

## **The Betrayal of Suffering**

### **An Adornian Interpretation of Bosniak Religious Nationalism and its Incorporation of Suffering through Cultural Products**



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The work on the cover is a creation of artist Ibro Hasanovic who will be discussed in this thesis. I will refrain here from explaining why this work is on the cover, since my thesis itself forms that explanation. Honoring Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, to whom I am very much indebted in my writing, I will let this work of art function as a *Vorbild* to an ulterior *Bild*. A possible, yet not absolute, interpretation of this *Bild* is set out in this thesis. The artwork is thus an invitation to read what is written on the following pages.

Source: Ibro Hasanovic, *Situation*, inkjet prints, 20x15cm each (framed), 1993/2013.

### ***Abstract***

This thesis focuses on how Adorno's concept of *enlightenment rationality* tries to incorporate suffering in its rationale. I will argue that Bosniak religious nationalism can be seen as an instance of this rationality and is very much indebted to it in its handling of suffering. The incorporation takes place in the Bosnian cultural landscape in which suffering regarding the Bosnian War is omnipresent. These products together form what can be called the *Bosniak culture industry*, relying on and furthering Adorno's concept of the *culture industry*. As Adorno envisioned, suffering is neutralized here by turning it into commodified entertainment. The furthering relates to how the suffering is not only neutralized but also directly instrumentalized by Bosniak nationalism. It does so by keeping the concepts of enlightenment's identity thinking very much alive and using explicit depictions of suffering to ideologically fill the identity concept of Bosnian Muslims with victimhood and the Serbian concept with being the victimizer. Such victim-ideologies pose the danger of enlightenment invoking its horrors again in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This application of Adorno's thought to Bosniak nationalism does not only prove Adorno's ongoing relevancy. It also opens new ways to look at the ongoing tensions in Bosnia and the role that (Western) cultural products play in this. Further research might relate to the applicability of the findings of this thesis to different contexts. It might also elaborate on the preliminary suggestions to counter the described process.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have taken its current form without the contribution of the people around me. First and foremost, I am indebted to Dr. Lucien van Liere. His thought-provoking enthusiasm, wealth of knowledge and friendliness have inspired and stimulated not only my thesis, but also my general development as an academic student. I hope to keep benefitting from this in the future. I want to thank Dr. Pooyan Tamimi Arab as well for his enthusiasm in taking up the role as second reader.

This thesis is not only a theoretical enterprise, it is very much involved with the daily reality of people related to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that respect I want to thank the Bosnian people I have met either during or after my stay in Bosnia. All of them have given me an impression about life and its hardships as a (former) citizen of a post-conflict society. In this respect I want to thank Ibro Hasanovic in particular, he was so kind as to make his art accessible to me which has strengthened my writing.

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## Introduction

“My dear love...”<sup>1</sup>

With these gentle words Max Richter starts his song *Sarajevo*. The words softly mutter away into tender yet melancholic harp tones when suddenly a high-pitched shriek sets in; as if fearing for the daunting strings and contrabass emerging from the depths. Just as the strings multiply and accelerate, the rumbling contrabass gets more distinct; as if the sound of shelling is approaching. The symphony evolves into the strings swirling around like bullets, threatening the ever-repeated lamenting shriek; which seems to be seeking shelter from the war drum like bass. There is no option but sheer exposure for the woman pitching this haunting threnody, condemning her to witness the destruction setting in around her. When the violence fades away the voice tones down, transforming the heart wrenching lament into soft mourning, reflecting on the indescribable losses around her.

This song is unmistakably one of the most touching representations of a city under attack, fearing for its life and fighting for its perseverance. Although the song transcends the particular case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is one event that comes close to the tragedy of the symphony. It is the destruction of the Sarajevo national library in the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> of August 1992. That pitch- black night in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina produced a sea of fire, lighting up the sky above Sarajevo. The rich library collection of more than two million volumes, from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, burned down before it could be saved. Both in its eclectic mix of Christian and Islamic architecture and in its diverse content, the library breathed the complex and multi-cultural history of what is now Bosnia and Herzegovina: thereby symbolizing the heart of this small country. Since 2013 the restored library is seemingly again the proud symbol of a multicultural city and country. But the library is not the same, it is an imitation of what once was. And the same might be true for this small country with an already turbulent past.

This is because more than twenty years after the signing of the Dayton peace agreement on the 14th of December 1995, tensions are still lingering in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH or Bosnia hereafter).<sup>2</sup> This impression was partially given to me during my July 2018 stay in BiH, in the course of which I had the chance to speak elaborately to some (mainly) Bosniak nationalists. These ‘field notes’ will be used to

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<sup>1</sup> Max Richter, *Sarajevo*, (Brighton: FatCat, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Karin Dystad, Tanja Ellingsen, and Jan Ketil Rød. "Ethnonationalism in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo: The effects of local violence and ethnic composition," *International Area Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2015): 12

illustrate the theories discussed in this thesis.<sup>3</sup> The theories relate in the first place to the existent body of literature regarding post-war Bosnia and its problems. Numerous sharp analyses have been conducted and valuable suggestions have been expressed to improve Bosnia's situation. Bosnia's problems and its direct causes are thus clearly covered by the existent body of literature. A leading explanation of the war and the lingering tensions is Bosnia's religious nationalism. This thesis will follow the existent literature in that explanation.<sup>4</sup> However, attempts to go deeper into this explanation and to discern the underlying mechanism of such religiously supported nationalism have been scarcer. Nonetheless, I deem this necessary in order to gain profound insight in why tensions linger on. I therefore highly agree with Adorno's statement, inspired by Freud, that "Why people love what is like themselves and hate what is different is rarely asked seriously enough."<sup>5</sup> Adorno's answer was unique, claiming that the main culprit is the rationality given to humankind by enlightenment. I will apply this explanation to the situation in Bosnia which can lead to new ways to understand the underlying roots of the ongoing tensions.

Thus, Adorno adorns this thesis as my philosopher of choice. I will analyze to what extent Adorno is relevant for present-day Bosnia by using his critique on enlightenment rationality as a hermeneutical tool. His theory states that the development of enlightenment is responsible for the emergence of the *Shoah*. Adorno claimed that the *Shoah* was an extreme, but not unique, example of what the rationality of enlightenment could lead to.<sup>6</sup> Inherent to this rationality is the urge to equalize 'otherness' by rationally understanding it. Everything that is non-identical (*nicht-identische*) to this rational understanding is liquidated. This liquidation itself is then rationalized and leaves only little trace.<sup>7</sup> In a continuation of Adorno's thought, the genocide in Srebrenica and the related Bosnian War from 1992 until 1995, as brought about by religious nationalism, can function as a further example of what enlightenment rationality can lead to. Enlightenment rationality thus managed to prevail, even in the face of all the memories of the suffering that it has created. This happened by incorporating the suffering into cultural products that together make up what Adorno calls the *culture industry* (*Kulturindustrie*). This culture industry supports the project of enlightenment and gives suffering

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<sup>3</sup> The names of the people interviewed in this thesis are changed due to the wishes of the interviewees

<sup>4</sup> Dino Abazović, "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *Post-Yugoslavia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 35-36. & Tania Wettach, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Occasional Papers on Religious Violence in Eastern Europe* 28, no. 4 (2008): 1-2. & Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 235-243.

<sup>5</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Freudian theory and the Pattern of fascist propaganda," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1978), 118.

<sup>6</sup> J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 394.

<sup>7</sup> Lucien Van Liere, "Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer, Dialektik der Aufklärung," *NTT* 68, no.4 (2014): 329-332.

meaning in its rationale.<sup>8</sup> It could thus invoke its horrors again in Bosnia. The question for Bosnia is if, and how, this rationality seeks to prevail again by rationalizing the suffering it has produced. Bosniaks have seen the biggest amount of suffering during the war, mostly inflicted on them by Serbian nationalists.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, the limited scope of this thesis and my firsthand experience with Bosniak nationalism my writing will focus on the incorporation of suffering in Bosniak religious nationalism. I will do so through a reading of Adorno's writing on the culture industry. The suffering thus seems to be handled by the same rationality that has caused it. I will not claim that Bosniak nationalism is responsible for the Bosniak suffering, but I will assess if their handling of suffering answers to the same rationale that has caused it. The following research question will then lead this thesis:

*How does Bosniak religious nationalism after the Bosnian War incorporate Bosniak suffering and how can this be understood as part of a "culture industry" in support of enlightenment rationality as critiqued by Theodor W. Adorno?*

It needs to be stressed that Adorno's theory is not an absolute truth, but rather a tool through which the post-war Bosnian situation, which appears to be in a deadlock, can be analyzed.<sup>10</sup> This will both open new ways of looking at the Bosnian situation and subsequently assess Adorno's relevance in contemporary (post-)conflict environments. It will furthermore provide insight in the rather implicit role (religious) nationalism plays in Adorno's thought as an instance of enlightenment thinking. Furthermore, this thesis will pose questions about the role that (Western) cultural products play in the continuation of tensions in post-war societies. The societal relevance of this topic is still pressing. For instance, threats of war were exchanged in 2017 between the Bosniak-Croatian federation and the Republika Srpska at the highest political level.<sup>11</sup> This hints to the precariousness and relevance of the post-war situation in BiH of which numerous examples will follow. Thus, this venture into post-war Bosnia begins.

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<sup>8</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 99/112.

<sup>9</sup> James E. Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. (Oxford University Press, 2002), 276-277.

<sup>10</sup> Abazovic, "Reconciliation, ethno-politics and religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 36.

<sup>11</sup> Thijs Kettenis, "Bosnische leider dreigt met oorlog tegen afscheiding," *Trouw*, 15 november, 2017, <https://www.trouw.nl/home/bosnische-leider-dreigt-met-oorlog-tegen-afschieding~ad7f60f1/>.

## Theoretical Framework

To embark on this voyage, chapter one will focus on nationalism in BiH, supported by religious institutions, and its important role in both the development of the war and the present-day tensions.<sup>12</sup> Because Bosniak nationalism is understandable only by assessing how it is shaped in exchange with and in opposition to Serbian and Croatian nationalism, these will also be taken into consideration. This religious nationalistic connection is partly due to religion being an important marker for ethnic nationalism in Bosnia, with Perica describing this religious affiliation more as a “loyalty to the tribe” than a sincere religious belief.<sup>13</sup> What is at play here is what Matthew Francis calls “sacred-making”: defining certain values as sacred and non-negotiable, which are seen as vital for the continued existence of the group. In the Bosnian case this meant a direct “sacred-making” of the national group-identity which was religiously underpinned.<sup>14</sup> These nationalistic values come down to a focus on the interest and identity of the ethnonational group.<sup>15</sup> If this perceived threat to the group identity is experienced as increasing, violence is a possible response.<sup>16</sup> The first chapter will examine to what extent this religious nationalistic bond is still influential. It will also look at the potential of religious actors to counter this bond.

These nationalistic ideologies use what Jan Assman calls cultural memory to relate themselves to the suffering of the Bosnian War. He defines this as:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 211-243 & Abazovic, “Reconciliation, Ethno politics and Religion in Bosnia & Herzegovina,” 35-40. & Wettach, “Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 1-5. & Dino Abazović “Religious Claims during the war and Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Borderlands E-Journal* 14, no. 1 (2015): 18.

<sup>13</sup> Perica, “Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process,” 41-43.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Francis, “Why the “Sacred” Is a Better Resource Than “Religion” for Understanding Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no.5 (2016): 913.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Moll, “Fragmented memories in a fragmented country: memory competition and political identity-building in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 41, no.6 (2013): 913.

<sup>16</sup> Francis, “Why the “Sacred” Is a Better Resource Than “Religion” for Understanding Terrorism,” 932.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Assman, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” in *The Collective Memory reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 213.



Assman stresses how cultural memory is all but an objective account of the past, it is rather selective as to uphold the group-identity. 'Memory' is thus given in and formed by the present.<sup>18</sup> This practice is both formative and normative: deciding what to remember and subsequently using this as a framework to decide which memories are allowed to be expressed and in what way.<sup>19</sup> The collective identity that is formed in this process determines who belongs to the group and who does not, so also in post-conflict Bosnia.<sup>20</sup> Memory is thus selectively being used and this inevitably leads to fragmentary accounts of reality. For this reason, I render it fit to apply James Anderson's definition of ideology to the nationalism in BiH. This definition states that ideologies are "Systems of ideas which give distorted and partial accounts of reality, with the objective and often unintended effect of serving the partial interest of a particular social group or class".<sup>21</sup>

Such nationalistic use of cultural memory and Anderson's definition of ideology can be incorporated in Adorno's writing on enlightenment rationality. According to him, this rationality inevitably leads to the urge to do away with "everything different".<sup>22</sup> In Adorno's thought, nationalism was a result of such rationality and therefore very dangerous.<sup>23</sup> Following Adorno, the results of this can be seen in the terrible suffering inflicted mainly (but not exclusively) on Bosniaks during the Bosnian War. Adorno regarded suffering as a source of hope to point out the untruth of the system.<sup>24</sup> However, he also pointed out the danger of such suffering to be betrayed by that same system.<sup>25</sup> Enlightenment rationality does so by giving it meaning in its own rationale. For Adorno this primarily meant a neutralization of suffering by making it fit for commodified entertainment that is incorporated in the culture industry. It is thus delivered to the capitalistic market, so characteristic of enlightenment.<sup>26</sup> In Bosnia, there seems to be not only a neutralization of suffering but also a direct instrumentalization.<sup>27</sup> This instrumentalization is rather

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<sup>18</sup> Assman, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 211-213.

<sup>19</sup> Jan Assman, "Collective memory and cultural identity," trans. John Czaplicka, *New German critique* 65 (1995): 128.

<sup>20</sup> Nicolas Moll, "Fragmented memories in a fragmented country," 912.

<sup>21</sup> James Anderson, "Nationalist Ideology and Territory," in *Nationalist Ideology and Territory*, ed. Ron Johnson, David Knight and Eleonore Kofman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 171-172.

<sup>23</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Erziehung nach Auschwitz," in *Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungssoziologie*, ed. Ulrich Bauer, Uwe Bittingmayer and Albert Scherr. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), 134.

<sup>24</sup> Rob Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Klement, 2016), 257.

<sup>25</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," in *Aesthetics and Politics* trans Francis McDonough, ed. Frederic Jameson (London: Verso, 1977), 188

<sup>26</sup> Van Liere, "Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer," 332.

<sup>27</sup> Abazovic, "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 41-42. & Perica, *Balkan idols*, 229. & Wettach, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 14. & Moll, "Fragmented Memory in a Fragmented country," 914. & Wettach, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 14

implicitly present in Adorno's writing and relates to the continued existence of nationalism in BiH after the war. So, not only does enlightenment thinking itself prevail in the face of suffering, on which Adorno focused, but so does its instance in the form of nationalism. For aforementioned reasons this thesis will focus on the perseverance of the Bosniak nationalistic discourse.

Adorno will then help in analyzing how cultural memory manages to instrumentalize the suffering for the Bosniak nationalistic ideology. It does so by answering to the enlightenment rationale that was responsible for the emergence of the suffering. Except for the obvious reason of selective remembering, there are some other important 'pillars' to this which can be seen with the help of Adorno's lens. These mainly relate to enlightenments tendency to identity thinking. This creates nationalistic identitarian concepts which are communicated in what I will call *the culture industry of suffering*. Positivistic expressions of suffering then lead to conceptualized suffering which might change the content of the concepts but does nothing to actually break the identity thinking. These 'pillars' will be applied to cultural products regarding the Bosnian War, foreign and domestic. Examples of these can be seen, amongst others, in museums like the *galerija 11/07/95* curated by photographer Tarik Samarah, material artefacts and documentaries. Attention will also be given to the role that Western material about the war, such as movies, (scholarly) articles and photographs, play in this respect. Little of this material is explicitly aimed at underwriting the Bosniak ideology. Yet, by offering a positivistic expression of what the nationalistic ideologies in the region have brought about (i.e. hostile ethnic-religious concepts and its suffering), this material risks affirming rather than escaping ideological accounts. In this vein, the explicit depiction of Bosniak suffering risks functioning as grist for the mill of the Bosniak victimhood. This might undermine Serbian nationalism but will stimulate a Bosniak nationalism based on victimhood, thus continuing enlightenment rationality in the form of nationalism. The utilization of such a victim-identity might be related to problematic representations of the conflict. This is because a victim ideology can be dangerous, as a reading of political philosopher Diane Enns' *The Violence of Victimhood* will show.<sup>28</sup> Mainly, since a big stress on victimhood can lead to a strong longing for either revenge or self-defense. The latter emanates from a constant feeling of being under threat which is connected to the use of cultural memory.<sup>29</sup>

In the final chapter, this thesis will attempt to offer humble sources of hope. Firstly, by applying Adorno's antidote to ideology and the tentacles of the culture industry: art. However, In this chapter I will

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<sup>28</sup> Plant, "The Politicization of Victimhood," 1.

<sup>29</sup> Dianne Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood* (University Park: Penn state University Press, 2012), 19. & Allan Megill, "History, Memory, Identity," in *The Collective Memory reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 194.

also articulate some critique on Adorno's rather pessimistic view that political and societal initiatives are doomed to fail. I will do so by offering hopeful political and societal projects that challenge the problematic aspects of the Bosnian nationalistic memory culture(s) in a similar vein as Adorno. Some of these initiatives are religiously underpinned, these are stressed because they carry the potential to weaken the religious nationalistic connection. These initiatives thus drift away from the nationalistic ideologies and offer the possibility of a more inclusive Bosnian society.

## Bad Religion

Coming back to the library in the middle of Sarajevo, we see a building proudly shining in an array of light colors, its Moorish style reminds the visitor of Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) that is so often hailed for its tolerance between Muslims, Christians and Jews. Its solid pillars and elegant ornaments almost manage to hide a crack on one of the outer pillars, not a physical but a cognitive one; the pillar carries a placard imprinted with the following text:

On this place *Serbian Criminals* in the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> August, 1992, set on fire National and University library of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 2 millions of books , periodicals and documents vanished in the flame. *Do not forget, remember and warn!*" (emphasis added, spelling mistakes not corrected).<sup>30</sup>

The emphasized parts are telling for the cracks that are still present in Bosnian society, why is it stressed for instance that the criminals were Serbs and why do people have to be warned? This chapter will claim that the ethnic divide suggested on this placard is not an individual case but indicates the fissures in the Bosnian architecture of memory.

### Eternally doomed?

The notion of BiH as a territory with a long and profound history of tolerance is in itself disputed. Many have commented that the Balkans in general and Bosnia in particular have a history dominated by hatred, bigotry and hostilities. Not the least of them is Ivo Andric. The Nobel prize winning author gave a gloomy image of his native land: seeing his people as eternally damned to fall victim to ignorance, prejudice and misrule.<sup>31</sup> A modern proponent of this view is anthropologist Robert Hayden. Hayden tends towards the vision of Bosnia as dominated by hostilities and tensions. He claims the war is an expression hereof and that not much has changed since.<sup>32</sup> Hayden is here exemplary of a wider line of thought, including for

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<sup>30</sup> SOAS University of London, "The Damnation of Memory. Do Not Forget, Remember and Warn," accessed September 9, 2018. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/development/events/17jul2014-the-damnation-of-memory-do-not-forget-remember-and-warn.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 234.

<sup>32</sup> Robert M. Hayden, "Moral Vision and Impaired Insight: The imagining of Other Peoples' communities in Bosnia," *Current Anthropology* 48, no.1 (2007): 109-113.

example Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* as well.<sup>33</sup> Related is a negative vision of Bosnia's potential for a successful multi-ethnic state. Hayden thus suggests that the international community abandons its efforts to form BiH to its own ideal, a tolerant multicultural state, because he claims this has little support amongst the natives of the country. His suggestion is that we follow the configuration of nation and state that people in Bosnia are willing to live under.<sup>34</sup>

There are numerous problems with such arguing, first of all in the claims being made. The claim for instance that the separation of ethnic groups into antagonistic communities of *Self* and *Other* is not the result but the start of the war is highly disputable as Weidmann and Perica point out. Both authors state that the war was mostly a result of mobilizations by elites, who managed to play into the local population's feeling of fear.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the call of Hayden and others to respect the autonomous wishes of the ethnic groups in BiH would be problematic since these wishes are divergent, and sometimes even outright conflicting. The best example is the secessionist sentiments in the Republik Srpska which would not be accepted by the rest of the country, as former president Izetbegovic of the Bosniak political body has expressed.<sup>36</sup> However, the most important counter-argument to this line of thinking relates to the prevalence of positivism in its arguing. The problem is that such accounts do not offer an explanation for the observed 'fact' of hostilities but rather present them as naturally 'given'. It thus forgets that such 'facts' are possibly pre-mediated by society.<sup>37</sup> In discussing Adorno a more elaborate critique on positivism will be provided. For now, it is apt to conclude that Bosnia's story is rather complex, pacing between ethnic hostilities and tolerance with both taking up a fair share on the stage of its history. In such complexity, it is easy to point out certain aspects by ill-intentioned elites. People might start to believe this and behave accordingly. The hostilities following are not inevitable but rather 'facts' constructed by society. The remainder of this thesis will look into how this 'constructing' is still taking place.

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<sup>33</sup> Michael T. Kaufman, "The Dangers of Letting a President Read," *The New York Times*, May 22, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/22/books/the-dangers-of-letting-a-president-read.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Hayden, "Moral Vision and Impaired Insight," 115.

<sup>35</sup> Nils B. Weidmann, "Violence "From above" or "from below"? The Role of Ethnicity in Bosnia's Civil War," *The Journal of Politics* 73, no.4 (2011): 1182-1188 & Vjekoslav Perica, "Religion as a Factor in Yugoslav Wars and the Peace Process," 33-34.

<sup>36</sup> Gerard Toal, " "Republika Srpska will have a referendum": the rhetorical politics of Milorad Dodik," *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 41, no.1 (2013): 180. & Thijs Kettenis, "Bosnische leider dreigt met oorlog tegen afscheiding," *Trouw*, November 15, 2017, <https://www.trouw.nl/home/bosnische-leider-dreigt-met-oorlog-tegen-afscheiding~ad7f60f1/>

<sup>37</sup> David Frisby "The Popper-Adorno controversy: The methodological dispute in German sociology," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 2, no.1 (1972): 112.

## The altar of nationalism

Numerous authors have pointed out that a lot of the factors that have caused the Bosnian War are still prevalent in BiH. There is a relative consensus on ethnic-nationalistic ideologies being one of the main causes.<sup>38</sup> These have all but disappeared, as expressed by the International Crisis Group's 2013 briefing, warning for rising Bosniak nationalism as provoked by Serbian and Croatian nationalism.<sup>39</sup> Religion plays an enormous role in these ethnic ideologies and their subsequent identities, functioning as one of the main differences between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Bosniaks are then of Islamic, Croats of Catholic and Serbs of Serbian Orthodox descent.<sup>40</sup> Religion also was an important factor in the war, with religious symbols being both used and targeted.<sup>41</sup> According to Perica, Abazovic, Tolomelli and others religion indeed played a big part in the hostilities. It helped to bring the conflict about by its strong and complex connection with nationalism, as expressed, for instance, by the reviving of old and the construction of new religious nationalistic myths.<sup>42</sup> What occurred here is religion taking its stance as the guardians of national heritage and values, a process described by Abazovic as the "nationalization of the sacred and sacralization of the national."<sup>43</sup> Perica went as far as to describe the religious communities in BiH more as ideologies and nationalistic organizations than religions.<sup>44</sup> Religion and nationalism have so merged into a bond that is all but broken today. This is underpinned by polls in all the three communities. These polls indicate that more people since the war define themselves as religious compared to before the war. In relation to this, religion is also getting more present in the public sphere.<sup>45</sup> Perica described this revival

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<sup>38</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 202-243 & Nils B. Weidmann, "Violence "From above" or "from below"? The Role of Ethnicity in Bosnia's Civil War," 1180-1182. & Karin Drystad, & Tanja Ellingsen, & Jan Ketil Rod, "Ethnonationalism in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo: The effects of local violence and ethnic composition, *International Area Studies Review* 18, no.1 (2015): 5-6.

<sup>39</sup> Naomi Levy, "International Peacebuilding and the Politics of Identity: Lessons from Social Psychology using the Bosnian Case," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no.1 (2014): 76.

<sup>40</sup> Ivan Ivekovic, "Nationalism and the political use and abuse of religion: The politicization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslav successor states," *Social Compass* 49, no.4 (2002): 523-524. & Tone Birnga, "Islam and the quest for identity in post-communist Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *Islam and Bosnia : conflict resolution and foreign policy in multi-ethnic states*, ed. Maya Schatzmiller (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 28.

<sup>41</sup> Clark, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina," 684.

<sup>42</sup> Perica, "Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process," 39-40. & Abazović, "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 35-37. & Wettach, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 1-5. & Alessandro Tolomelli, " "Two schools under one roof" ," 100. & Heleen Touquet, "The Republika Srpska as a strong nationalizing state and the consequences for post ethnic activism," 212-213.

<sup>43</sup> Abazovic, "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 37-38. & Abazović, "Religious Claims during the war and Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Borderlands E-Journal*, 14, no.1 (2015): 17.

<sup>44</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 242.

<sup>45</sup> Perica, "Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process," 41.

more as a “loyalty to the tribe” than as a genuine return to religion, profound knowledge of scripture and doctrine are for instance remarkably absent. What generally seems to be preached is antagonism towards the other religious communities.<sup>46</sup> This resonates with Sam Keen’s explanation of nationalism, which is that having an enemy is at the core of nationalistic ideologies. Keen claims that the identity of the enemy is then based on that which we despise in ourselves.<sup>47</sup>

A telling example of the religious nationalistic bond is the 2008 Serbian Orthodox church service in Prijedor in support of convicted war criminals Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.<sup>48</sup> Another major indication of this bond can be seen in the Bosnian education system. There are strong concerns regarding this system which is dominated by segregation and nationalistic rhetoric. Religion and its role in the classroom play a huge role here-in, as they are used to stress ethnic differences.<sup>49</sup> Besim Spahic, professor of political sciences at Sarajevo university, even claims that the religious differences as fostered by the role of religion in education, prepare the children of BiH for a break-up of their country.<sup>50</sup>

Religion does not only contribute to nationalistic tensions by what happens inside the architecture of Bosnia, it also deploys architecture and objects themselves, i.e. material culture. A highly remarkable example is the case of Fata Orlovic who returned to her property in Konjevic Polje after the war to find an Orthodox church in her backyard. In spite of her appeal to the local Bosnian-Serbian authorities and the local Orthodox eparchy, the church is still not removed.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the church is completely empty inside and never attended has led to Bosniak speculations about the church being built on a mass grave.<sup>52</sup>

The perseverance of ethnic-religious identities is strengthened by the problematic aspects of the Dayton agreement. The vision dominates that the agreement was well-designed to stop the violence, but that it was unfit to have evolved into the constitution of Bosnia. It has thus not helped in reaching reconciliation, democracy and the lessening of ethnic divisions. A major reason hereof is the agreement’s stress on ethnicity and ethnicity’s central role in the political make-up of the country. Rather than diminishing, the agreement underscores ethno-religious identities that have played such a big role in the

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<sup>46</sup> Perica, “Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process,” 41-43. & Tolomelli, “ “Two schools under one roof,” ” 99.

<sup>47</sup> Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1986), 21.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, “Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina?,” 686.

<sup>49</sup> Tolomelli, “ “Two schools under one roof,” ” 90-99.

<sup>50</sup> Tolomelli, “ “Two schools under one roof,” ” 99.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, “Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina,” 686.

<sup>52</sup> Nermina Ibrahimovic (former conservator Musuem of Crimes against Humanity and Genocide, 1992-1995), interview with the author, Sarajevo, July, 2018.

emergence of the conflict.<sup>53</sup> The political make-up is dominated by ethnic parties that are unwilling to work together and have incompatible goals, as expressed in Republika Srpska president Milorad Dodik's repeated call to hold a referendum on independence.<sup>54</sup> Instead, the parties focus mainly on keeping their homogenous ethnic territories intact and securing their economic interests.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, religious organizations support these nationalistic parties.<sup>56</sup> The 2018 October elections have brought little change to the stage of Bosnia's political theatre.<sup>57</sup> The strategy of sparking fear over the national group being in danger was upheld during these elections, forcing progress to remain offstage.<sup>58</sup>

## Religious potential

Most authors agree that the three main religious institutions in present day BiH function more as a hindrance than as motivator for peaceful co-existence in their current role.<sup>59</sup> There is nonetheless a strong potential for religion in stimulating reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. This insight is mostly based on Scott Appleby's assertion that religion carries the potential to transcend ethnic and nationalistic lines.<sup>60</sup> The status, and therefore influence, that religious actors carry amongst the population of BiH is also stressed as a potentially positive force.<sup>61</sup> Some individual religious actors of the three most important faiths in Bosnia as well as some smaller and/or external religious organizations like the Franciscans in 'Silver Bosnia' and the American Mennonites fulfill this potential. However, a majority of the religious leaders of the three main faiths keeps supporting the religious nationalistic connection.<sup>62</sup> The solution of

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<sup>53</sup> Marijan Branka, "Neither War, Nor Peace: Everyday Politics, Peacebuilding and the Liminal Condition of Bosnia Herzegovina and Northern Ireland," PhD diss., Wilfrid Laurier University, 2015, 202-216. & Outi Keranen, "Building States and Identities in Post-Conflict States: Symbolic Practices in Post-Dayton Bosnia," *Civil Wars* 16, no. 2 (2014): 136. & Naomi Levy, "International Peacebuilding and the Politics of Identity," 68-70.

<sup>54</sup> Barbara Surk, "Milorad Dodik Wants to Carve Up Bosnia. Peacefully, if Possible," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/16/world/europe/dodik-republika-srpska-bosnia.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Keil & Kudlenko, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 20 years after Dayton: Complexity born of paradoxes," *International Peacekeeping* 22, no. 5 (2015): 484.

<sup>56</sup> Perica, "Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process," 39-40.

<sup>57</sup> Dimitar Bechev, "Elections in Bosnia: More of the Same," *Atlantic Council*, October 10, 2018: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/elections-in-bosnia-more-of-the-same-but-there-is-a-silver-lining>.

<sup>58</sup> Gordana Knezevic, "Bosnia's Postelection Blues," *RadioFreeEurope* October 21, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-s-postelection-blues/29555500.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Tolomelli, "Two schools under one roof," 95.

<sup>60</sup> Abazovic, "Reconciliation, Ethnopolitics and Religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 51.

<sup>61</sup> Clark, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina" 674.

<sup>62</sup> Perica, "Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process," 45-47.



most authors is a rather simplistic call to religious organizations and actors to leave their nationalistic stances behind and transcend this so to strive towards reconciliation. But, as Wettach sharply discerns:

Clergy have taken over the function of 'proxy politicians (...) and presented themselves as guardian of the nation, the chances for a self-critical distancing from the nationalistic ideas, for political alliances, and the initiation of a reconciliation process from the ranks of religions so full of knowledge about guile and forgiveness are imaginably poor.<sup>63</sup>

This stance is explained by the observation that religious institutions have based their renewed relevancy on their connection to nationalistic ideologies.<sup>64</sup> Undermining this bond might then result in a loss of this relevancy. A clear example of this lasting connection is how the Serbian orthodox church has threatened organizations that tried to bring the Serbian war crimes under attention.<sup>65</sup> In his study of post-ethnic organizations in BiH, Touquet has found that in general, religious communities only give weak support to such organizations. According to Touquet this is due to the strong ties between nationalism and religious institutions.<sup>66</sup>

Nonetheless, one has to avoid an interpretation like that of Michael Sells. He goes further than the explanation that religion and nationalism molded a dangerous and destructive bond that led to the eruption of violence. He states that the phenomenon religion itself is responsible for the hostilities before, during and after the war.<sup>67</sup> By stating this, Sells places himself in the camp of writers as Charles Selengut who holds that religion itself, rather than its adherents or its functioning in a specific context, is responsible for the violence and the death of many people throughout history.<sup>68</sup> Such arguing is problematic because it denies both the agency of the actors in question and the context in which the actors operate. Matthew Francis' approach therefore seems to be a better alternative. He introduces the term "sacred making", which is done by religious and non-religious groups alike and translates into the setting apart of non-negotiable matters and values which relate to the identity of a group.<sup>69</sup> As Abazovic

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<sup>63</sup> Wettach, "Religion and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 14.

<sup>64</sup> Perica, "Religion as a factor in Yugoslav wars and the peace process," in *Uloga Religije U Pomirenju I Tranzicionoj Pravdi* (Belgrade: Centar za istraživanje religije, politike i društva, 2013): 41-45.

<sup>65</sup> Heleen Touquet, "The Republika Srpska as a strong nationalizing state and the consequences for post ethnic activism," *Nationalities Papers* 40, no.2 (2012): 210.

<sup>66</sup> Heleen Touquet, "The Republika Srpska as a strong nationalizing state," 210-2012.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Sells, "Crosses of Blood: Sacred Space, Religion and Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Sociology of Religion* 64, no.3 (2003): 309-329.

<sup>68</sup> Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, (Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 2003): 1-16.

<sup>69</sup> Francis, "Why the "Sacred" Is a Better Resource Than "Religion" for Understanding Terrorism," 913.

has pointed out, in the Bosnian context it was the nationalistic group that was made sacred with the help of religious communities. When these non-negotiable matters are perceived to be under threat by an outside group, violence is a possible reaction.<sup>70</sup> It is thus Important to realize that it was not religion per se leading to this violence. Perica's following statement is in line with this: "those whose 'spiritual experience' made them 'aware' of divine support for their group and of rival groups 'evil character' and turned them into worshipers of ethno-religious nation-states."<sup>71</sup>

This chapter has outlined the ever-present strength of religious nationalism in BiH. In the next chapter it will be outlined how these religious nationalistic ideologies and their use of cultural memory can be related to Adorno's conception of enlightenment rationality.

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<sup>70</sup> Francis, "Why the "Sacred" Is a Better Resource Than "Religion" for Understanding Terrorism," 913.

<sup>71</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 215.

## The Bosniak Culture Industry

“Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to relive it.”<sup>72</sup>

If we take ourselves back to that city hall in the middle of Sarajevo and return to the ‘crack’ on one of its outer pillars, we are faced with a modern adaption of the above mentioned Santayana quote: “Do not forget, remember and warn!”<sup>73</sup> On numerous other places throughout the country, Bosniaks are called upon to remember: from graffiti inscriptions on public walls to plaques like these. Whatever the importance to regard one’s past, the question of how to remember remains a very pressing one. It should not be underestimated how certain forms of remembering might keep a conflict alive rather than move past it.<sup>74</sup> This is true for the use of cultural memory as used by nationalistic ideologies, for which cultural production is vital.<sup>75</sup> This is no less true for the Bosnian context where the memory politics is dominated and dictated by the ethno-political structure of the country.<sup>76</sup> Philosopher and writer Boris Buden sharply analyzes and criticizes the influence hereof on the Bosnian commemoration culture:

“This is (...) a problem of any so called culture of commemoration. To put it short, it remembers the past only as a mirror image of the present. And it remembers it only as a culture, that is, as a culture that remembers as well as a culture that is remembered.”<sup>77</sup>

The past is thus viewed through the specter of the present. This present in BiH is dominated by nationalistic accounts that are not that different from the ones which have brought the war about. The suffering this has produced needs to be incorporated in the nationalistic ideologies in order to prevail. In this chapter Adorno will help me to analyze how such incorporation of suffering through cultural memory answers to the structures of enlightenment thinking. Although Adorno’s main focus was on the philosophical tradition of the German enlightenment, his notes on rationality and the culture industry can be used to understand how certain trajectories of rationality can become so dominant that it also puts a

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<sup>72</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason volume I*, (New York City: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1905), 280.

<sup>73</sup> Memorial plaque Sarajevo library, May 9, 2014.

<sup>74</sup> M. Sehagic, “How a Collective Trauma Influences Ethno-Religious Relations of Adolescents in Present-Day Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Social Inclusion*, 4, no.2 (2016): 139. & Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred : Memory, Law, and Repair*, edited by Nancy L. Rosenblum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>75</sup> Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural identity,” 217-219.

<sup>76</sup> Moll, “fragmented memories in a fragmented country,” 931.

<sup>77</sup> Boris Buden, “Srebrenica After Commemoration: Towards a Politics of Revenge,” in *Srebrenica Today*, ed. Christiane Erharter (Vienna: Ertse Stiftung, 2015), 5.

claim on memory and makes this memory 'cultural'. Regarding such problematic forms of remembering, the warning on the plaque might be true on more levels than originally intended to.

Prior to threading down this delicate path of memory, I have to make a note about the goal of it. In no way do I have the intention to question the suffering of any side in the Bosnian War. Far from that, this thesis should be interpreted as a contribution to Adorno's question of how suffering can be expressed without being betrayed.<sup>78</sup> This 'betrayal' seems to not only be present in the Bosniak discourse, as there are striking similarities between Serb and Bosniak nationalistic narratives: glorification of one's own battle combined with an emphasis on victimhood, the blaming of the other groups while the own group is exculpated and the construction of homogenous nationalistic narratives wherein history is presented as always repeating itself.<sup>79</sup> Both nationalistic accounts thus seem to be heavily intermingled.<sup>80</sup> This is in line with Adorno's writing who would regard both Serb and Bosniak nationalism as an instance of the same enlightenment rationality.

## Introducing Adorno

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno was a German philosopher of Jewish descent. His own writing focused on the connection between enlightenment, late capitalism and the atrocities of the Shoah, where he saw the last as a result of the first. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment (Dialektik der Aufklärung)*, published in 1947, Adorno and Max Horkheimer focused on enlightenment rationality and its development towards — what they called — identity thinking. According to the authors, identity thinking contains a process in which rationality continually identifies objects within the frame of itself. Individuals are thus 'recognized' and as such incorporated into the structure of reason. Objects are abstracted from themselves to create categories which outcome can be calculated and predicted.<sup>81</sup> This categorizing is characterized by linguistic and conceptual determinacy, banning fluidity and indeterminacy.<sup>82</sup> The *non-identical (nicht-identische)* is what remains as a residue in this process of categorization. It is the true essence of an object

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<sup>78</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 188

<sup>79</sup> Moll, "Fragmented Memories in a Fragmented Country," 914.

<sup>80</sup> The striking similarities between both narratives offers an interesting point in relation to Rene Girard's mimetic theory in which imitation in human relations and narratives is paramount. This would support Adorno's thought in which different forms of nationalism are expressions of the same ulterior use of enlightened rationality. A reading of Girard could lead to the conclusion that the Bosniak narrative is heavily influence by the Serb narratives. This would lead to unsettling conclusions and questions.

<sup>81</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 3.

<sup>82</sup> J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and ethics*, 349-350.

that is impossible to incorporate in the enforced identity. Something in the object thus escapes the all-encompassing thrust of rationality.<sup>83</sup>

Instrumental reason operates as the driving force of this categorizing push. The knowledge of an object is thus defined by and limited to its instrumental use. As stated by Adorno and Horkheimer: "For enlightenment, everything that is not conform the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion."<sup>84</sup> An individual object is for instance placed under the category of 'coal' and knowledge of this category only extends to how this category can be used as a means to an end, for example to produce fuel. Adorno deemed this enlightenment thinking an ideology, since it provides a selective account of the world and propagates this as reality.<sup>85</sup>

Individual things are thus replaced by concepts. This standardization has led to commercialization: standardized products become 'fixed' and defined by a uniform price. The *exchange value*, the amount of money or other asset used to obtain the product, therefore comes to reside above the *use value*: the extent to which a product satisfies human needs.<sup>86</sup> This domination is, according to the authors, omnipresent in (late)-capitalism and its underpinning *culture industry (Kulturindustrie)* which I will come back to elaborately in a few pages. Both authors claimed that this rationalization is propelled by a fear for unknown nature. To counter this fear, men reduces nature to that what can be known and controlled.<sup>87</sup>

This enlightenment thinking is responsible for the *Shoah*. Adorno claimed so by tracing the origins of German nationalism back to the enlightenment rationality.<sup>88</sup> This is due to this rationality leading to depersonalization of individuals. The taming of nature has provided the subject with ready-made concepts to apply to reality. As Horkheimer and Adorno stated: "In the world of mass production, stereotypes replace intellectual categories."<sup>89</sup> The concepts are mediated to the individual through the omnipresent sameness of the culture industry. These concepts are estranged from the reality which they try to encompass. The own perception is then sacrificed for the use of pre-determined genera and types, experience becomes cliché.<sup>90</sup> As work is automatized and routinized, the same thus happens with human thinking.<sup>91</sup> By controlling and estranging nature from itself, the subject thus becomes estranged from

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<sup>83</sup> Lucien van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2006), 87/91.

<sup>84</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Deborah Cook, "Adorno, ideology and ideology critique," *Philosophy & social criticism* 27, no. 1 (2001): 9.

<sup>86</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 128.

<sup>87</sup> Lucien van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 63.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Rothberg, "After Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe," *New German Critique* 72, no.3 (1997): 72.

<sup>89</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 166.

<sup>90</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 159/166.

<sup>91</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 167.

inside and outside nature as well: the dialectic of enlightenment.<sup>92</sup>

This leads to the standardization of individuals.<sup>93</sup> What remains is a pseudo-individuality: "(...)individuals are none but mere intersections of universal tendencies."<sup>94</sup> The individuals are thus reduced to the same reductionist categorization as it understands nature with.<sup>95</sup> Because of this depersonalization, the individual does not longer identify with personal ideals but becomes susceptible to impersonal and imposed group ideals.<sup>96</sup> The totality of the culture industry mediates such ideals, paving the way for propaganda.<sup>97</sup> In a world dominated by sameness these people lose their individuality, they become little more than instances of abstract denominators like religion or ethnicity.<sup>98</sup> Individuals are then nothing more than social atoms, nothing more than a function of collectivity.<sup>99</sup> The instrumentalization so apparent in enlightenment rationality is in this stage applied to both objects and subjects.<sup>100</sup>

Anything (e.g. the 'Jew') that diverges from this identity is threatening. It is the unadjusted that reminds of the *nicht-identische*.<sup>101</sup> The resistance of this non-identical to conform reminds societies' subjects of its own suffered de-personalization by the system. For example, the freedom of the 'other' reminds us of our own lack of freedom. The frustration that follows leads to a violent urge, dangerous to self-preservation, and therefore attributed to the 'other'.<sup>102</sup> This relates to Keen's aforementioned practice of attributing what we despise in ourselves (e.g. the violent urge upon being confronted with the non-identical) to the 'other'.<sup>103</sup> This process continues with the projection of negative stereotypical concepts to the 'other' which presents the 'other' as threatening.<sup>104</sup> Because of the perceived threat, self-

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<sup>92</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 64. & Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 254.

<sup>93</sup> Alan Finlayson, "Psychology, psychoanalysis and nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 4, no.2 (1998): 151.

<sup>94</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 125.

<sup>95</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 88.

<sup>96</sup> Finlayson, "Psychology, psychoanalysis and nationalism, 151-152.

<sup>97</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 131.

<sup>98</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 256-257.

<sup>99</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Freudian theory and the Pattern of fascist propaganda," 136.

<sup>100</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 258.

<sup>101</sup> Martin Jay, "The Jews and the Frankfurt School: Critical theory's analysis of anti-Semitism," *New German Critique* 19, no.1 (1980): 148. & Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 88.

<sup>102</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 88 & Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 158.

<sup>103</sup> Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> An interesting addition to Adorno's theory would be to argue that it is not only the suppressed urges and taboos that we project upon the 'other' but rather everything we suppress in ourselves. This is rather implicit to Adorno and more present in Keen's thoughts on nationalism. This opens an explanation to how the 'other' is dehumanized by attributing to him what we suppress in ourselves as to regard ourselves as 'civilized'. This explains for instance why the other is presented as dirty and malodorous, because we project on him the fetidness that we as 'civilized people' suppress in ourselves. This dehumanization makes it easier to perform the violent urge we feel

defense is regarded as necessary and as justification to take out the frustration on the 'other'.<sup>105</sup> In Adorno and Horkheimer's words: "Those impelled by blind murderous lust have always seen in the victim the pursuer who has driven him into blind self-defense."<sup>106</sup> This importance of the own group's perception of being under threat for the eruption of violence, resonates with Francis' theory as described in chapter one.<sup>107</sup> Adorno helps us in understanding the 'why?' of this process. So, as logic does away with everything different, so does society do the same with the 'fear and trembling' difference invokes on it.<sup>108</sup> If not by the violence of concepts, then by physical violence.

## Adorno in Bosnia

Considering Adorno's statement, after World War II, that the same fundamental structures that have caused the *Shoah* are still at work, I believe Adorno would not have been surprised by the tragedies in BiH.<sup>109</sup> Or, as expressed in *Erziehung nach Auschwitz*:

*Weiter wäre aufzuklären über die Möglichkeit der Verschiebung dessen, was in Auschwitz sich austobte. Morgen kann eine andere Gruppe drankommen als die Juden, (...) Das Klima - ich deutete darauf hin -, das am meisten solche Auferstehung fördert, ist der wiedererwachende Nationalismus.*<sup>110</sup>

In Adorno's thought nationalism is thus connected to the ideology of enlightenment and the use of totalitarian reason. The previous paragraph has seen an explanation of how group identities and hatred against 'others' comes into being. This is clearly applicable to the nationalism in BiH, as seen in the Bosnian War. This is further supported by the similarities in Adorno's theory and the in chapter one described characterizations by Keen and Francis, to which Adorno adds a deeper explanation. A further similarity is offered by Adorno's view that all ideology is based on identity-thinking.<sup>111</sup> As John Grant states when

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towards the 'other'. In this interpretation, the remark of a Bosniak nationalist that you cannot see the difference between Serbs and Bosniaks but only smell it, is made insightful.

<sup>105</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 158.

<sup>106</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 154

<sup>107</sup> Francis, "Why the "Sacred" Is a Better Resource Than "Religion" for Understanding Terrorism," 913.

<sup>108</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 167.

<sup>109</sup> Rothberg, "After Adorno," 69.

<sup>110</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Erziehung nach Auschwitz," in *Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungssoziologie*, ed. Ulrich Bauer, Uwe Bittingmayer and Albert Scherr. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), 134.

<sup>111</sup> Deborah Cook, "Adorno, ideology and ideology critique," *Philosophy & social criticism* 27, no.1 (2001): 1.

reflecting on Adorno: "The promise of rational thinking is transformed into ideology when concepts subsume objects into predetermined identity claims."<sup>112</sup> As we will see, religious nationalism in BiH makes heavy use of premediated identity claims and is thus part of enlightenment rationality. This identity thinking reduces subjects to one 'fixed' identity, forgetting that someone is always much more than this one identity (of say Orthodox Serb or Bosnian Muslim).<sup>113</sup> This leads to "(...) distorted and partial accounts of reality."<sup>114</sup> Adorno's definition of ideology is thus in line with Anderson's previous applied definition of ideology.

Adorno stated that even when such nationalism disappears (as happened with German Nazism and its anti-Semitism), similar hostilities towards other minority groups will occur again. This is because enlightenment thinking prevails and will inevitably form "enemies of difference".<sup>115</sup> However, in Bosnia, nationalism has not disappeared. Adorno's writing focused on how enlightenment thinking in general incorporates the suffering produced by its expression in, for example, nationalism. This thesis, however, focuses on how nationalism, as the still present expression of enlightenment rationality, tries to incorporate the suffering. Some of Adorno's thinking will thus have to be adjusted to this different situation. As previously stated, I will focus on the Bosniak nationalism regarding this process.

## The culture industry

Adorno saw the suffering of enlightenment rationality as a beacon of hope. This is because the violence hints to the way the system tries to do away with the non-identical.<sup>116</sup> Another reason is that suffering is not instrumental and therefore has no place in the highly instrumentalized enlightenment rationality.<sup>117</sup> In Adorno's words: "Something in reality rebuffs rational knowledge. Suffering remains foreign to knowledge."<sup>118</sup> Because of this belief, Adorno stated that every form of truth should be based on a voicing

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<sup>112</sup> Grant, "The End of critique? Ideology as replication in Adorno and Jameson," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55, no. 1 (2014): 2.

<sup>113</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 74.

<sup>114</sup> Anderson, "Nationalist Ideology and Territory," 20.

<sup>115</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 171-172.

<sup>116</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 88.

<sup>117</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 128.

<sup>118</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno, Tiedemann and Robert Hullot-Kentor, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London & New York: Continuum, 1997), 18.

<sup>118</sup> One way this suffering can prove the untruth of ideology is by what Adorno calls the *addendum*: the physical shock and shiver one experiences upon being confronted with human suffering as expressed in for instance the *Shoah* or the Srebrenica genocide. This pre-rational reflex is first of all a physical impulse, but it carries the potential to influence thinking.. This is an interesting observation worthy of more elaborate consideration that I cannot offer in main text nor in the footnote. The more since this observation is rather questionable. There is after



of suffering.<sup>119</sup> The suffering of the 'other' then carries the potential to take the 'other' out of his abstract category (as say, Jew or Muslim) and constitutes his individuality. His non-identical essence becomes visible and he stops being a mere specimen to a genus.<sup>120</sup> The suffering thus carries the potential to highlight the untruth of enlightenment and its identity thinking by pointing towards the suppressed non-identical.<sup>121</sup> However, rationality will always try to make this suffering apprehensible and meaningful, it tries to wrap its tentacles around its self-produced enemy of suffering.<sup>122</sup>

Adorno and Horkheimer focused on how this happens in the late-capitalistic culture industry, characterized by its domination of exchange value over use value.<sup>123</sup> The authors described this as the industry that endlessly replicates the enlightenment rationality into cultural products which affirm its rationale. In doing so, the culture industry supports the enlightenment ideology as it duplicates the empirical reality as envisioned by enlightenment thinking. It therefore suggests that the depicted 'reality' is nothing more than an extension of that external reality. Adorno and Horkheimer offer the simple example of film in which reality is imitated: "(...) the moviegoer perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left, because the film seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception, has become the guideline of production."<sup>124</sup> Here we see Adorno's definition of positivism operating: the unproblematic and neutral replication of society which carries the suggestion of naturalness.<sup>125</sup> In this positivism, the culture industry adheres to identifying and classifying reality into concepts.<sup>126</sup> What this positivism depicts, however, is in the end pseudo-realistic: it depicts no more than the general norms, concepts and standards of objects, the particulars are violated in this process.<sup>127</sup> This replication of empirical reality as unproblematic is stressed by presenting it as entertainment: "by presenting the same everyday world as paradise."<sup>128</sup>

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all much 'proof' for the existence of such an *addendum* (e.g. Himmler vomiting upon being faced with the execution Jews in Ukraine) but this has not always led to an influence on the rationality of such a person. Does reason immediately neutralize the *addendum* then and if so, why does this happen with some people and not with others? Questions like these pose a challenge for Adorno's writing regarding the *addendum* and deserve further inquiry.

<sup>119</sup> Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997), 202.

<sup>120</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 256-257.

<sup>121</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 249.

<sup>122</sup> Van Liere, "Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer," 332

<sup>123</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 114.

<sup>124</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 99.

<sup>125</sup> Grant, "The end of critique? Ideology as replication in Adorno and Jameson," 2.

<sup>126</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 104.

<sup>127</sup> Cook, "Adorno, ideology and ideology critique," 13.

<sup>128</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 113.

The suffering that is produced by enlightenment thinking is not ignored. It is given meaning in its rationale scheme. For the highly capitalistic culture industry this means transforming it into entertainment in commodified form. In the words of the authors: "The culture industry replaces pain with jovial denial."<sup>129</sup>

A striking example in Bosnia hereof is that of the 'bullet pens' (Figure 1). Everywhere in Sarajevo, pens that are assembled out of the remains of bullets are sold. These relics of war, and thus of suffering, are incorporated in the overarching scheme of capitalistic rationality by turning them into commodities fit for



Figure 1: Anna. Karsten "What to Do in Sarajevo and Why Visit?," *Anna Everywhere*, January 22, 2017, [annaeverywhere.com/sarajevo/](http://annaeverywhere.com/sarajevo/).

entertainment. The suffering, which the culture industry bears responsibility for, is as a commodity taken up by this same industry again.<sup>130</sup> Paul Mills has observed the commodification of suffering in BiH as well when writing about his uneasiness regarding the numerous commodities like books, photographic collections, films, exhibitions, but even posters and postcards of Bosniak suffering.<sup>131</sup>

Such handling of suffering might be regarded as problematic. This is because it seems inadequate compared to the actual suffering. Adorno therefore condemned direct images of suffering, "which can never be fully grasped and never completely escapes a sense of entertainment."<sup>132</sup> This entertainment factor is underscored by Guy Debord's theory of *The Society as Spectacle* in which everything is mere representation. By capitalism's constant focus on spectacle through media outlets, our experience is

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<sup>129</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 112.

<sup>130</sup> Van Liere, "Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer," 332

<sup>131</sup> Miller, "Contested memories: the Bosnian genocide in Serb and Muslim minds," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 3 (2006): 319.

<sup>132</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 189.

reduced to such spectacle and reality is reduced to image.<sup>133</sup> The commodification of suffering and related handling of reality as spectacle can be seen in the video that photographer Paul Lowe has made of the Sarajevo Siege. He has set his pictures to music, but not just any music: it is the score of the blockbuster movie *Requiem for a Dream*. The music is well known for its dramatic cinematographic effect, the suggestions of the movie and the use of a typical blockbuster symphony puts the event of a very real siege almost on equal footing with a dramatic entertainment of a blockbuster movie. This is underscored by the rapid trailer-like montage of the video.<sup>134</sup> A possibly even more telling example is offered by the actual blockbuster movie *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, directed by Angelina Jolie.<sup>135</sup> The movie contains grave depictions of suffering that are reduced to a screening in the local cinema or on television screens, in other words: to spectacle. Such depictions of suffering contains it, therefore neutralizing the suffering as 'there', and thus not threatening or acute.<sup>136</sup> At the same time the so feared 'entertainment' of suffering is opened up in these instances: one cannot help but feel some sense of entertainment in the music of both movies or the tragic love story in Jolie's work. The suffering is thus neutralized and mediated as nothing more than a dramatic spectacle to be enjoyed. The distance this creates deforms the cries of the victims into a symphony that is almost pleasant to the ear and which does not call to action.<sup>137</sup> The most extreme example can be found in the form of the *War Hostel Sarajevo* where one can get the experience of living in besieged Sarajevo, complete with the sound of shellfire and a lack of electricity.<sup>138</sup> Such "Dark tourism" (visiting places associated with suffering) is exemplary of 'entertained' suffering and the omnipresence of spectacle. Debord's claim that daily life and spectacle merge into each other is very present here. Arijan Kurbasic, the owner of the hostel, is happy that he is at least able to make a living in an economy with youth unemployment higher than 60 percent.<sup>139</sup> He does so by playing into what he experienced as people's main interest in Bosnia: its suffering.<sup>140</sup> The only suffering that remains authentic

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<sup>133</sup>Debie Lisle, "Gazing at ground zero: Tourism, voyeurism and spectacle," *Journal for Cultural Research*, 8, no.1 (2004): 14-15. & Guy Debord, "The Commodity as Spectacle," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenkashi Gigig Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 117-120.

<sup>134</sup> Paul Lowe, "The Siege of Sarajevo," Vimeo video, October 2018, <https://vimeo.com/128590723>.

<sup>135</sup> Tim Headington, Angelina Jolie, Graham King and Tim Moore, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, DVD, directed by Angelina Jolie (Los Angeles: FilmDistrict, 2011).

<sup>136</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 230.

<sup>137</sup> Tim Headington, Angelina Jolie, Graham King and Tim Moore, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*.

<sup>138</sup> Fahrad Mirza, "Recreating death for a living: Inside Bosnia's War Hostel," Al-Jazeera, April 28, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/recreating-death-living-bosnia-war-hostel-180419100203442.html>.

<sup>139</sup> Mirza, "Recreating death for a living: Inside Bosnia's War Hostel."

<sup>140</sup> Andrew Higgings, "No Bed, No Breakfast, but 4-Star Gunfire. Welcome to a War Hostel," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/28/world/europe/bosnia-war-hostel-sarajevo.html>. The question about why people feel so attracted to such suffering might be explained and deepened as well by Baudrillard's theory of catastrophic cannibalism. However, I chose for a focus on Adorno for earlier mentioned

here is that of Kurbasic himself, who is forced to make a living by a constant confrontation with his wartime memories and for whom this war is not just a spectacle. I

In all these instances the suffering is given meaning and is thus neutralized by means of commodified entertainment. It thus becomes marketable and apt for the culture industry and its capitalistic underpinning. Thus, rather than criticizing the enlightenment rationality, the suffering affirms it. Here seems to be a sort of positive feedback relation of suffering to enlightenment rationality.

### The culture industry of suffering

The nationalistic ideologies in Bosnia have all but disappeared. It is therefore likely that there will be a direct feedback relation to the nationalistic ideology, as an expression of enlightenment thinking, as well. We can see this in how Lowe's and Jolie's movies contribute to the Bosniak narrative of victimhood. This is exactly the critique of *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo's critical newspaper: the movie keeps the Bosniak nationalistic victim ideology alive, which is 'celebrated' and instrumentalized by the nationalistic elites and religious figures.<sup>141</sup> Mustafa Cerić, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia has for instance praised the movie, saying: "The film is the second best thing to the Dayton Agreement, since it shows the truth about our suffering."<sup>142</sup> So the ideology of religious nationalism and its underpinning in victimhood is also supported by these and akin cultural products. What I want to propose here is the existence of another culture industry in post-war Bosnia. This is the *culture industry of suffering*, expressed in both foreign and domestic products. It operates alongside the 'normal' culture industry. The content of this culture industry and the context are different than the one initially envisaged by Adorno and Horkheimer. Nonetheless, the basic mechanism of Adorno's culture industry is applicable to the ideology of post-conflict nationalism as well. In Adorno and Horkheimer's words:

The omnipresent and impenetrable world of appearance is set up as the ideal. Ideology is split between the photographing of brute existence and the blatant lie about its meaning. A lie which is not articulated directly but drummed in by suggestion. The mere cynical reiteration of the real

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reasons. I included Debord for his proximity to Adorno and the striking presence of his theory in the mentioned examples.

<sup>141</sup>Boris Dežulović, "In the Land of Blood and Honey" – soothing for elites and victims," *Oslobođenje* February 28, 2012, trans. Kika Kurovic, <https://voxeurop.eu/en/content/article/1559581-land-blood-and-honey-soothing-elites-and-victims>.

<sup>142</sup> Mustafa Cerić, in. "Transnational celebrity activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local responses to Angelina Jolie's film *In the Land of Blood and Honey*," by Zala Volcic and Erjavec Karmen, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (2015): 362.

is enough to demonstrate its divinity. Such phonological proof may not be stringent but it is overwhelming. Anyone who continues to doubt in face of the power of monotony is a fool.<sup>143</sup>

The “brute existence” is present in both culture industries, both deal with suffering by giving it meaning as to uphold the existent ideology. For the capitalistic culture industry this means adding entertainment to the suffering in order to make it marketable. The Bosniak nationalistic ideology adds a different dimension to the suffering: it instrumentalizes the suffering as to create a sense of victimhood that becomes part of the national identity. So the ‘lie’ put up in the culture industry of suffering is slightly different: the culture industry neutralizes suffering while the culture industry of suffering directly instrumentalizes it. Yet, in both suffering is given meaning in such a way that the enlightenment rationality prevails. In what I will call the *Bosniak culture industry* both forms of ‘meaning’ are present with a stress on the nationalistic instrumentalization.

A further important similarity is present in Adorno and Horkheimer’s claim that the culture industry serves the interest of the capitalistic elite by keeping the public docile. This is because the omnipresent sameness of mass culture takes over the sphere of decision making in people’s mind, spelling out every single decision and independent thought.<sup>144</sup> This is something numerous observers in BiH have claimed as well: the ethno-religious elites keep the ethnic hostilities alive while the civilians are distracted from their economic hardships caused by the corruption and financial misconduct of these elites.<sup>145</sup> According to Horkheimer and Adorno the system is so strong that the public willingly participates, we will observe the same in Bosnia.<sup>146</sup>

The suffering in which Adorno saw so much hope to point out the untruthfulness of ideology is instead used as the essence of the Bosniak nationalistic ideology. How then is this suffering used in a post-conflict situation and how is its critical potential not only neutralized but also directly used by an exclusive nationalistic ideology? The answer is latent to Adorno’s writing and in order to make it explicit we have to focus on the positivistic depiction of suffering. Adorno has issued a “*Bilderverbot*” on such depiction, fearing that a sense of entertainment might be added to it.<sup>147</sup> For this thesis of greater importance is the following, more general, statement: “Works of art which by their existence take the side of the victims of

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<sup>143</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 118.

<sup>144</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 168.

<sup>145</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 96 & Perica, “Religion as a Factor in Yugoslav Wars and the Peace Process,” 33 & Jasmina Husanovic, “Resisting the Culture of Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Narratives of Justice In and Out of the Courtroom: Former Yugoslavia and Beyond* 8, no.1 (2014): 155.

<sup>146</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, 96.

<sup>147</sup> Gene Ray, “Conditioning Adorno: ‘After Auschwitz’ now,” *Third Text* 18, no. 4 (2004): 223-227.

a rationality that subjugates nature, are even in their protest constitutively implicated in the process of rationalization itself.<sup>148</sup> The non-identical, which suffering hints to, is after all the very thing which empirical categories deprive the objects of. Instead, the non-identical: *"negiert die der Empirie kategorial aufgeprägten Bestimmungen und brigt durch."*<sup>149</sup> Thus working with the same empirical categories to depict the suffering will not hint to the non-identical. Rather, the suffering remains trapped in the shackles of the conceptualization by which enlightenment has brought it about. 'Unreal' reality continues its victory march. This conceptualized suffering is therefore not only "mute and inconsequential."<sup>150</sup> What happens as well is that the concepts, by which suffering is mediated, give way to positivism being the servant of another ideological master. The expressed suffering might switch the meaning of the concepts but the concepts remain, and thus the non-identical is kept silent.

### Positivism to the bone

We can see this happening in the main culprit of Adorno's thought, positivistic science, which supports such conceptualization. This is apparent in Damir Arsenijevic's critique on the forensic excavation of human remains. He states that the war victims are managed by an alliance between "the scientist-the bureaucrat-the priest."<sup>151</sup> The discovered human remains are defined by the scientists as belonging to a certain ethnicity, mostly Bosniak, the religious leader defines the subject even further by ascribing a religion to him and giving him a religious funeral. As the individual is reduced to what can be understood of it in scientific or religious terms, all that remains are religious nationalistic concepts. The ethno-political elite is then free and more than willing to use this 'gift' of information for their own purposes: for instance to support an ideology of victimhood.<sup>152</sup> Kada Hotic, vice-president of the *Mothers of Srebrenica* organization has experienced how nationalistic actors express satisfaction when they can add extra victims to the ethnic body-count.<sup>153</sup> A further observation here is the way this identification process is turned into a profit-driven business, measuring the cost-efficiency in "Euros per dead head."<sup>154</sup> Here again

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<sup>148</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 192.

<sup>149</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, (Frankfurt am Main: suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft, 1970), 15.

<sup>150</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 19.

<sup>151</sup> Damir Arsenijevic, Jasmina Husanovic and Sari Wastell, "A Public Language of Grief: Art, Poetry and Transitional Justice in Post-Conflict Bosnia," in *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, ed. Vlad Beronja and Stijn Vervaet (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 266.

<sup>152</sup> Arsenijevic, Husanovic and Wastell,, "A Public Language of Grief," 271.

<sup>153</sup> Plant, "The Politicization of Victimhood" 9.

<sup>154</sup> Husanovic, "Resisting the Culture of Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 151.

we see how the suffering is incorporated in the overarching scheme of capitalism. Furthermore, we see the complex interrelation of the culture industry of suffering to Adorno's culture industry, together constituting the Bosniak culture industry. In this interplay both the capitalistic and the nationalistic ideology are supported, both expressions of the ideology of enlightenment.

### Positive suffering

We can see this use of such positivistic concepts operating in cultural products like the work of photographer Ron Haviv. He has photographed the atrocities committed by the Serb nationalistic Arkan Tigers during the Bosnian War. One of his photos has become iconic. It is the 1992 picture with the description: "Arkan's Tigers



Figure 2: Ron Haviv, *Blood and Honey*, Photographic collection (Manville: VII Agency, 1992), <http://viiphoto.com/vii-stories/blood-and-honey-by-ron-haviv/>.

kill and kick Bosnian-Muslim civilians during the first battle for Bosnia."<sup>155</sup> (Figure 2). We deal here with a committed cultural product, undoubtedly made with the best of intentions. However, in Adorno's thought committed works all too often turn out to do more harm than good. This is mainly due to the fact that these works cannot help but pose an accommodation to the world and therefore are prone to contribute to ideology themselves.<sup>156</sup> If that world, or rather our understanding of it, is based on problematic identitarian concepts then the work that deals with this same reality cannot help but to affirm its problematic aspects. Haviv's photo is a duplication of what nationalistic ideologies and its use of concepts have brought about. Yet, in its depiction and accompanying words, the nationalistic concepts (Serb-Muslim) are kept alive and reinforced. This becomes clearer in the Time caption of the photograph: "Serb

<sup>155</sup> Ron Haviv, *Blood and Honey*, Photographic project (Manville: VII Agency, 1992), <http://viiphoto.com/vii-stories/blood-and-honey-by-ron-haviv/>.

<sup>156</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 193.



kicking a Muslim woman who had been shot by Serb forces.”<sup>157</sup> Here we see a further abstraction from the ‘Arkan Tiger’ to ‘Serb’. The term soldier is left out and we end up with the concept of ‘Serb’ as perpetrator and ‘Bosniak Muslim’ as victim. The remark of New York Times foreign correspondent John Kifner that “(...) It (*the picture*) tells you everything you need to know,”<sup>158</sup> is telling. I do not know what exactly Kifner thinks we should extract from the photograph, but the picture seems prone to fall victim to a nationalistic conclusion. For nationalists it is a positivistic proof of the concept of Bosnian Muslim victimhood and the concept of Serbs victimizer. In Sontag’s words: “a world in which photography is brilliantly at the service of consumerist manipulations, no effect of a photograph of a doleful scene can be taken for granted.”<sup>159</sup> The same could be said for numerous other pictures depicting the suffering of Bosniaks

These concepts are underpinned by sub concepts like the one art historian Bojana Pejic names “Srebrenica women”: the depiction of Srebrenica genocide survivors as displaced persons, homeless refugees, devout Muslims and so on. She sees this as the result of a nationalist/ethnic account in Bosnia that has been formulated and officially carried out as the discourse of victimhood.<sup>160</sup>

The collage video of all the memorial services at Srebrenica from 1995-2018 by aforementioned

photographer Paul Lowe affirms this concept of “Srebrenica Women” once more (Figure 3). In the video

we see photos of mourning



Figure 3: Still from Paul Lowe, “110795,” Vimeo video, November 18, 2018, [vimeo.com/288509120](https://vimeo.com/288509120).

women, captured during moments of intense suffering. They are all dressed the same and a considerable amount of them have their faces covered, diminishing their individuality even further. Towards the end

<sup>157</sup>Ben Goldberger, ed., “Bosnia: Ron Haviv,” in *100 photographs* (New York: Time Inc Home Entertainment, 2016), 148.

<sup>158</sup> John Kifner, “A Pictorial Guide to Hell; Stark Images Trace the Balkans’ Descent and a Photographer’s Determination,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/24/books/pictorial-guide-hell-stark-images-trace-balkans-descent-photographer-s.html>.

<sup>159</sup> Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 79.

<sup>160</sup> Bojana Pejic, “7/11 and after,” in *Srebrenica today*, ed. Christiane Erharter (Vienna: Erste Stiftung, 2015), 17.



of the video all the photos are placed together, seemingly to stress the vast number of mourning women. This is accompanied by estranging music, only interrupted by cries and other utterances of mourning.<sup>161</sup> This “Srebrenica women” concept, that de-individualizes the women, is affirmed and strengthened by such artistic reflections.<sup>162</sup> Philosopher Boris Buden criticizes this ‘conceptualized’ commemoration culture when he writes:

Only Bosnian Muslims were killed in Srebrenica and only Serbs killed them. Not a single human being was killed and not a single human being perpetrated the crime. It has completely recognized the political outcome of this conflict. The culture of commemoration articulates itself totally in accordance with the political paradigm that was established as the result of war and crime.<sup>163</sup>

In both Haviv and Lowes’s work, the individuals are abstracted from and put into the same identitarian concepts that were so important for the emergence of the suffering in the first place. This denies that individuals are always more than the nationalistic/religious identity ascribed to them.<sup>164</sup> The explicit depiction of suffering gives way to the ideological content of these concepts: the Bosnian Muslims were aggressors and the Serb were victims in the Serb nationalistic ideology, now the Serbs are the aggressors and the Muslims the victims in the Bosniak account.<sup>165</sup> The suffering does not open the possibility of regarding the individuality or non-identical of these subjects, rather its imprisonment in identitarian concepts is stressed. Considering this process it is of no surprise that Haviv’s photo is used in nationalistic Bosniak material like the *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity* documentary that will be discussed later. The nationalistic concepts that were used by Serbian nationalism to justify their violence towards Bosniaks during the Bosnian War are thus continued by Bosniak nationalism. Enlightenment’s identity-thinking thus carries on in post-war BiH, or as philosopher Dianne Enns formulates it: “It is quite possible that in a world in which rats have managed to triumph over cats, rats may continue living in a world defined by cats, that is, by identities generated in the era when cats ruled.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Paul Lowe, “110795,” *Vimeo video*, November 18, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/288509120>.

<sup>162</sup> Pejic, “7/11 and after,” 17.

<sup>163</sup> Boris Buden, “Srebrenica After Commemoration: Towards a Politics of Revenge,” 5.

<sup>164</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 74.

<sup>165</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Blood lines* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 50-80.

<sup>166</sup> Dianne Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 37-38.

## What's in a concept

A special way of enhancing the concept of Bosnian victimhood and Serbs as victimizers, is its connection to larger narratives of victimhood and victimizers. The urge to call atrocities inflicted upon Bosniaks a 'genocide', for example, is omnipresent. This seems to be driven by the weight this term carries.<sup>167</sup> The work of Tarik Samarah and his project 'Srebrenica' is an example hereof. Upon opening his book, one is confronted with five white letters, together spelling 'Genocide'. The work seems eager to pursue the spectator, saying: 'this is how it is, and nothing can be said to discredit it.'<sup>168</sup> The culture industry thus overtakes independent thinking. Such 'fixedness' already reeks of ideology in Adorno's writing.<sup>169</sup> One gets the impression this is done because of the power this word carries, because of politicized reasons as Miller has suggested.<sup>170</sup> Here we see a clear example of the "pointed finger" which is on beforehand infected with the problems of society.<sup>171</sup> Committed art thus again seems to fall prey to ideology, one sees how when the pages of the book are turned.

On the next pages the abstraction process continues when connection is established with the *Shoah*. With no respect to the particularities involved, both are placed on the same footing. We see this happening in Samarah's picture of a "Srebrenica mother" who is standing



Figure 4: Tarik Samarah, "July 11 - Srebrenica Memorial - 1945 - 1995 - 2005," *Sarajevo Center for contemporary art*, July 15, 2005, [scca.ba/exhibitions/art-in-public-space/july-11-srebrenica-memorial-1945-1995-2005/](http://scca.ba/exhibitions/art-in-public-space/july-11-srebrenica-memorial-1945-1995-2005/).

in front of the Anne Frank museum in Amsterdam. On top of the picture are three dates: 1945-1995-2005, connecting the two atrocities with each other and connecting them to the present. This connection is stressed even more when the picture was hung outside the Ashkenazi synagogue in Sarajevo (Figure 4).<sup>172</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Plant, "The Politization of Victimhood," 4.

<sup>168</sup> Miller, "Contested memories: the Bosnian genocide in Serb and Muslim minds," 312

<sup>169</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 259.

<sup>170</sup> Miller, "Contested memories: the Bosnian genocide in Serb and Muslim minds," 313.

<sup>171</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne Filosofen over Kunst*, 257.

<sup>172</sup> Miller, "Contested memories: the Bosnian genocide in Serb and Muslim minds," 318.

The only difference with the Jews, according to academic Rasim Muratovic, is that the Jews got their own state, in that respect the fate of the Bosniaks is even worse.<sup>173</sup> This connection to the *Shoah* as a symbol of pure victimhood is not the only World War II kinship sought.<sup>174</sup> The claim that the Bosniaks are on the good side of history is advanced further by the (false) claim to have been the foremost antifascist faction during World War II.<sup>175</sup> And when the Bosniaks are the Jews or anti-fascist, then the Serbs are subsequently framed as Nazi's. Academic and former diplomat Muhammed Filipovic for instance compares Karadzic to Hitler.<sup>176</sup> Just as is suggested that the Bosniaks are actually to be pitied more than the Jews, some Bosnian political leaders, like Stejpen Klujic, claim that the Serbs were actually more cruel than the Nazi's.<sup>177</sup> According to Bosniak historian Semso Tukakovic the Serbs were even the "most monstrous people in history."<sup>178</sup>

As in an antinomy, the Bosniaks seek connection with the Palestinian people as well. This is done for instance by mufti Muamar Zurkolic who makes the comparison between the suffering and disparity of both people. In addition, both Bosniaks and Western academics make comparisons between the land politics of Israel and that of the Republika Srpska.<sup>179</sup> The suggestion that such comparisons are partially given in by an instrumentalist approach of generating more relevancy, support and credibility is supported by the outcry Paul Lowe received upon opening his 1994 exhibition in Sarajevo. In the exhibition Paul Lowe combined pictures of atrocities in Somalia with those of the atrocities he had captured in Bosnia. The public scolded him for making this comparison: their suffering was not to be equated with what happened in Africa.<sup>180</sup> Comparisons to other's suffering seems only acceptable when it supports the plea one is trying to make. In this context, this plea is the claim to absolute victimhood. This is something the *Shoah* is arguably far more able to support than the atrocity in Somalia.<sup>181</sup>

What is central here is that through these comparisons the individuality—the non-identical—to which the suffering opens a way is even more violated. Instead, the concepts of Bosniak victimhood and Serb as aggressors are strengthened by such connections to larger narratives of victimhood/guilt.

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<sup>173</sup> Rasim Muratovic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 02:11:21.

<sup>174</sup> Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 50.

<sup>175</sup> Huseinovic, *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 01:10:44. & Moll, "Fragmented Memories in a Fragmented Country," 914.

<sup>176</sup> Muhamed Filipovic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 01:37:25.

<sup>177</sup> Stejpan Kljujić, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 02:15:50.

<sup>178</sup> Semso Tukakovic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 02:16:10.

<sup>179</sup> Muamer Zurkolic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:02:06. & Gearoid Tuathail & Carl Dahlman, "The 'West Bank of the Drina': land allocation and ethnic engineering in Republika Srpska," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31, no.3 (2006): 304-322.

<sup>180</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of*, 113.

<sup>181</sup> Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 50.

What is, will always be

The suggestion that the constant positivistic affirmation of these concepts carries, is defined by philosopher Deborah Cook as follows: "things cannot be other than what they are."<sup>182</sup> The reified concepts therefore lack a critical reflection towards reality. This finality given to empirical evidence ignores that society is already structured: "The facts in society are themselves mediated through society."<sup>183</sup> Thinking therefore loses its critical power towards the object, and thus towards the society it reflects upon. Positivism may be compared to the football trainer who sees that his football team is functioning badly and accepts that to be the fate of the team. The empirical evidence is on his side, every week they lose with at least 3-0 and the football team is placed under the concept 'bad team'. The fact that his players play on wrong footwear, is ignored. Adorno, however, sees that the basis (e.g. the footwear) of the team is bad and sets out to work towards the ideal of an effective team. The claim that writers like Hayden make, as discussed in chapter one, that Bosnians do not want to live together, can now be seen in a different light. With their positivistic affirmation of society, these thinkers ignore how society is pre-mediated. Instead, they add a veneer of unalterableness to the Serb-Bosniak hostilities and thus support the nationalistic ideologies.

This suggestion of steadfastness is just as much present in other cultural products regarding BiH. The documentary *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity* by director Avdo Huseinovic offers a striking example. The aim of the documentary is to convince the spectator that the Srebrenica genocide is all but an exception.<sup>184</sup> By tracing history at the hands of Bosnian academics, religious leaders and witnesses, the Srebrenica massacre is placed in a long continuity of Bosniaks as the 'genocide' victims of Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins. In such accounts we clearly see the important role religion plays in these concepts. Irrespective of the truth content of these claims, an explanation is never given for these 'genocides'. The suggestion is thus advanced that aggression towards Bosnian Muslims from Orthodox Christians is the natural condition. Positivist accounts are thus used to support concepts of Bosnian Muslims as victims and Orthodox Serbs as aggressors. This is once more affirmed in the claim by the documentary maker that these attacks against Bosniaks were solely motivated by the fact that they are Muslims.<sup>185</sup> The claim is also made that religious figures like bishops were actively involved in the killing or even initiated it. When talking about the killings of Muslims during the battle of Sjenica (1941), Muhic for instance states that

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<sup>182</sup> Deborah Cook, "Adorno, ideology and ideology critique," 12

<sup>183</sup> David Frisby "The Popper-Adorno controversy," 112.

<sup>184</sup> Huseinovic, *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:01:04/ 01:39:25/01:42:10-01:42:25.

<sup>185</sup> Huseinovic, *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:09:07.

the bishops “swore on the bible” during the killing of Bosnian Muslims.<sup>186</sup> This might be true but the reviving of it and subsequent application to the present situation, continues the religious framing of the conflict. This is then topped with a positivistic suggestion of unalterableness.

This relates to what Bernstein states when reflecting on Adorno’s thought on concepts: “Once established, a conceptual schema can insinuate its repetition (...) because under these conditions the world appears as determinably given, our consciousness feels this world is ‘natural’ and ‘immediate’.”<sup>187</sup> The quote of researcher Murotovic about an alleged genocide against Bosniaks in the city of Pjenica offers a striking example. He uses phrases like “as always” and “of course” when talking about the attacks of Serbs on the Bosniak population.<sup>188</sup> The result of this conviction about the ‘natural order of things’ is expressed by grand mufti Mustafa Cerić: “We are constantly living under the threat of another genocide.”<sup>189</sup> The fear of extinction by which religious leaders mobilized thousands of people during the last war, has thus all but disappeared. Perica describes this fear, genuine or not, as the main cause of religious involvement in the 1992-1995 war.<sup>190</sup>

This view of a meta history of genocides against Bosniaks is not only expressed in the documentary but on numerous other places as well, a remarkable example is *The Virtual Museum of Genocide against the Bosniaks*. The ‘museum’ was partially funded by the former Bosniak president and vice-president: Izetbegovic and Mahmutbegovic.<sup>191</sup> It has a website full of material supporting Bosniak victimhood, which is collected in a “Register of Artworks on Genocide” that ranges from videos about “The Bosnian Dreyfuss Affair” to literature about the betrayal of Bosniaks and explicit photographic accounts of suffering.<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, it has published a similar, yet independent, documentary spreading the same message of eleven genocides and victimhood, supported by positivistic research and material.<sup>193</sup> The museum is related to professor Emir Ramić, the head of *the institute for Research of Genocide in Canada*. In a text that starts with a reflection on the Islamic New Year (*Hijrah*) and its importance for Bosniaks, Ramić says that “We Bosnian Muslims – Bosniaks should use this occasion to remind ourselves about the *Hijrah* and about

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<sup>186</sup> Ferid Muhic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:14:14.

<sup>187</sup> Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, 347.

<sup>188</sup> Admir Muratovic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:14:00.

<sup>189</sup> Mustafa Cerić, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 2:21:03.

<sup>190</sup> Perica, *Balkan Idols*, 241.

<sup>191</sup> The Virtual Museum of Genocide Against the Bosniaks, “Donators,” accessed December 12, 2018, <http://vmgb.ba/eng/#o-projektu>.

<sup>192</sup> The Virtual Museum of Genocide Against the Bosniaks, “LEGArT,” accessed December 12, 2018, <http://vmgb.ba/legart-eng/performansi/>.

<sup>193</sup> The Virtual Museum of Genocide Against the Bosniaks, “Kontinuitet genocida nad Bošnjacima,” *Youtube video*, January 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SniLkwhYdGU>.

the eleven genocides against Bosnian Muslims – Bosniaks.”<sup>194</sup> This underscores how the religious identity and victim identity are intermingled in Bosniak nationalism.

### Instrumentalized suffering and the danger of victimhood

The nationalistic concepts of Bosniak Muslim victimhood and Serb Orthodox victimizers are thus strengthened, finalized in a way, through further conceptualization and presenting the concepts as everlasting. In a song, exemplary of all the facets of the Bosniak culture industry, rapper *Genocide* voices this identity: “Our land is full of graveyards, a Balkan cemetery. A legacy of blood, ingrained in our identity.”<sup>195</sup> Slavisa Sucur, an ethnic Serb who was awarded the Golden Lily for his service in the Bosnian army, strongly opposes such conceptualization:

Creating the sense that the whole ethnic group is a collective victim basically is a justification to do whatever you want... I strongly believe that the guilt should be individualized, and the victimhood should be individualized. The problem with fascism rising is one side has said ‘we are the victims’ – no there are people who were victims. You are not the victims.<sup>196</sup>

This resonates with Dianne Enns writing on violence and victimhood. She explains how a group identity can become based on victimhood, a victimhood that establishes a Manichean opposition between the absolute innocence of the victims and the absolute guilt of the victimizers. This victim status confers moral superiority.<sup>197</sup> This is expressed by Ferid Muhic, president of the Bosniak Academy of Sciences. He thinks Bosniaks should be proud of their identity: “Primarily because a victim is better than a criminal and the persecuted better than the persecutor.”<sup>198</sup>

This victim role can be dangerous, first of all because the constant stress on being wronged fosters a longing for justice. This can be expressed in all sorts of ways, one way is how Huseinovic in his documentary introduces research which points to the high level of suicide in Republika Srpska, framing these deaths as a retribution to the lost lives of Bosniaks during the war.<sup>199</sup> One activist told me that this

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<sup>194</sup> Emir Ramic, “Eleven genocides against Bosniaks,” February 19, 2004, <http://www.bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=18853>.

<sup>195</sup> Genocide rap, *Cry From The Grave (Srebrenica: 20yrs Later)*, (Hawkes Bay: Terrorize Records, 2015).

<sup>196</sup> Plant, “The Politicization of Victimhood,” 6.

<sup>197</sup> Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 49-50.

<sup>198</sup> Ferid Muhic in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 00:02:44.

<sup>199</sup> Semir Sinavovic, in *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 02:21:31.

was the punishment from above and thanked God for it.<sup>200</sup> In the worst case, a feeling for direct revenge can emerge.<sup>201</sup> More dangerous is the constant feeling of being under threat. This may stimulate a desire to turn weakness into strength, the 'Never again' becomes a wide-carried acceptance or even celebration of what is perceived as 'defensive violence'.<sup>202</sup> The moral superiority associated with the victim role makes it hard to condemn such violence. Bosnia is dominated by a constant stress on the threat of hostilities breaking out again.<sup>203</sup> The 'defensive violence' is then dangerously close. We can see this in the chorus of one of the songs of aforementioned rapper Genocide: "Never Again will we Kneel, If Bosnia Cries, we'll be there on the Battle Field."<sup>204</sup> The same happens towards the end of the documentary which gives a heroic representation of the fighting during the last conflict, speaking of an "honorable anti-fascist fight."<sup>205</sup> Possibly more telling is that young Bosniaks have told me that they are prepared for another war in which they believe people will want to take revenge.<sup>206</sup> This combines the feeling of self-defense and vengefulness.

The cultural memory of Bosniak nationalism thus continues the same ('enlightened') rationality that was responsible for the emergence of the war. It does so by forming a Bosniak culture industry that both neutralizes and instrumentalizes the suffering, and thus betrays it. The last enhances the identity concepts of Bosnian Muslims as victims and Orthodox Serbs as aggressors. Adorno, as a fierce opponent of instrumental reason, would have abhorred of this instrumentalization. Art is his beacon of hope since "art denounces the particular essence of a ratio that pursues means rather than ends." In the next chapter we will see if and how this is present in BiH.

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<sup>200</sup> Edin Hasanbegovic (activist and guide), interview by the author, Sarajevo-Srebrenica, July 2018.

<sup>201</sup> Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 39.

<sup>202</sup> Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*, 50-51.

<sup>203</sup> Husanovic, "Resisting the Culture of Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 151.

<sup>204</sup> Genocide rap, *Srebrenica (Never Again)*, (Hawkes Bay: Terrorize Records, 2010).

<sup>205</sup> Huseinovic, *Bosniaks - Genocide in Continuity*, 02:09:22.

<sup>206</sup> Nermina Ibrahimovic (former conservator Musuem of Crimes against Humanity and Genocide, 1992-1995) and Ahmed Ibrahimovic (activist), interview by the author, Sarajevo, July, 2018. & Edin Hasanbegovic (activist and guide), interview by the author, Sarajevo-Srebrenica, July 2018.

## Hope(lessness)

It is July 1999, four years since the end of the Bosnian War and the Kosovo War has just ended. Little seems to have changed in those intermediate years: nationalist Serbs and Muslims still fight each other for respectively a 'Greater Serbia' and an independent country, with innocent civilians bearing the brunt. Kosovo lays in ruins and Richter's lament for Sarajevo might as well have been called 'Pristina'. In the midst of these ruins Sokol Beqiri, an artist from a small town in Kosovo, looks at the remnants of 'his' Western-Balkans, and decides that it is time to do something. That 'something' meant making art that has made Beqiri one of the most relevant Balkan artists of recent times.

He did so in a careful manner, realizing that his art might fall victim to the ideological traps described in the previous chapter. Art, for Beqiri, had to transcend this and thus go beyond the categories of Serbs as



Figure 5: Sokol Beqiri, *The End of Expressionism: Painted by a Madman*, 2001, Photographic project, Pristina: National Gallery of Kosovo.

perpetrators and Kosovans as victims, reaching the point where not the suffering of a Kosovan but of a human being is expressed.<sup>207</sup> Beqiri hoped this venture would "change the world".<sup>208</sup> A few years later, completely disillusioned, Beqiri said goodbye to art, claiming that art was dead. He reached this conclusion by observing that art is nothing more than a "business like everything else."<sup>209</sup> He expresses this view visually with his series "The End of Expressionism: Painted by a Madman". Beqiri says that "With that series I am profiting from barbarism. (...) You create the work and try to sell it for as much as you can."<sup>210</sup> What Beqiri expresses here is similar to Adorno's concept of the culture industry and its attempts to incorporate suffering/art by contorting it into commodities with an entertainment value. Beqiri

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<sup>207</sup> Lorina Hoxha, "Sokol Beqiri: If an artist has a mission, it's to testify that there is no art," *Kosovo 2.0*, September 5, 2017, <http://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/sokol-beqiri-artist-mission-testify-no-art/>.

<sup>208</sup> Hoxha, "Sokol Beqiri: If an artist has a mission, it's to testify that there is no art."

<sup>209</sup> Hoxha, "Sokol Beqiri: If an artist has a mission, it's to testify that there is no art."

<sup>210</sup> Hoxha, "Sokol Beqiri: If an artist has a mission, it's to testify that there is no art."



demonstrates this principle by altering two press photos of killed Kosovan boys in such a way that beauty becomes visible, making them fit for commodified entertainment (Figure 5).

So far, Beqiri and my reading of Adorno reach remarkably similar conclusions. However, from this point onwards they dramatically diverge. Beqiri namely concludes that art has no social power. He epitomizes this in his work "When Angels are late" in which one sees a reproduction of Andrea del Sarto's "Il sacrificio di Isacco". In this reproduction the painting contains a hole, when one looks through it one sees footage of a head being kicked by an army boot, art is thus not the angel capable of stopping the violence of which Beqiri mistook it to be. Hence Beqiri's affirmation of Adorno's statement that it is indeed "barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz."<sup>211</sup> Adorno has however never meant that art should therefore not be produced anymore, quite the contrary, he thought that "(...)it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it."<sup>212</sup>

## Circle and line

*If I were to live in France or Norway... I, as well, would like to or would make works that analyze or study the relationship between "line" and "circle". But look at me and look where I live, I can't just stand with my arms crossed, I have to make art that is socially engaged(...).*<sup>213</sup>

The abovementioned quote is of an ex-Yugoslavian artist that Ibro Hasanovic, a Bosnian artist, once stumbled upon. The text has become part of one of Hasanovic's own artworks: depicting, a circle and a line. This artwork is more than a witty reaction to the statement of that Yugoslavian artist. Hasanovic calls the statement "naïve", thereby suggesting that lines and circles do say something about the society that they are created in.<sup>214</sup> This interpretation of Hasanovic's work resonates with Adorno's thoughts about art, seeing it as one of the bastions to resist a "false society". This falseness is expressed in suffering which hints to the repressed non-identical.<sup>215</sup> Art was Adorno's beacon of hope, since it is furthest removed from the rationality that tries to neutralize/instrumentalize the suffering.<sup>216</sup> It is thus the utmost place to communicate the suffering as a path to the suppressed non-identical.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Hoxha, "Sokol Beqiri: If an artist has a mission, it's to testify that there is no art."

<sup>212</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 188

<sup>213</sup> Ibro Hasanovic, *Circle and Line*, Vinyl on wall (Galleria d'Arte Moderna Palazzo Forti, Verona, 2009), <http://www.ibrohasanovic.com/works/circleandline.html>.

<sup>214</sup> Hasanovic, *Circle and Line*, <http://www.ibrohasanovic.com/works/circleandline.html>.

<sup>215</sup> Rob van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 249.

<sup>216</sup> Van Liere, "Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer," 332.

<sup>217</sup> Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 14.

However, it is for that exact reason that the artwork cannot duplicate society's suffering directly, that would after all give the non-identical an identity and lead to conceptualized suffering. In the previous chapter we have seen that this would not resist the falseness but rather affirm it.<sup>218</sup> Adorno stated it in the following words: "If art cedes its autonomy, it delivers itself to the machinations of the status quo."<sup>219</sup> What art should do instead, is set our knowledge in motion, without arriving at a 'fixed' point.<sup>220</sup> The suffering/non-identical can thus not be depicted directly but only by using depictions that function as pre-images (*Vorbild*) to an ulterior image (*Bild*). This makes the non-identical/suffering shine through, as in an apparition. This shining through is what Adorno called the antinomy of showing and disappearing, since it disappears at the same time as it appears. It thus escapes the grip of rationality.<sup>221</sup> This practice makes an artwork enigmatic and asks for interpretation, it lets the untruth of society shine through and stimulates the onlooker to search for its antithesis: truth.<sup>222</sup> In this truth the non-identical would not be suppressed, it functions as utopia. Since our rationality is involved in the process of suppressing the non-identical, the utopia cannot be grasped rationally without being immediately turned into dystopia.<sup>223</sup>

An example of Hasanovic's work that is in line with Adorno's thought is his video project "A Short Story". It begins with the claim that myths have a great influence on the formation of history. The influence this has on the way reality is perceived is suggested at the start of the video.<sup>224</sup> The frame of a peaceful hilly scenery suddenly starts to turn sideways, the crackling sound mimicking the falling or burning of a tree. The camera is positioned inside this toppling tree. This image functions as a *Vorbild* to a *Bild*: the tree that falls indicates something else. A suggestion of what this might be is offered by Adorno's debate with idealist philosopher Edmund Husserl about the possibility of a tree burning down. Husserl stated that the fact that we can still talk about the tree even after it has burned down proves the adequacy of our concepts in catching reality. For Adorno it was exactly the other way around: the truth is that objects change, and this highlights the untruth of concepts in catching the heterogeneity, complexity and movement of reality.<sup>225</sup> The essence of reality, the non-identical, is not pierced through by concepts and the use of concepts is thus rather a false projection of society on what 'reality' is. The falling tree can

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<sup>218</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 259 & Adorno, "Commitment," 184.

<sup>219</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 237.

<sup>220</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 249.

<sup>221</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 78-81.

<sup>222</sup> Van Gerwen, *Moderne filosofen over kunst*, 259.

<sup>223</sup> Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 55.

<sup>224</sup> Ibro Hasanovic, *A Short Story*, Video, 10:20 (Tourcoing: *Le Fresnoy studio national des arts contemporains*, 2011), <http://www.ibrohasanovic.com/works/ashortstory.html>.

<sup>225</sup> Susan F. Buck-Morss, "TW Adorno and the Dilemma of Bourgeois Philosophy," *Salmagundi* 36, no. unknown (1977): 80.

be seen as hinting to this discussion in which it seems to take Adorno's position. This is because exactly by this false projection our concepts corrupt reality, recognizing what we project onto it and presenting this as 'facts'.<sup>226</sup> The same happens in myths, the reason why Adorno saw them as closely related to the project of enlightenment.<sup>227</sup> The metaphor is then twofold: the falling of the tree hints to our inability to grasp reality, but exactly this inability opens up the possibility to 'change' reality, either by myths or concepts. This opens up the interpretation that it is our false perception that caused the 'tree' to fall in the first place.

A glimpse of what kind of 'facts' such myths can bring about is suggested later on in the video: we see a man fiercely telling a myth, originating from a local imam, about past and future wars in Bosnia. His



Figure 6: Ibro Hasanovic, *A Short Story*, Video, 10:20 minutes (Tourcoing: Le Fresnoy studio national des arts contemporains, 2011), <http://www.ibrohasanovic.com/works/ashortstory.html>.

audience is a group of young kids and the onlooker(s) of the video. After some time, the frame is shifted again: the image of the silently listening kids is slowly turned upside down while the frame is coloring more and more red and eerie sounds reach an unsettling apotheosis. The suggestion here is manifold but one thing stands out: the perception, reflected in the camera, is turned around, formed and dictated by the myth just being told: the blood red and the alarming sounds promise little good (Figure 6). With such myths, the concepts of "friend or foe" and all their consequences are around the corner.<sup>228</sup>

Through a play with *Vorbild* and *Bild* Hasanovic manages to let the untruthfulness of our perceived reality and the suffering this might produce shine through. This lets us seek to 'truth' which is not offered. The enigmatic character of the work stays alive, moving our thinking without letting it arrive at a fixed point.

<sup>226</sup> Frisby "The Popper-Adorno controversy," 112.

<sup>227</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xviii.

<sup>228</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 167.

## Adorno in politics

This thesis has used Adorno's theory as a hermeneutical tool to understand the post-war situation in Bosnia. It therefore interprets nationalism in BiH as an instance of identity-thinking emanating from enlightenment rationality. Considering this acceptance, I also accept the potential of escaping/countering enlightenment ideology that Adorno ascribed art with. However, it would be ironic to treat Adorno's theory as an ideology in itself, by blindly following it. It can be criticized on numerous points, of which most extend the scope of this thesis. Yet, one point of critique is important for Bosnia's situation. This relates to Adorno and Horkheimers thought that the only way to prevent future atrocities from happening is a thorough reform of enlightenment by philosophy and art. They claimed that there are no other options since enlightenment is totalitarian and every intellectual critique of it will only lead to a strengthening of the rationality that is initially opposed.<sup>229</sup> Every political initiative, no matter how radical, will produce "enemies of difference", aimed at prosecuting the non-identical of minority groups.<sup>230</sup> To judge if this is necessarily true extends both the scope of this thesis and my own knowledge. It does however strike me as clear that even in the, possibly inherently problematic, enlightenment rationality, something has to be and can be done to alleviate the situation in Bosnia beyond the sphere of art and philosophy. I therefore believe that Beqir's statement that "you fight politics with politics," combined with Adorno's insights does carry potential to improve the situation in BiH. I feel strengthened herein by Adorno himself and his incidental focus on education's potential to act against fascist ideology while operating in the status quo.<sup>231</sup>

It extends the scope of this thesis to give an extended overview of hopeful societal and political projects, but it is worthwhile to note the work of a few initiatives. The first is the *Grupa Spomenik* (Monument Group). Their call is not a call for less but for more politics. They claim that the war memory in BiH has suffered from de-politicizing. The group states that the individual victims of the Bosnian War are being reduced to tools of the dominant ethno-religious ideologies by the aforementioned connection

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<sup>229</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 3.

It transcends the scope of this thesis to assess the truth claim of this statement and I think it is not necessarily true as I will set out in the thesis itself. Yet, ironical and very tragic proof of the very real possibility that critique can be counterproductive is offered by the reading of Adorno himself by contemporary anti-Semites. More hereon can be read in the following article: Les Back. "Aryans reading Adorno: cyber-culture and twenty-first century racism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 4 (2002): 628-651.

<sup>230</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 171-172.

<sup>231</sup> Tyson Lewis, "From aesthetics to pedagogy and back," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 1-12.

between religion, science and politics who ascribe the victims with a conceptual identity.<sup>232</sup> They claim that something remains in this process, a surplus that is not covered by the identitarian concepts.<sup>233</sup> The aim of the group is then to respect this individuality, freeing it from their victim-position that is reducing the subject to a single fixed identity and its interest.<sup>234</sup> Out of this new individuality, the group reaches the conclusion that all victims are equal as victims and that there is only a thin demarcation line between perpetrators and victims.<sup>235</sup> The call is then, and here they depart from Adorno, to both emancipate these victims into politics, and to show how politics instrumentalize ethno-religious victimhood. This would break the ideological taint of victimhood.<sup>236</sup> They do so by hosting debates, exhibitions and performances, supported by texts and theories, in which sensitive topics are discussed by people from very diverse backgrounds.<sup>237</sup>

Another hopeful example is offered by the *Centre for Nonviolent Action* (CNA). This platform acknowledges how the war has shaped narratives which keep the hostile identities alive and might stimulate the recurrence of violence. The actors of this group resist this identity thinking and its reflection in simplistic concepts of perpetrator and victim. In these concepts perpetrators are dehumanized while the victims get a label of absolute purity attached to them. The use of such concepts implies homogeneity which is all too often imposed on the whole ethnic group to which the perpetrators/victims belong.<sup>238</sup> Such conceptions are challenged by the CNA. The platform believes war veterans and victim groups have an important role in this, because they are regarded as the epitome of the concepts of perpetrator/victim and have a considerable amount of respect amongst the population. Instead of being instrumentalized by nationalistic ideologies the CNA believe that such groups should acknowledge each other, 'humanize' the other as to break the Manichean perception of the conflict. This could pose a real option for reconciliation by setting an example.<sup>239</sup> Examples of their work are workshops and joint commemorations in which they include war veterans of the three warring sides.<sup>240</sup> By such initiatives the platform hopes to, amongst others, deconstruct the enemy-image and its underlying nationalism to reach an inclusive culture of

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<sup>232</sup> Husanovic, "Resisting the Culture of Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 147-153.

<sup>233</sup> Arsenijevic, Husanovic and Wastell,, "A Public Language of Grief," 271.

<sup>234</sup> Arsenijovic, "Gendering the Bone", 195.

<sup>235</sup> Arsenijevic, Husanovic and Wastell,, "A Public Language of Grief," 261-271.

<sup>236</sup> Arsenijovic, "Gendering the Bone," 196.

<sup>237</sup> Arsenijovic, "Gendering the Bone," 203.

<sup>238</sup> Nenad Vukosavljević, "One Process: Tackling the Past and Reckoning With the Future," *Peacelab*, October 4, 2018, <https://peacelab.blog/2018/10/tackling-the-past-and-reckoning-with-the-future>.

<sup>239</sup> Vukosavljević, "One Process: Tackling the Past and Reckoning With the Future."

<sup>240</sup> CAN, "Peacebuilding Training for War Veterans: How to Cool Down the "Cold War"," *Centre for Nonviolent Action*, July 26, 2018, <https://nenasilje.org/en/2018/peacebuilding-training-for-war-veterans-how-to-cool-down-the-cold-war/>.

remembrance. In this way they hope to honor the suffering of the 'other' which in fact is the suffering of everyone.<sup>241</sup>

## Reconsidering the religious potential

The religious potential as described at the hand of Appleby in chapter one is very real. Especially in Bosnia where the religion and nationalism is heavily intermingled. When religious institutions stop supporting the nationalistic ideologies, the fundament of Bosnian nationalistic ideologies will seriously tremble. Religious leaders and institutions would however also risk a loss of relevancy. This might explain the rather negative or ambiguous stance some religious leaders take towards the other communities. But there are hopeful initiatives that carry serious potential. The 2017 CAN commemoration at the former Vozuca battleground deserves attention in this regard. At this happening the Centre managed to involve religious actors. Veterans were present alongside an imam, Orthodox-and Catholic priest to honor the victims and talk about their war experiences.<sup>242</sup>

This potential is further developed by *The International Forum Bosnia*. This organization is made up of a diverse group of Bosnian people from various professional backgrounds and religious/ethnic communities, from technicians to religious actors like friar Mile Babic.<sup>243</sup> The organization states that they want to form a new intellectual community which can discover and research what is needed for renewed trust in Bosnia. In this endeavor they set out to deconstruct ideologies based on ethnicity and religion.<sup>244</sup> One of their projects is focused on interreligious dialogue in which they explicitly set out to revive what they see as the strong religious foundation for liberal ideas like tolerance and co-existence. They do so by conferences, round-table conversations, publications and campaigns in which they co-operate with religious leaders in BiH to spread this religious knowledge of interreligious dialogue, understanding and tolerance.<sup>245</sup> An example of such a project is the *Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week*, which took place in August 2018. During this week the question was asked how plurality in Bosnia (mainly in religion)

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<sup>241</sup> Ivana Franović and Nenad Vukosavljević, ed., *War of Memories* (Sarajevo/Belgrade: Centre for Nonviolent Action, 2016), 227.

<sup>242</sup> Nedžad Novalić, "War Veterans Visit the Former Vozuća Battleground: Let me ask you, what was it like for you?," *Centre for Nonviolent action*, July 12, 2017, <https://nenasilje.org/en/2017/war-veterans-visit-former-vozuca-battleground-let-ask-like/>.

<sup>243</sup> "Members of the Management Board," *The International Forum Bosnia*, accessed December 9, 2018, <http://www.forumbosna.org/members-of-the-management-board>.

<sup>244</sup> "About IFB," *The International Forum Bosnia*, accessed December 9, 2018, <http://www.forumbosna.org/about-ifb>

<sup>245</sup> "Centre for Interreligious Dialogue," *The International Forum Bosnia*, accessed December 9, 2018, <http://www.forumbosna.org/centre-for-interreligious-dialogue>.

can be celebrated instead of functioning as an instrument of modern ideologies like nationalism. The aim is to “rediscover” the religious core which celebrates the difference of the religious foundations in their common goal: to work in the image of God for all that is good.<sup>246</sup> During this week, Catholic friar Ivo Markovic spoke as well. The Franciscan priest worked on peacebuilding during the war, often risking his own life. He continued this practice after the war as the mind behind *Oči u oči*, an interreligious service. He is mostly known for the *Pontanima* choir in which he managed to get people from Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic and Jewish backgrounds to jointly sing the religious songs of these traditions. The choir has become highly successful with 60 members and over 300 concerts worldwide.<sup>247</sup>

Such political, societal and religious initiatives carry enormous potential to break enlightenment’s identity thinking with its tendency to regard objects and subjects as mere instances of concepts.<sup>248</sup> They are aimed at reconciliation by respecting the non-identical, creating ‘friends of difference’ instead of Adorno’s “enemies of difference”.<sup>249</sup> The individuals do not stop being Muslims or Christians, but such endeavors potentially stop de reduction to such categories. The individual is then not only a Muslim but also the friendly neighbor of the Catholic and both suddenly realize that they are both big fans of footballer Miralem Pjanic. The individuality (non-identical) is thus respected and it is acknowledged that a person is always much more than the identity ascribed to him.<sup>250</sup> This in turn releases the identity concepts from their hostile content, suddenly one learns that not all Serbs are perpetrators.

Ivo has spoken during the 2018 Sarajevo UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in the Sarajevo City Hall, with which this thesis began. Bosnia and Herzegovina might not yet be as tolerant as suggested in the eclectic architecture of the building, but there is hope that it can move towards it. This former library might just be the perfect place to do that.

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<sup>246</sup>Skola Stolic, “On UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, by Rusmir Mahmutćehajić,” *YouTube video*, 25 January 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=190&v=K3fvA4oyUZw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=190&v=K3fvA4oyUZw).

<sup>247</sup> “Friar Ivo Markovic Bosnia,” Tanenbaum’s Peacemakers in Action, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/friar-ivo-markovic/>.

<sup>248</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 74.

<sup>249</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 171-172.

<sup>250</sup> Van Liere, *Geweld, genade en oordeel*, 74.

## Conclusion

The question that was raised at the start of this thesis was: *How does Bosniak religious nationalism after the Bosnian War incorporate Bosniak suffering and how can this be understood as part of a “culture industry” in support of enlightenment rationality as critiqued by Theodor W. Adorno?*

To answer this question, I have first described the ongoing relevancy of religious nationalism in BiH. Then, it was of importance to locate Bosniak religious nationalism in Adorno’s writing. Once this connection was established, the question emerged how this instance of enlightenment rationality answers to the enlightenment’s tendency to nullify the suffering it has created. I will answer this main question by using the clarifying metaphor of a chess game. Enlightenment rationality, very dominant until now, is on one side of the board, facing the non-identical on the other side. By violating the non-identical via conceptualization, expressed by late capitalism’s culture industry and nationalism alike, enlightenment rationality perpetually checks the non-identical. The violence with which enlightenment tries to do away with the non-identical creates suffering. This suffering creates a trace to the non-identical and it thus carries the potential to counterstrike. But, if this move is explicitly expressed, it is prone to be nullified by enlightenment’s chessmen. One way to do so is by incorporating it into enlightenment’s capitalistic culture industry. Enlightenment does so by contorting the suffering into commodified entertainment. The enlightenment rationality thus prevails. In Adorno’s thought this is the main move by which enlightenment does away with the suffering it has created. However, this thesis has shown that enlightenment rationality can also deploy the chessmen of its instance, viz.: nationalism. These chessmen do not resort to a ‘defensive’ technique but launch a ‘counter-attack’. The Bosniak nationalistic handling of suffering is such a ‘counter-attack’. It carries it out by a positivistic handling of suffering which creates a culture industry of suffering. In this culture industry, the reigning positivism makes sure that the nationalistic identity concepts, that enlightenment rationality has created, remain. As we have seen, religion is used in constituting and upholding these identitarian concepts. The explicit suffering then fills these concepts with steadfast content of victims and perpetrators. In the Bosniak account the Bosnian Muslims are the victims and the Orthodox Serbs are the perpetrators. Enns helps to point out how dangerous such victimhood is. In this way, the suffering can directly be instrumentalized by ideologies hostile to what they see as different. This way, a potential ‘short-cut’ is created to recurring violence and suffering. By doing so, the products that make up the Bosniak culture industry ‘betray’ suffering as to support both enlightenment rationality and nationalism as an instance of this rationality. This thesis has thus proven both Adorno’s relevancy for Bosniak’s post-conflict nationalism and located the role of such



nationalism in Adorno's thought. There are strong indications for a similar process to be in play in the Serbian ideology. Further research might also test the value of this theory to other victim ideologies: for instance in the Israel-Palestine environment that the Bosniaks so frequently seek connection to.

These insights pose questions about dealing with suffering in a post-conflict situation. Relying on and furthering the insights of Adorno, I have been rather critical towards explicit depictions of suffering, claiming that such depictions play enlightenment's chessmen into their hands. However, this thesis should not be interpreted as a simplistic condemnation of all the cultural instances discussed. Take for instance the work of Haviv, his work has done a lot in terms of raising awareness about the atrocities in BiH and his work has even contributed to finding justice by its use as evidence in courtrooms. Nonetheless, by the, almost inescapable, machinations of enlightenment rationality his work also acts as grist for the mill of the Bosniak victim ideology. There are multiple arguments in defense of such work. This thesis is not the place for such a debate, but I do hope my thesis can contribute to such a debate regarding the precariousness of depicting suffering in journalism, art and related fields.

One thing is sure, such cultural products will not reach a stalemate in this malicious game of chess. I have given some very preliminary suggestions of better ways to achieve this. I have shown that Adorno's foremost hope, art, is present in Bosnia as a counterforce. However, there is still a lot of exploration here to conduct; a task for further research. I have also shown that there is hope, counter to what Adorno thought, for political and societal initiatives to apply and spread (some of) his insights to BiH. These initiatives might keep playing on the chessboard of enlightenment rationality, but they nonetheless have the potential to reach a stalemate in the game and prevent further violence. This is especially true for religiously motivated initiatives which try to set religion free from nationalistic use. This would seriously weaken the nationalistic identity-thinking. A thorough analysis of such hopeful initiatives could function as a guideline for the international community to assess which projects/initiatives should be given support and which not.

Richter's symphony has guided us through this thesis, forming the musical articulation of the suffering discussed. Listening closely, however, we hear that the symphony is not finished. The machinations of enlightenment thinking thus pose the danger of the chilling squeal to take up the strings and bass that have previously threatened her. So, no matter how touching the symphony, the Bosnian people should lay down its instruments for now. At least, until the moment when Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats can stand next to each other and recognize the lament of the singing woman not only as their own but of their neighbors just as much.

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