, against fascists; Serbian royalists – Četniks – against partisans, Muslims and other Croats, etc.), these multiple massacres, mention of which was silenced during Tito's regime,[13] became the object of revisionist histories, usually political and nationalistic, in the late 1980s. After Tito's death,[14] the once-socialist regime of former Yugoslavia came under increasing strain, with additional care for corpses and graves being seen as essential for religious and ethnic renewal. A number of exhumations and reburials were televised, and viewed by large audiences across the whole of the former country.

Such images – of people digging out bones from caves, bagging them and turning these plastic sheaths to the light (cf. Verdery 1999) – thus became the sources of mutual recrimination and demonization among ethnic groups of Yugoslavs (cf. Denich 1994; Hayden 1994; Ballinger 2003). Both in folk rhetoric and in political speeches, bones and body parts of Second World War victims that had been thrown into caves, buried in shallow graves, or simply left to rot, served to mark and spatialize the new state borders of the 1990s, further differentiating 'true' or 'national'

kinship[15] and ethnic ties from more general modes of relatedness based on citizenship. The reburial of exhumed remains played an essential role in suturing cultural nationalist understandings of the dead body to religious mortuary forms.

Along with documentary films on Second World War genocides, a number of highly regarded writers published in the early 1990s works on Yugoslavia's Second World War history, with the different interpretations, or manipulation of such, of each arousing dormant emotions which again got caught up in strategies of attributing guilt and accountability. According to Verdery (1999), the projection of unmarked corpses, or 'nameless bodies', was particularly effective in exciting these animosities. Nationalist demagogues used the ethnic crimes of the past to fuel a new cycle of ethnic violence. In a bid to attract honour to the idea of fighting for the Serbian nation in the 1990s, war apologists described a citizen as someone with a proper degree of respect for his recent and distant ancestors. As well as being mediated through death, in this process, civic culture was invested with distinctively masculine values: individuals who fought for 'just cause' were given terrestrial and national rights in return for their efforts on the battlefield. Acts performed in the name of an ancestral principle found justification in an idiom of anteriority and claims over land and property. In Judith Butler's terms, because actions could be articulated as drawing on a symbolic dimension, they were able to lay claim to a universal force (see Butler 2000: 44). Isolated actions or skirmishes in the war, including war crimes, often clothed themselves in the name of a principle that simultaneously elevated and sanctioned them. Those Serbs that were pro-war, moreover, expressed their fidelity to an ideology of historical Serbia, and their proximity to political power, through spatial markers and land ownership claims.

The dead body was key in mobilizing this nexus of relations between power, land title and historical entitlement; but alongside the corpse's effectivity in a public symbolic register during the wars of the 1990s, we should also note the alleged flourishing of a particular material practice around corpses at this time. This was the bartering of body parts and whole corpses between Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and later Kosovars for what my respondents called 'emotional' and 'spiritual' reasons. Although no official documents discuss this trade, a number of my interviewees (Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats) admitted that they were either aware of such trafficking, or had even taken part in it. This return of the dead body also played up to a potent and readily politicized set of popular expectations. In bringing the body parts of dead relatives back to the soil where they 'belonged', those involved in the trade understood themselves to be restoring their own spirits, and those of their ancestors, to peace.

Human Remains in Times of Postconflict

This study is not concerned, however, simply with the atavistic dimension of people's desire for the repatriation of their dead relatives, as this is sought on an informal level beneath the oversight of official or state-sector processes of administration. On the contrary, in the negotiation of the postconflict Serbian order, what might be thought an atavistic, 'non- or pre-modern' practice finds a counterpart in the use of these same remains to reinflect or reconstruct ties and ideas of kinship within (and between) statelevel entities. Where once ancestors were iconically invoked as figures conjuring national kinship, now a symbolic body politic is taking shape around the bodies of those who died in the past decade. This is more than a matter of membership of the 1990s war dead, say, among one's immediate family bestowing legitimacy on a citizen or national subject. In addition to these popular forms of recognition, a number of public sectors, NGO and civil society organizations are active in resuscitating an idea of national participation through their solicitation of families' involvement in scientific and bureaucratic processes of bodily return. In the view of the international community, the peoples of the former Yugoslavia commit themselves to a course of healing by beginning to reckon with the evidence of war crimes. A Serbian public has begun to reconcile itself to the postwar polity by consenting to take part in internationally run programmes of repatriation; while politicians and others have sought to frame the terms of Serbia's guilt, or its relation to Europe and the world, by recourse to the work of agencies dealing with the dead. The ICMP (International Commission on Missing Persons), created in 1996 in Lyon by the G7 in order to address the issue of persons missing as a result of the conflicts of the 1990s, plays an important role in these surrogate processes.

Following the cessation of hostilities and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, the ICMP[16] started its work first in Bosnia and Herzegovina, before extending its activities to other postconflict regions. Estimating that more than 40,000 persons remained unaccounted for across the former Yugoslavia, the Commission established, under a 'strictly humanitarian mandate', a 'mission to bring relief' to the families of the missing, regardless of religious, national or ethnic origin. The organization's remit in retrieving remains on families' behalf connects with the wider societal effort to frame the legal terms of accountability and reconciliation, as transacted in bodies, rights and across a range of other political and civil contexts.[17]

The Commission uses DNA-led methods, developed by its own forensic specialists, to identify the remains it exhumes. In order for DNA to figure in

the identification of exhumed bodies, however, DNA profiles must be taken in the form of blood samples from the family members of a missing person, and compared to the profile abstracted from recovered body parts and bones. This sampling of a population necessitated a major bureaucratic or 'public health' campaign spanning, and crucially 'reconnecting', the whole of the former Yugoslavia. Compiling a dossier, or rather a satisfactorily comprehensive database, of samples thus required the cooperation of a number of previously hostile groups, including the grieving wives, mothers and daughters of the deceased, other self-declared victims, possible perpetrators and governmental bodies; such groups had to exchange information for war crimes localities to be determined and, potentially, for families to accept remains and achieve closure. Should locals have held back from reporting their missing,[18] or, further, from providing information as to the possible whereabouts of mass graves (and identity of perpetrators), foreign experts would not know where to search, frustrating identification efforts from the outset.

It took some time, then, for the ICMP and related organizations[19] to generate the primary source of their data – that is, the register and inventory of missing persons – that would form the basis of their future work. Generally speaking, the local people I worked with, both Serbs and Bosniaks, tended to be very ready to offer accounts of how they were encouraged to 'face their experience of the wars by voicing their opinions' -what they sometimes called their 'pressure situations'. But if people have largely dispensed with any embarrassment in narrating their suffering as caused by the war, it remains harder to summon up the courage to consider its roots. These roots, understandably, are held to be complex and multiple; and although many have sought to pin down the major factors precipitating the conflicts, most local writing and commentary is regarded by the international audience as nationalistic, pro-war or one-sided etc. Likewise, local Serbs often read the international intervention in the 1990s in Yugoslavia as 'aggressive, usurpatory, belated and economically-driven'. As the initial operations of the ICMP consisted primarily in gathering information to be used as legal evidence in The Hague court, they were welcomed in Bosnia by representatives of different ethnicities but tended to be repudiated by many in Serbia (either through mockery or neglect). Undergirded by such a social dynamic, the objectives and work of the ICMP were initially met with great suspicion fostered by the obvious international character of the Commission as an intragovernmental organization founded by Bill Clinton in 1996. The initial relationships between the Commission and the local population, in the words of an ICMP officer, were: 'Frustrating. People thought we were an aid agency that would provide them with financial help. But we didn't

come here to distribute money. We didn't have much money anyway. We said that we had come to find their war missing'.

Another fact contributed to the tension between the locals (Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats) and the ICMP. At the time just after the signing of the Dayton Accord, despite the fact that positive collaboration between locals and foreign volunteers and experts represented a prerequisite for the ICMP's work, it was believed that locals should be excluded from the professional processes of remains' retrieval. As the mass graves found were rarely primary, but usually secondary or tertiary sites, the 'ethnic' origin of their victims was not clear, with the possibility existing that graves held people from all three sides of the conflict. The ICMP wanted therefore to ensure that no specific local nationality would be represented in (or could be seen as favoured by or allied with) the ICMP working team. Yet this decision provoked dissatisfaction among the people personally involved in searching for their loved ones' remains. I recorded many stories of frustration, in which locals claimed that they had initially felt 'cheated, as no one had let them come close to the excavation sites', prohibiting them, moreover, from dealing with the remains as they felt proper. A great number of the ICMP workers whom I interviewed stated that they were advised not to mingle much with the locals, as their job was to collect data that very well might be destined for use in criminal justice courts. Interestingly, many found my questions as to their knowledge of the region, or the nature of their contact with locals, misplaced or emotionally redundant. A middle-aged archaeologist once commented somewhat tiredly: 'I have been here for more than 5 years. No, I don't speak the local language, but should I have to? I came here to find people's remains, and not to amuse them with my language capabilities or the lack of such'.

Another forensic scientist followed up by commenting on the nature of the ICMP:

> Yes, but that's what is truly strange here. The policy of the ICMP is to have a fractured process – different experts work on different stages of identification. And this separates us from families. Where I worked before, in El Salvador, Zimbabwe, Argentina … we were involved in the whole process … from visiting the families and asking them for consent to dig up the remains, to handing the remains back to families. That meant that we had to communicate with them. That is much better, I think. Being involved in the whole process allows you at least to see the outcome – the return of the body to the family. With that you can somehow close the process for yourself. But here … no. You are always only digging and digging and digging … and you rarely find out where the bodies you worked on end up. But then … I have never worked at a site such as this before. Here we have thousands and thousands of bodies to excavate. Even if you wanted to, it

would be impossible to supervise the whole process from beginning to the end, because it is just too complicated and too big.

Another ICMP expert, a tiny woman in her forties, added: 'It's true. We might not communicate with them, but we help them nevertheless. We detect and identify those whom they miss. We help them reach justice'.

With time, the ICMP started helping the families of missing, also offering financial support, training and technical assistance in writing reparation claims, and serving as a forum for the organization of meetings, conferences and all sorts of special events. Selma, an ICMP regional coordinator born in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who struck me as a brisk and very resolute woman, explained:

> We think it's crucial to encourage people to play a real role in resolving issues around their missing. To report that somebody is missing already counts for a lot, but it is not enough. People need to be more active. They have to speak so that we can hear them. They have to talk about their cases and build up public awareness. And they should do that in an organised way. Nobody can possibly feel better when mourning alone. We can help them feel better … We can't always find their missing loved ones, but we are trying to help them by setting [relatives] up in networks and organising roundtables in which they can participate … if they want. Many people have told me that these occasions [conferences, workshops] really help, and make them feel decent again … help them bear their loss. …Yes, I do think we are helping them. You saw it yourself. It's very often the case that after a woman [it is usually women who assert victims' identification] identifies her missing person she stays with us as an organisation. Many women have become seriously involved in the ICMP workshops and organisations. … I guess, that once they cease to be dependent on us [regarding the information about deceased or the missing] they are more able to get a hold on their emotions, and they usually want then to throw themselves into the other activities … But of course, it is our duty to mobilise them in the first case. And the best way to do that is to invite them for a DNA testing. It is terribly hard to come into contact with them otherwise. You know, we're in touch with a lot of people already who are fine with coming forward, but we also have to go out and look for those who are sitting on their own at home seek and don't know who to ask for help. The fact that these people can meet our workers, and see that they really are trustworthy, and that they are locals themselves, whilst donating blood, is really important. It seems it really helps. And people have learned with time *how miraculous the DNA techniques can be* anyway. (my emphasis)

As over the years the ICMP's policies have changed, so have local people's evaluation of their work. Locals, such as Selma, have now been

invited to join the ICMP in a professional capacity, while the humanitarian aspect of the organization has been promoted with increasing salience:

> The reason why the ICMP was founded was to put a stop to the trafficking of bodies and to facilitate the exchange of information about bodies and grave sites for financial and diplomatic reasons. We wanted to set the terms under which this exchange could become a humanitarian act. The point was to encourage the Serbs to help the Bosniaks by admitting what they knew about their missing persons, and for the Bosniaks to help the Serbs, and the Serbs to help Kosovars, or Croats help Serbs, and so forth. We knew that the circle of information always existed, and we did not want to break it. We wanted just to place it on a different, let's say, moral basis. (ICMP officer from the Belgrade office)

And so the retrieval and identification of remains has lent itself to inter-ethnic reconciliation as much as it has to more personal healing; the process, in both materially and metaphorically reassembling previously dishonoured and ravaged remains, has allowed families to perform funerals and commemorate deaths – reinscribing their losses into a comprehensible sequence.

Mint Fields and Mass Graveyards

Between 2003 and 2004 I attended a number of exhumations and excavations of human remains in both Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). The bodies found within various mass graves had suffered a range of disfiguring injuries. When I recall one of these sites, the first image that comes into my mind is of a swaying field of wild mint. Consumed with nerves and genuinely ignorant of what I was going to see, the first time I visited a grave-site I was overwhelmed against all expectations by the fresh smell of mint carried on a July wind. It did not feel like walking across a mass grave to push through the soft, unmown grass heaving with buttercups. Only past the military tent, the bulldozer and other heavy equipment, did the mint give way to a more pervasive odour of decay. The yellow ribbon under which I ducked to enter the site read: 'Police – Crime scene – Entrance prohibited'. Approximately 16 metres in length, 3 metres wide and 2.5 metres deep, with a ramped-up base identified as the grave's western end, the grave held the remains of fifty two individuals. Viewed from the side, the plot had the shape of a wedge. The presence of fragments from earlier deposits, and the remains' stratigraphic context, suggested that the grave was a secondary one. As I came onto the site, archaeologists were removing soil from squares marked out in a grid,

sieving it for skeletal and other debris. Skulls were often smashed and lay at odd angles. A senior forensic archaeologist, a silver-headed man who, it seemed to me, sat in the grave as comfortably as he might in a sandpit, showed me one of the skulls, where the wound to the right frontal bone, or forehead, bore small, circular edges – the signature-mark of a projectile. Commingled burned and fragmented remains had been separated with great care from whole corpses. The soft, knobby and grumose tissues of the body were kept to one side of the skeleton by the dead person's clothes. Following the standard postmortem protocol, clothing was removed, handwashed, described and photographed. Notwithstanding the close observance of this procedure, adipocere, a brownish-white, soap-like material, was everywhere.

It took me a while to strike up conversation with an older, heavily moustached local worker, who seemed to have been digging up and sifting layers of soil for an eternity. A cacophony of birdsong and drone of heavy diggers made it difficult for us to hear one another. I had to step down practically into the grave if I wanted to speak to him. The man, hands caked with a heavy layer of dirt, smiled at me and said in a tired way: 'You'd get used to it. Everyone gets used to it. It's hard at first, but then you forget about it quite soon, and think of something else while you dig. When we have breaks we even joke about this stuff. It's only life'. I nodded and asked in return what they joked about. Did he talk about his work on the grave-sites with his family? He looked at me seriously and said: 'They don't know what I do. Of course they don't. They know that I work for the ICMP, and that I bring good money back home, but I'd certainly not go around telling that I was the person who digs up and cleans the bones here'. The man then turned his back on me as if offended and embarrassed at the same time, and went on digging. I stepped out of his cave, and into another, that of a forensic archaeologist in her late forties, who was smoking a cigarette while dusting off and counting the hand bones of a skeleton facing skull-down on the ground. Another archaeologist was carefully removing decaying tissue from a newly-discovered body with a scalpel. He commented:

> This one is in quite a rough state. Generally speaking, when a body is buried in a shallow grave, it's subject not only to the attentions of many insects and animals, but also affected by seasonal fluctuations in temperature. Hmm, the surface of the articular region of the hipbone, is pitted heavily … and … you see … it has uneven borders. He must have been over sixty years old.

Finding the smell, sights and information all too much to take in at once, I made a determined effort at least to remember what I saw. I consciously tried to retain archaeologists' comments, the shape of collarbones, and to

memorize dental record files, the colours of clothing, images of bits of broken mirror, and of the few coins that were sparkling in the pit. An archaeologist showed me a cache of items he had found – identification documents encased in plastic stapled to the collar of one man's clothes, and a set of prayer beads (*tespih*),[20] together with a SIM mobile phone card. On retrieval, each set of remains was placed in a fresh, white body bag, labelled and carried to the storage tent to await autopsy. The impressions formed by the teeth of a digging and loading shovel sat on a large wheeled machine testified to the effort that had gone into constructing the grave. The whole mint field was anyway an irregularly shaped area, the surviving mark of disturbance associated with the stockpiling of removed soil, or so I was told.

The images of those things I could not grasp immediately but hoped to remember – prostrate skeletons, putrefied tissues, a powerful whiff of ammonia, clothes,[21] tyre marks – all appeared to be perfectly intelligible, however, to the rest of the crew working on the site. What I apprehended as sensory impressions, others treated as evidence, proofs fitting into an interpretive framework designed to yield an analytical synopsis of the exhumation in a medico-legal context. The whole rationale of the examination and codification of the fragments and body parts lay in the legal meanings they would acquire as medical evidence. But I could not help feeling that, as well as helping to detect and prosecute crimes, forensic experts in technical interventions into the landscape of mass graves crucially redefined the value of such spaces. In sieving the soil, they erased some whilst preserving other traces of the recent past. The blue overalls, which I wore in common with everyone else on the site, made me feel clinical myself, as if tasked to make the graves salubrious again. Turning over earth, measuring bones and collecting corpses, site workers' processes of sense-making in effect turned pathology into physiology, construing remains as evidence, and the past as an instrumentality serving future uses.

But that night, hours after taking a shower, and returning my blue overalls to the team, I wondered how I would have read that very landscape, if it had not been the site of an intervention. How would I have understood that day if I had not been accompanied by forensically educated scientists and technicians? What is the meaning anyway of a sloping mint field, when not marked off by red flags and a yellow ribbon? To the inexpert eye, it tells nothing. The field was like any other scented field in summer; only the bodies interred in it made it a crime scene. The supposed, then confirmed, presence of bodies had played as much into my conception of the field as the forensic scientists', evaluating the land and enabling my assessment of their work. In order to restore a link between the temporality of an unthinkable past and the present, some

form of intervention (comparable to the bodies' exhumation and examination) had been essential. At the same time, the connection between ancestors' graves and of those of contemporary war victims was irresistible; it was impossible for science, in whatever name, to divest itself of the resonances of metaphor.

Remains as Sites of Truth

Ever since the first positive results of the ICMP's DNA identification technique were publicly announced (on 16 November, 2001), DNA has been described in official reports and public documents as irrefutable evidence of a victim's identity. A population-based, DNA-led system of identification, based on profiling blood samples from close relatives of the missing, and matching them with bone samples from exhumed mortal remains, has speeded up the determination and repatriation of body parts/corpses to a very marked degree. In the last six years, ICMP experts have collected over 70,00 blood samples, identified more than 9,000 missing individuals across the former Yugoslavia, and developed an internationally acclaimed DNA-matching software tool.[22]

In the hope that a secure method of attribution would stimulate people to exchange information on the missing with greater speed and candour, the proponents of interstate reconciliation styled DNA in public discourse as the figurative basis on which people previously at loggerheads could be brought together. In the words of an ICMP web page, '[F]orensic Science in the Service of Truth and Justice' could potentially unite formerly warring parties. With time, the concept of DNA has taken root amongst, and gained the respect of, locals,[23] although it is by no means the case that the lay public understanding of DNA-based identification approximates to anything like the understanding of a trained scientist. Moreover, as Selma emphasized, it was precisely the DNA project that mobilized people in such great numbers around the cause of their missing. The ICMP's massive blood donation campaigns were not organized only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo, but through EU-funded outreach campaigns across Europe, the United States and Canada.

The effect of the ICMP brochures, public awareness campaigns, and, most of all, identification results, was to give rise to a notion that one could cope with the loss of loved ones, and attempt to secure justice on their behalf, by searching for them on a molecular level, through DNA profiles. While connoting personal and interpersonal reconciliation, the DNA-matching project also came, in ambiguous ways, to signify ideas of modernity, development and Europeanness. The restitution of an

imaginary Yugoslavia criss-crossed by DNA collection and blood testing came to shape itself after a model of social and international cohesion between the states of the region and these entities in their political relationship to Europe. Further, the programme offered its participants a possible modality of 'biocitizenship', as they were mobilized in a civic function through acts of donating blood and offering information on their families. In the theorists' terms: 'They [biological citizens] are pioneering a new informed ethics of the self – a set of techniques for managing everyday life in relation to a condition, and in relation to expert knowledge' (Rose and Novas 2005: 450).

The concept of biological citizenship that Petryna (2002) introduced, and Rose and Novas (2005) further elaborated may indeed be useful when looking at the ICMP's Enlightenment ambition of promoting informed civil society discourse on the basis of DNA findings in postconflict Yugoslavia. Precisely such endeavours to educate the public about science and technology are discussed by Rose and Novas as prime aspects of the strategies for 'making up' a biological citizen. In referring to the 'making up' of citizens, they mean to designate 'the reshaping of the way in which persons are understood by authorities … be they political authorities, medical personnel, legal and penal professionals, potential employers, or insurance companies' (2005: 441). These broadly regulative procedures and modalities, for the authors, in turn entail 'citizen projects', or practices according to which 'authorities thought about (some) individuals as potential citizens, and the ways in which they tried to act upon them'(ibid.). To parse this in very compressed fashion, then, it is not categories of biology or the body that vest persons with 'biological citizenship'; rather, citizenship is also predicated on persons' and groups' ability to participate in social and public constructions (or contestations) of the biology of the body. For Rose and Novas, people's ability to engage with state and other institutions on the basis of an informed understanding of science works to relegitimate public provision (and, more widely, the processes through which citizens are constructed in relation to power).

In one sense, though, this optimistic rendition of biocitizenship fails to accord with my sense of local people's practice. As I have described above, many people I worked with at different times felt pressure (emotional and political) to give evidence as to the presumed state of their missing relatives. But they understood this need as answering to a familial imperative, rather than emerging out of (or being realized as) a form of civic duty or right. It is not clear that people would have come forward had they not been vexed as to their missing relatives' whereabouts; or whether they could have offered information merely on the basis of a systematic institutional intervention into (or redeployment of) their bodily

potential, to adopt the Foucauldian language of biopolitics developed by Rose and Novas. People took a long time to utilize the ICMP frameworks as a means through which they might repatriate remains or claim certain benefits out of their situation *as a right*, on the basis of their being war victims or seekers after reconciliation. In other words, people claimed a form of emotional satisfaction, rather than their rights. For most of the time their emotions ran on fear and hope (that their missing ones would be found alive, or that, if they were indeed dead, their bodies would not have been desecrated, so that they would be able to bury them whole); these feelings, that is, were the wellspring of public participation in DNA citizenship programmes. These unsettled emotions, not the recognition of rights as such, shaped the form of their organizing:

> It was a nightmare. I was so afraid to think something had happened to him, that I didn't want to say aloud to myself, let alone to anyone else, that he was gone. I was frightened that just fearing it and thinking badly of it would make him dead. Imagine what would happen if my husband came home, after all, only to find that I had declared him dead and missing? That would be enough to kill him by itself! … But he never came home. By the time I gathered up the courage to go and declare him missing, they [the ICMP] were already pretty good at identifying missing people via these DNA methods. So I gave my blood, our son gave his too, and my husband's sister and brother also gave blood. In the beginning I was afraid to ask them anything. I tried to contact them as little as possible, as I was afraid they had too many women calling them all the time, and I was afraid that they would tell me something horrible. I just waited. After two years of waiting, I have received a letter notifying me that the DNA identification of the commingled human remains in one of the pits they excavated a year ago, confirms that six bones in it were Zlatko's [her husband]. That meant that he was dead for sure. I was shattered. Completely. Particularly when they asked me whether I would take the 'identification'. I don't know how, but all of a sudden I got back all the courage I had lost, and I said no to them, that I had given them all of my husband and didn't want back only six bones. They were kind to me, they listened and then explained that there was only a very slight chance they would recover the whole body, that their funds were running low and they there was no way that they could run a DNA test on every bone they found – that would be far too expensive. But I could not accept that. So … they are still searching for his body parts … Sometimes, though, you know, I'm not sure, sometimes I think that I should have taken these six bones and just buried them. But then I do know, I feel, that I must bury Zlatko properly. To have six bones only is just not decent. It is not. (Ivanka, 44 years old)

Ivanka's courage in demanding that the ICMP carry on searching for her husband's remains is not only structured by the confirmation that her

husband really was killed, and that she could no longer *make him dead* by 'wrongly declaring his death'. Her access of courage, I believe, was also predicated on changes in the social and political treatment of the war bodies over the past few years in the former Yugoslavia – in the time, in fact, during which she was waiting for her letter to arrive. I will try to explain through the following example.

Almira hoped for years that she would hear from her father, who disappeared in the early days of 1993. She felt particularly lonely and desperate as she had also lost her mother at the age of three. But the financial pressure of raising herself, her sister and younger brother, and paying rent, forced her to barter the hope that he might be alive for a £220-per-month pension. She gathered the paperwork and two witnesses and declared him dead in 1999:

> Even though I was positive by then that he must have died, it felt such a loss, such a degradation to say that officially, you know, in public. I have never felt more humiliated then when I had to get together all the paperwork. But I had to have the documents, if we wanted to claim benefits and Ljubiša [her brother] receive his entitlement to a scholarship.

At the time of my fieldwork, the steps that anyone needed to go through to claim and authenticate their missing relative's body were extremely complicated. In much the same way as at the start of the war, people were generally reluctant to declare their relatives missing, although by the end of the 1990s, some certification of loss or absence had become essential to many families' welfare. Women could not remarry if they were unable to prove their late husband's death (since in law missing persons are accounted neither alive nor dead); children could not ask for pensions and other financial entitlements in the name of their parents; and many people's living conditions, such as the roofs of their houses (if still standing), water and gas mains could only be repaired on the basis of funding attached to specific types of documentation. People who were dislocated, who had lost everything during the war, stood in especial need of official texts confirming their hardship and identity. Very often, these two were the same thing; people had nothing to show for themselves but penury.

This situation changed, however, when in November 2004, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH adopted a State Law on Missing Persons, one of the first of its kind globally, enshrining the right of all families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones. To ensure this right, the law stipulated a mechanism (the Missing Persons Identity Protocol) according to which surviving family members could register non-returnees with the Commission on Missing Persons (*Institut za nestale*

osobe, BiH) through the ICMP. Additionally, the law laid out principles for improving the search process for missing people, established a central database, coherently defined a 'missing person' for the first time, and provided for some of the social and other rights of the families of missing persons. These measures relieved some of my respondents[24] of the need to declare their relative's death as a precondition of access to the family apartment or house.[25] The law also filled in the gaps in international law through tasking the state with searching for remains and returning them to families. Further, families not covered by pensions, veterans' benefits, or benefits for civilian victims could sign up for missing persons benefits.

There is a difference, however, between the ability to claim rights and a guarantee to these rights. Many of the families I spoke to doubted that the law would allow them to see any reparations soon. As one man stated: 'It [the law] would be a good foundation if there were any money, but there isn't any' (Esad, 48 years old). In theory, the state missing-persons fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina should have been paid for by the three internal governments created after the war – the Bosniak-Croat Federation, the Serb Republic, and the Brčko District. But a general shortage meant that no one invested substantial amounts into the funds. For people to grasp reclamation as a rational process, there has to be a perception of a responsible subject (the state, an institution, or the individual) as being willing to consent to and implement (in this case, to finance) the positive outcome of claimants' cases.

I have described people's feelings of embarrassment and humiliation in the face of pursuing claims not simply to suggest their moral sensitivities or hardiness, but because such feelings capture something of the interpenetration of local and international impulses and imperatives in postconflict Yugoslavia. Both the idea and practice of claiming in respect to war losses was heavily reinforced by the presence of international bodies in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A discourse and set of practices disposing of rights-concepts in relation to dead bodies that existed before the war has become increasingly prevalent in relation to the missing bodies of those lost in the war; further, ideas as to the information which bodies may yield have been decisively shaped by the technologies and ideology of the institutions, such as the ICMP, through which people process their claims for recompense and the 'right to know'.

Human Remains in Praxiography

In her book of that title, Mol ethnographically explores 'the body multiple' (2002) 'and its diseases in all their fleshiness', investigating the ways in which tensions between sources of knowledge and styles of knowing are

negotiated in present-day allopathic medicine. If instead of bracketing the practices by which objects are handled, we foreground them, she suggests, reality multiplies (Mol 2002: 5). Further on, she reminds readers of the disciplinary-historical processes through which medical anthropology founded its subject. Social science's first step in the field of medicine was to define illness as an important conceptual object which could be held apart in a certain sense from disease's mere physicalities. Next, anthropology stressed that whatever doctors said about 'disease' represented a narrative or form of discourse, and as such partook of a realm of meaning, needing to be interpreted in relation to the specific perspective of the speaker. Mol proposes a further third step as formative of the methodology of a social science of the body – to foreground the practicalities, materialities and events according to which 'disease' ceases to be entirely pregiven as an ontology, but becomes a part of what is done in practice (Mol 2002: 12). If one is to understand how disease is 'being done', then the materialist turn to the physicalities of living, diagnosis and intervention is a necessary one. The researcher is enjoined to study a praxiography of instances as these fail to be entirely subsumed, on the one hand, by the sheerly bodily, and, on the other, by the psychosocial matters.

Projecting this logic onto the events I witnessed during my time in the former Yugoslavia, the thought occurred that the body of evidence collected on battlefields, in mass graveyards, DNA test laboratories and in courts potentially formed an object of study illuminating the *diseases of the communities* to whom they pertained. The language in which bellicose emotions were expressed during the war, and the idioms of subsequent traumas, losses, claims and eschatologies of the dead all correlated to, and spoke of, *communities' illnesses*. Mol's formulation, further, of discrepancies between 'sources of knowledge and styles of knowing' seemed very adequately to point up the slippages between the explanatory models offered by war victims, the relatives of missing persons, the recognized perpetrators of atrocities, forensic professionals, lawyers and politicians. Supposing, then, that Mol's framework offers a basis for a productive reorientation of my enquiry's concerns, it would seem to follow that, instead of seeking to extract some *cognitive* benefit out of my analysis of the Commission's and others' intervention into remains, I should shift, rather, from an epistemological to a praxiographic analysis of events.[26] Much of the rest of this chapter, then, deals in even more close-up fashion with the physical reality of bodies and body parts.[27]

Retrospectively, too, I understood that my research had wedded itself to a praxiographic method (long before I had read Mol's monograph), since it was the only one practical in the face of people's sensitivities about discussing human remains. People would either clam up when I raised the question about the traffic in body parts, or (as I suspected) elaborate or

fabricate; others took the topic for granted, seeming thereby tacitly to project their own ideas about bodies and parts onto my supposed knowledge. Although people were encouraged to vocalize their experiences under a motto of national reconciliation, many I met did not want to, or could not, talk about the events of the past ten years. People's 'respectful silence' on the subject of war bodies, meanwhile, treated them in an illocutionary way: the communicative effect of their non-utterance and allusions underlined the importance of the topic, while forbearing to disclose itself in explicit statement. This meant that the knowledge I could more easily access was that enacted in daily events and activities, and located in laboratories, missing relatives' ICMP forms, DNA-extracting procedures, reparation claims' drafts, and so on – that is, within what have appeared as 'the full materiality and phenomenality of experience' (Mol 2002: 32).

More importantly, while the identity of those searching for proofs of a connection between themselves and those that were buried in mass grave-sites could only be *expressed,* the identity of those interred, on the other hand, could only be *performed.* This identity could only be stated within an order of procedure. First, bodies had to be identified. A dead body did not express anything on its own, but rather practices of intervention *performed* its reality.

And the mass graves were indeed a reality (whereas the causes, reasons and justifications for the war atrocities often appeared as narratives only). But it was a reality often unintelligible to me. The only way of making sense of it, and not mistaking a crime scene for a mint field, was through appropriating a certain technical knowledge.

Anatomy, for example, turned out to be a very helpful idiom for talking about past atrocities. In the ICMP's reassociation rooms, spaces for body bags full of commingled remains (too great in number to be DNA tested), experts devoted themselves to the knowledge work of turning bodies into objects. The same skulls, pelvic bones and jaws that I saw scattered in the mass graves seemed even more startling once respectfully and carefully set up in rows. These rooms lined up parts in their hundreds, even thousands; and the only way for me to decipher the scene was to treat it as a puzzle. Only someone with a knowledge of anatomy, it seemed, could reassemble the body part pieces into the requisite number of skeletons. But in these rooms what first appeared as a strange, respectful form of civic organization turned out to be a practical manoeuvre. The remains had to be lined up neatly before they could be put together. Mended and patched, skeletons gained a different status, however. They started to represent someone. The practices that 'performed' human remains' identity turned corpses or piles of body parts into objects, and then objects into individual war victims. The painful present, as exemplified in human remains, was articulated again

into the temporal sequence of the past, enabling skeletons to retrieve their names, surnames, vocations, lives. In consequence, the identification of body parts offered the possibility of future commemoration. Whatever the outcome, though, the reconstruction of physical individuals proceeded through strictly technical processes. Technicians enact victims' individualities by measuring their hips, enclasping their dental remains, recognizing and naming their body fractures. These processes of diagnosing and reinstilling bodies' personality also inextricably and ineluctably construct dead persons as the evidence of crime, and as missing ancestral links.

Apart from allowing us to describe how things are being done in practice, such a 'praxiographic appreciation of reality' (ibid.) may also give a further push to analysis. Not only do practices fundamentally intervene into their objects, forensic methods of identification seem predicated on effecting some sort of change in the object with which they interact.[28] Classification and reconstruction alter objects. Moreover, alteration was not only the effect of the practice but in most cases represented the rationale for its performance. The graves, landscapes and ICMP waiting rooms had to be reshaped, almost renewed. Practices had to yield a moral transformation. Producing such an effect (and affect), interventions could not be understood simply as a way of organizing individual lives (of people and corpses), but set out to shape postconflict societies as a whole.

At the same time, it is not only processes which alter these objects or people's relations to them. The land in which remains had rested had also altered or, more precisely, eroded them (at least partially). But interestingly, even decay became valuable in processes of reclamation, insofar as it rendered reconstruction possible. The postmortem dissolution of the body,[29] and the postmortem history of bones, expressed the force of an interplay between opposing agencies of preservation and destruction, in the sense of cultural memory as much as of soil erosion.

Conclusion

During the Yugoslav wars, the body was often invoked as a metaphor for national wholeness and resilience; it symbolized people's claims to a particular territory and motivated them to take sides or take up arms. In the aftermath, when many bodies had become body parts, human remains were in turn invested with a unique significance, as carriers of certain defining forms of identity (whether as victim, perpetrator or national subject), and as vehicles through which particular versions of modernity and reconciliation could be legitimated.

If in wartime political rhetoric and practice the body of the Serbian people was reanimated in battle, it appears that in medical and peacetime rhetoric, Serbia becomes whole again through the rightful assignation of the bones of its war-missing. DNA testings and reassociation techniques apparently yield a new solution to questions of conflict through a recourse to scientific incontrovertibility. Genetic accreditation, along with the reasocciation practices, was offered as a definitive and scientifically sanctioned verdict on a person's victim identity. Moreover, in applying certified expertises (of archaeology, physical anthropology, pathology, physiochemistry, odontology, etc.) to a local setting, in an attempt to solve crimes and restore identity to the missing, forensic researchers suppose themselves to be contributing to both individual and political (or inter-state) healing. Forensic identification enables body parts to accede to a metonymical status not merely in their capacity as evidence of a greater crime, but symbolically, as tokens of the ways of life, communities or nations that were violated during the war. The signs left on the body – by the perpetrators, by scientists and by time – assume different values in different contexts, but would all seem to be construed according to an evidentiary function. Bodies are evaluated; they certify and attest. Hence victimhood, citizenship and modernity may all be predicated on DNA methods of identification. Moreover, it is no longer possible to sustain the claim that the private treatment of the remains, i.e. supposed barter, represents an index of 'backwardness and atavism', as it was in the early 1990s. On the contrary, the foreign agencies today see the active involvement of locals in questions of the remains and their commemoration as 'crucial, progressive, liberal, and moral'.

But *does* restoring the remains promote reconciliation? How effective, painless or speedy a process is this? And how hygienic can the notion of reconciliation be, if presided over by the image (however attenuated by scientific methods) of dismembered corpses, projected onto a visually distorted symbolic register, as this continues to dominate people's emotional landscape? The projective processes of rememoration, even if intimately connected with mourning, in my view have both affirmative and negative aspects: affirmative, because they can bring families some sense of resolution, and negative, because they are liable to manipulation in the context of revanchist and reactionary politics. I have recorded many cases where the technical identification of the remains has functioned also as a process prompting the resuscitation of illusory or abusive images of national wholeness. Now that the DNA test has been established as a supreme proof of a victim's identity, the dead body's biology has became a supreme proof of ethical belonging. As a seventeen- year-old schoolboy, the greater part of whose family was slaughtered in Srebrenica, asserted:

> I did give my blood for the ICMP's DNA testing. Most of the people I know did that. And that's right. Only those who were DNA-tested can prove that their families are not guilty [of war massacres]. This is why only DNA-tested people, like us in Bosnia, should get into the European Union.

Among many of my respondents, the scientific attribution of identity through DNA methods had buttressed popular mythologies of underlying physical differences between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Further, more far-reaching and complex political questions, like membership of the EU, were referred to the tests. And the EU-funded campaign for collecting DNA samples overseas was read by some as a drive potentially rallying a genetically coherent Serb (or Croatian or Bosniak) population from around the globe – thereby lending itself to political claims for the self-sameness or homogeneity of these peoples.

Many relatives themselves, though, want rather to demystify the bones that have been sent back to them – to divest them both of the juridical, scientific and proto-civic narratives in which they have been wrapped, and also of the cargo of unpleasant historical associations they have been forced to carry:

> That wretched shambles that happened fifty years ago, that happened again in the awful shambles of ten years ago. The same bloodbaths, and the same excuses. I am so tired of it all … I am tired even of talking about it. I want to change the topic away from the war – let it die once and for all. I feel like a stranger here. And that's horrendous. Believe me, it's far easier to be a stranger in a foreign land than in your own. (Višnja)

Expressing sentiments like these, some have set their faces against the conscription of the remains into any project of reconciliation or European integration. Were the remains to be used as tokens of, say, Serbia's willingness to face up to its guilt, they feel that their pride, or their respect for their ancestors or recent dead, would be effectively demeaned. While the pursuit of accountability through human remains is understood as instrumental and potentially valuable in legitimizing democratic government, repairing bridges with the international community, and restoring dignity to individual victims and their families, the politicization of the bones continues to arouse a disquiet about atavism. People hold to an idea of modernity while still expressing the hope that the 'deceased will rest in peace' (Ružica), that the missing will be free of the interference of the ICMP, which only discomfits them. The healing sought by families is not necessarily a quick or public process.

Rather than making an unproblematic distinction, then, between local desires and procedures to make sense out of dead bodies, on the one

hand, and the 'proper' or hygienized objectives of transnational institutions, on the other, this analysis reads both parties as caught within the same rhetorics, because both centrally deploy figures of the restored body in their imaginary projection of some shattered whole (families in the case of relatives, and the nation or international harmony in the case of agencies). It is only through making claims for certain sorts of identity and structures of belonging that any agent is able to articulate their goals in the supposed process of national healing.

In a way, both groups treat human remains in an evidentiary or immediately compelling mode, as if no further interpretive work is required on whatever scientists discovered in the mint fields. But it seems imperative to insist that scientific attribution is only the first step in a complicated and multi-sided process of reckoning with the past, that will involve families as well as institutions assimilating individuals' fate into possibly many narratives of justification, rationalization, culpability and forgiveness. When the Second World War Yugoslav graves were disinterred, the political context in which the bones were used (or abused) prior to the 1990s wars became, rather, less perspicuous; bones do not interpret themselves, nor is the meaning of evidence always evident. In the same way, it seems hasty and wishful to suppose that the retrieval of war bodies now will unproblematically serve the cause of national reconcilation. The political context in which the actions of attribution and return will be understood has rather still to be specified, according to whatever social trends most successfully capture the demands and aspirations of Serbs and of the international community at large.

I have argued that postconflict attempts at sense-making should be understood not only as relating to the historical legacies from which they emerge, but also as contemporary practices finding their effectivity in the present. The contemporary intervention into the land and the bodies it holds defines the past. In order to see a mass grave rather than a field of mint, certain practices have to be granted, or to be allowed to take hold. If nothing else, a yellow ribbon has to encircle a grave. To show respect for the dead, a mother must sit by her son's tomb, even if it is empty. A wife must persuade herself that declaring her husband missing may precipitate his death. Given how raw these private sense-making practices may feel, larger-scale practices of collecting, measuring and analysing bodies may appear invasive; when, however they are recognized as participating in the same processes of grief and accounting as more private acts, they are more usually welcomed.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. My Serbian fieldwork was based in the capital, Belgrade, on account of its centrality to the research both as the home of local and international bureaucracies dealing with human remains and as the symbolic heart of the country's relations of 'national kinship'. However, throughout my research, I ranged widely across the former Yugoslavia following those professionals and institution staff searching for remains and processing parts' return to families.

2. See Čajkanović (1994 [1910–24]); Kulišić (1979); Lowmniasky (1996 [1979]); Zečević (1982); Čolović (1984); Dvornić (1994); Petrović S. (1995); Bandić (1997); Jovanović (2002). Similar rituals have been observed in the other parts of the world (see Hertz 1960 [1904–6]; Ephirim-Donkor 1997; or Swain and Trompf 1995: 157).

3. A specific concern with the exhumation of bones (*kosti*) once they were free of the flesh was especially important insofar as bones were understood to bind the soul to the profane world. In Russian Orthodox doctrine, a dead person is revealed as a saint not only through miracles but also because his corpse does not putrefy (see Verdery 1999). In Serbia, on the contrary, the body that does not decompose represents a proof that the deceased was a 'bad man', leaving open the further possibility that s/he might turn into a vampire (Jovanović 2002: 131).

4. Considering that Orthodox Christian doctrine teaches that the human being consists of a body (*telo*) and soul (*duša*), both of which are believed to be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ, the natural decomposition of the body is key to the traditional prohibition of both embalming and cremation.

5. To understand the role that Kosovo plays, both as historical reality and as metaphor, in the constitution of Serbian cultural and national identity, see an outstanding article by Bakic-Hayden (2004). To dismiss the Kosovo theme as something solely reserved for fictive 'representation' (epic and myth) and isolated from 'fact' (history), Bakic-Hayden explains, would be to

underestimate the degree to which the popular conception of Kosovo has the power to mobilize certain actions and identifications in Serbia. Specifically, the myth of Kosovo served to mobilize terrestrial claims over other regions in the former Yugoslavia, rather than only over Kosovo proper.

6. According to a traditional custom prescribed by the Christian Orthodox Church, the remains of famous people and saints, after their traditional excavation and washing, are ritualistically carried around Orthodox monasteries.

7. For this also see Verdery (1999: 18), and her simile with the travels of Frederick the Great's human remains around the boundaries of present-day Germany after its reunification.

8. There is an extensive scholarship on the 'folk religion of Serbs' (*ljudska religija Srba; narodna religija*) specifically by Kulišić (1979); Zečević (1982); Čajkanović 1994 [1910]; Bandić 1997, and others. Although Serbs accepted Christianity as early as the ninth century, Bandić argues that people often understood and practised Christianity in non-Christian, pagan and animistic ways. God often had and still retains the characteristics of a pagan deity, and beliefs in magic continue to complement religious celebrations. In this sense, popular or pagan beliefs still play a central role in establishing and maintaining the system of ritualized rules governing the specific procedures of bidding farewell to the deceased (cf. Bandić 1997).

9. Bandić (1997) argues that it is more correct to speak of the 'popular or folk religion of [the] Serbs' rather than of 'Serbian folk religion', since little firmly distinguishes the Serbian set of religious practices from those performed by other Orthodox Slavs under the jurisdiction of the Church. For Bandić, specifically Serbian phenomena only denote '*krstna slava*' and '*svetosavski kult*', leading to his suggestion that the pagan heritage and magical animistic religious beliefs of the Serbs rather represent part of a shared Slavic patrimony.

10. These forms are regulated by the popular belief that one year after death, the soul of the deceased joins the souls of the ancestors in a joint cultus. The transformed soul of the late person attains the status of a distant dead person, or common ancestral spirit, functioning as a protector of collectivity and symbol of collective identity. After a year, when the soul is taken finally to part company with the properly buried body of the deceased, it begins a search for a new home in which to live. Souls may go into tombstones, ledgers, into the trees (the reason that many people plant fruits by the graveyards), or into animals (so-called *senovite životinje* or *psychopomps*, such as wolves, snakes, cockerel, pigeons, etc.) There is a recorded belief that impure souls go to live in mice; finally, souls can also migrate into other people. Ancestors usually communicate with the living in the image of a man, a stranger or beggar. The belief that souls can reincarnate into stones is also found in Israel (Weingrod 2002).

11. '*Da bi mu barem duša našla spokoj*'.

12. This ritual is still performed in some areas, including rural Greece (see Danforth and Tsiaris 1982; Seremetakis 1991; Verdery 1999: 45), Romania and

among Orthodox Albanians (Đorđević 2004 [1923]). Importantly, although the belief is associated with Orthodox Christians, the expression of concerns with the proper disposal of remains, signally bones, is also widespread among the Catholic and Muslim inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia (cf. Bringa 1995; Ballinger 2003).

13. A number of my respondents complained that one of the most vexatious features of Tito's suppression of the past was their being frustrated in any search for the graves of their beloved, meaning that they were prevented from formally commemorating their deaths. In his solidification of a 'Yugoslav identity', Tito moved to forestall any airing of different nationalities' grievances. As people were prohibited from publicly naming or criticizing perpetrators, they keenly felt that 'the souls of their dead were still tormented'. Another group of informants, whose relatives were purportedly not victims of the regime, offered a rather different, more favourable account, suggesting that although Tito was an autocrat, he made life in Yugoslavia pleasant, secure and affluent. The argument that totalitarian leaders, who suppressed open disagreement over the conflicted past, imposed clarity instead of chaos, is also one found in Green's ethnography of Epirus, in northwestern Greece (see Green 2005: 64). Yet a third group amongst my interlocutors stated how much they hated 'the patronising analysis that people in the former Yugoslavia lived under the Iron Curtain and wanted to be subdued only for the sake of clarity and order' (Goran, 64 years old). However, many older people with whom I spent time stressed their love for *Tito's socialism*, [saying] how proud they were 'to have lived through it'. Tito's period and policy, according to the opinion of a large number of people, 'was a very nice period, which will not be repeated', and in general, people regret the end of his rule and the harmony between ethnicities he sustained after the extraordinary bloodletting of the Second World War. Once President-for-life Tito was gone, wartime and earlier grievances, it is widely accepted, were exploited by politicians jockeying for power.

14. Although Yugoslavia was under socialist rule under Tito from the late 1940s until the 1980s, when religious practices had to be, at least publicly, quelled, an intense burial regime was still encouraged and regulated by the state. In former Yugoslavia everybody had to pay rent on the grave-sites of kin buried in the cemeteries. The fee was, and still is due to the state, and if it goes unpaid, the burial site is leased to someone else (with the contents removed).

15. 'National kinship' is a phrase that I have provisionally coined for the purposes of conveying my assumption that in former Yugoslavia, along with kinship relations, understood as personal and domestic kin networks, one may talk of national kinship networks and alliances on a political level. The idea of kinship on the national level – for example, the treatment of all Serbs as kinsmen on the basis of their shared ethnicity – propagated a national value system that functioned as a kinship value system, encouraging respect, loyalty and solidarity amongst Serbs in regard to the fighting army, politicians and the state. Pro-war politicians in Serbia, as well as those in Croatia, nurtured these ideas in order to fulfil specific political imperatives during the war.

16. Notably, the ICMP was (or is) the first organization of its kind to be created specifically envisioning postconflict situations; its remit of excavating, identifying and returning such an enormous quantity of missing persons is also unprecedented. Today, this organization and a few others with similar missions are trying to set up work in Iraq, and adjusting their logistical set-ups to future possible postconflict settings.

17. The idea that formerly disempowered, oppressed or aggressive societies or countries can achieve modernization, and the recognition of the international community, through a public acknowledgement of truth, i.e. their wrongs (as, for instance, accounted for through Truth and Reconciliation Commissions) has been a feature of international relations discourses from the early 1980s and is especially salient in the Serbian context (see Petrović 2003).

18. Though it was always apparent to the local population that the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), and later ICMP, was building up a file on missing persons, many locals took their time to come forward and report their losses officially (and some have resisted doing so). People feared that in reporting missing peoples' information, they would indirectly be informing on their loved ones' activities in the war; others held to the hope that their missing relatives would soon return anyway; and most of the women I spoke to confessed how much it confused and distressed them even to imagine that their husbands, sons, brothers or uncles would not return. Reporting that someone was missing was tantamount to accepting their death, which many people were reluctant to do.

19. The ICMP, the organization widely discussed in this paper, was not the only organization that endeavoured to secure the cooperation of governments from those formerly hostile countries of Yugoslavia, with the end of locating and identifying persons missing as a result of armed conflicts. The International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC) and later the Missing Persons Institute (*Institut za nestale osobe Bosne i Hercegovine*) were and still are trying to encourage public involvement in their activities as these are billed as contributing to 'the development of appropriate expressions of commemoration and tribute[s] to the missing' (as stated in the ICMP mission).

20. The *tespih* is the traditional Muslim rosary, said to be imbued with the spiritual power of an endless number of prayers intoned by members of one's house and community (cf. Bringa 1995: 159).

21. As essential articles of sociability, clothes are integral to the revivification and rearticulation of the personhood of dead persons (cf. Mol 2002). It would always evoke strong emotions when a piece of clothing was found amidst piles of remains in a mass grave. It was somehow easier to look at dead people's bones than their clothes. Bones could possibly be mistaken for animal remains or for the deposits of an ancient past, while there was nothing 'archaeological' about clothes – they were violently contemporary. Many of the victims' clothes were still bright and their textures still fine or raised.

22. The number of DNA matches for missing individuals from the former Yugoslavia as of 17 February 2006 stands at 9,220. The total number of blood samples collected and processed to obtain DNA profiles, which are

subsequently located onto the ICMP DNA database, is 78,559. The total number of individual cases of missing persons represented by the samples collected is 26,740, and the total number of bone samples from which the ICMP has successfully obtained DNA profiles has reached 17,331. Source: ICMP official website http://www.ic-mp.org

23. My fieldwork threw up many instances where people who wanted to find their missing did not ask too many questions about the processes which would conduce to their doing so. Nevertheless, these people gave vivid and emotionally engaged accounts of the practices of the blood giving. Many aired suspicions: 'Why do they need our blood after all?', 'Will they sell it?', 'This sounds to me like another vampire story', etc.

24. This law, importantly, pertains only to the citizens of BiH. As the law is the first of its kind in the world, many speculate that it might prove a model for other countries. It has been unable, however, to accommodate other 'seekers after rights' in the former Yugoslavia. The press reports that family associations in Kosovo, in Serbia, as well as Iraqis and those affected by the Asian tsunami, who have to deal with the missing, are keen to put a similar law in place. In this they are especially seeking to access the unique expertise of the ICMP in extracting DNA profiles from bones and teeth, which enables it to identify victims of natural as well as man-made catastrophes, such as the 2004 Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, in 2005.

25. Under the new law, relatives can sign up for what is called a 'temporary trusteeship' of the property.

26. Some would claim that Mol's analysis replicates presuppositions common to poststructuralist anthropology in general. Her analysis, however, has decisively influenced my understanding of the war-harmed bodies, and I want to acknowledge that. Importantly, although Mol's work has enabled me to conceive of the multipleness of the body-parts phenomenon in postconflict Serbia, my reading of her text was not stimulated by the evident fact that the bodies I was researching were usually fragmented or scattered. There is more to her figure of the 'multiple body', that is, than the physical fact of bodies' diasporas. In other words, the multiple body does not stand for a fragmented or plural one.

27. The categories with which I operate here are ethnographic and not analytical.

28. During the Yugoslav wars international political and military interventions aimed to put an end to the fighting. The intervention of laboratory technicians as they filled their test tubes with solvents and reagents served to translate one kind of knowledge into another – a blood test into a DNA proof of victimhood. I have myself intervened into the landscapes of mass graves whilst helping technicians record the quantity and state of remains found.

29. But then one could interpret the decaying body as a process, too, and not only as an object.

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