

Damir Avdagic

Projekti u dijalogu

Projekter i dialog

Prologue

Adriana Alves

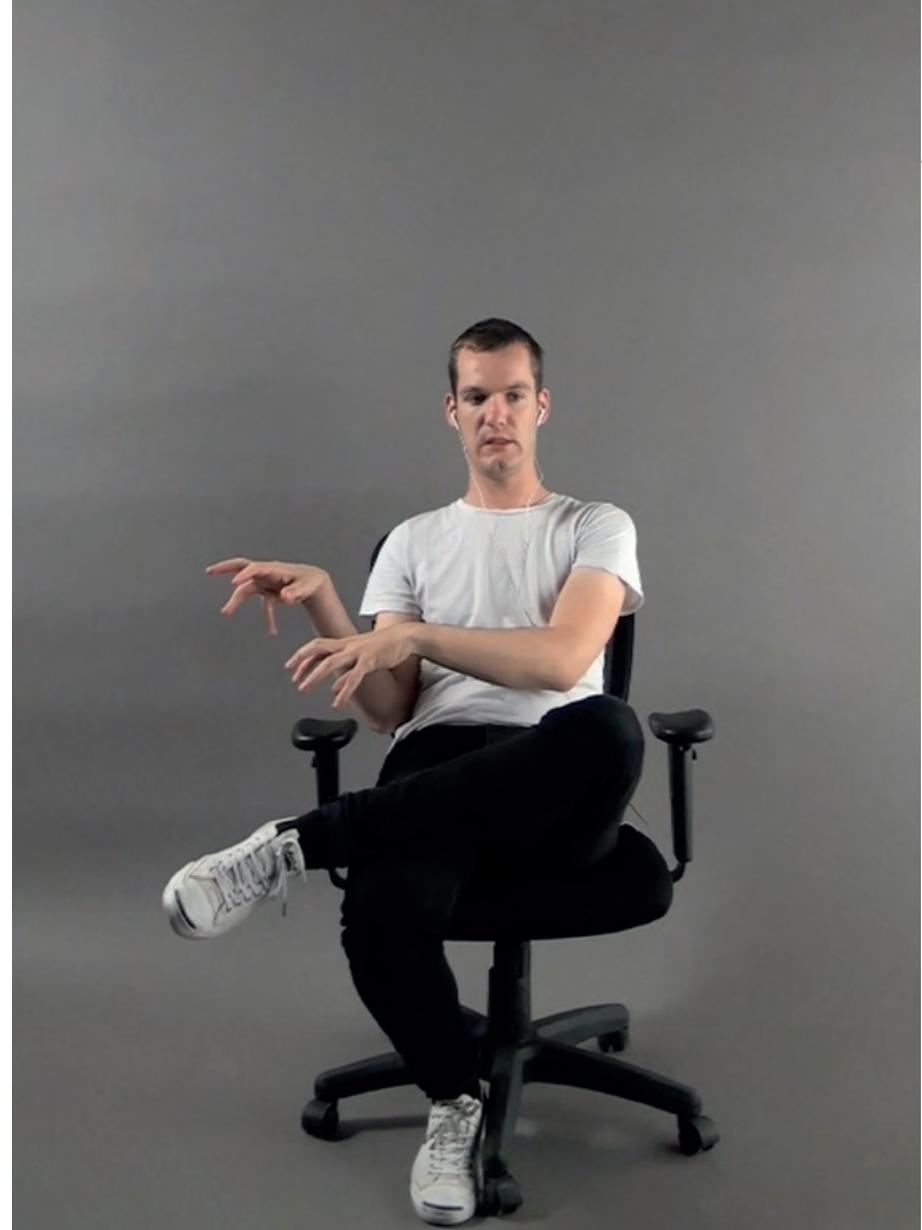
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There are many ways to approach Damir Avdagic's art projects; he works within a clearly delineated thematic frame that accommodates an almost infinite universe. This suggests the complexity in the material the artist works with, and reveals how he, through art, carefully examines his own history. This is because it concerns not only himself or his immediate family, but also positions itself in the long-term history that has contributed to shaping our understanding of the world and the present.

While working with this exhibition, I have tried to understand more of the history of the Slavic peoples. It is fragmented, scattered and consists of countless stories strongly influenced by geography, the struggle for freedom and contacts with other peoples. One challenge has been that all older sources of information about the Slavs were written by others, since the Slavs themselves had no written language until the 9th century. The spoken word was perhaps their most important feature, it was at the core of their self-understanding, of their identity. They referred to themselves as *slovo*, denoting 'those who speak', 'those with words', while non-Slavs were called *němci*, 'the mute people'. With this as a starting point, it seems as though their individual and collective identity was formed, and transformed, through the perspective of multiple voices and through dialogue.

It is precisely the spoken word that is Avdagic's main material. He gathers oral stories, depictions, memories and reflections. This 'raw' material is collected through conversations, from archives and through interviews that are transcribed and processed until they gain a final presentational form. The result is often a sober polyphony. The voices belong to emigrants from Ex-Yugoslavia of different ages, different backgrounds and varying ethnic and religious affiliations. Each and every one of them fled their homeland in the 1990s, during the conflicts that resulted in the collapse of the former republic. Some were children, others were adults, and when they were there at that time, they were at home. They are other places now, and they are again at home.

There are many dislocations in the artist's works, and they manifest themselves on several levels: in time – then and now; in space – here and there; and in how first-hand depictions and stories from one generation are recounted by another. Polyphony and oral tradition contribute to expand our understanding of official narratives about historical events. In Avdagic's work, they

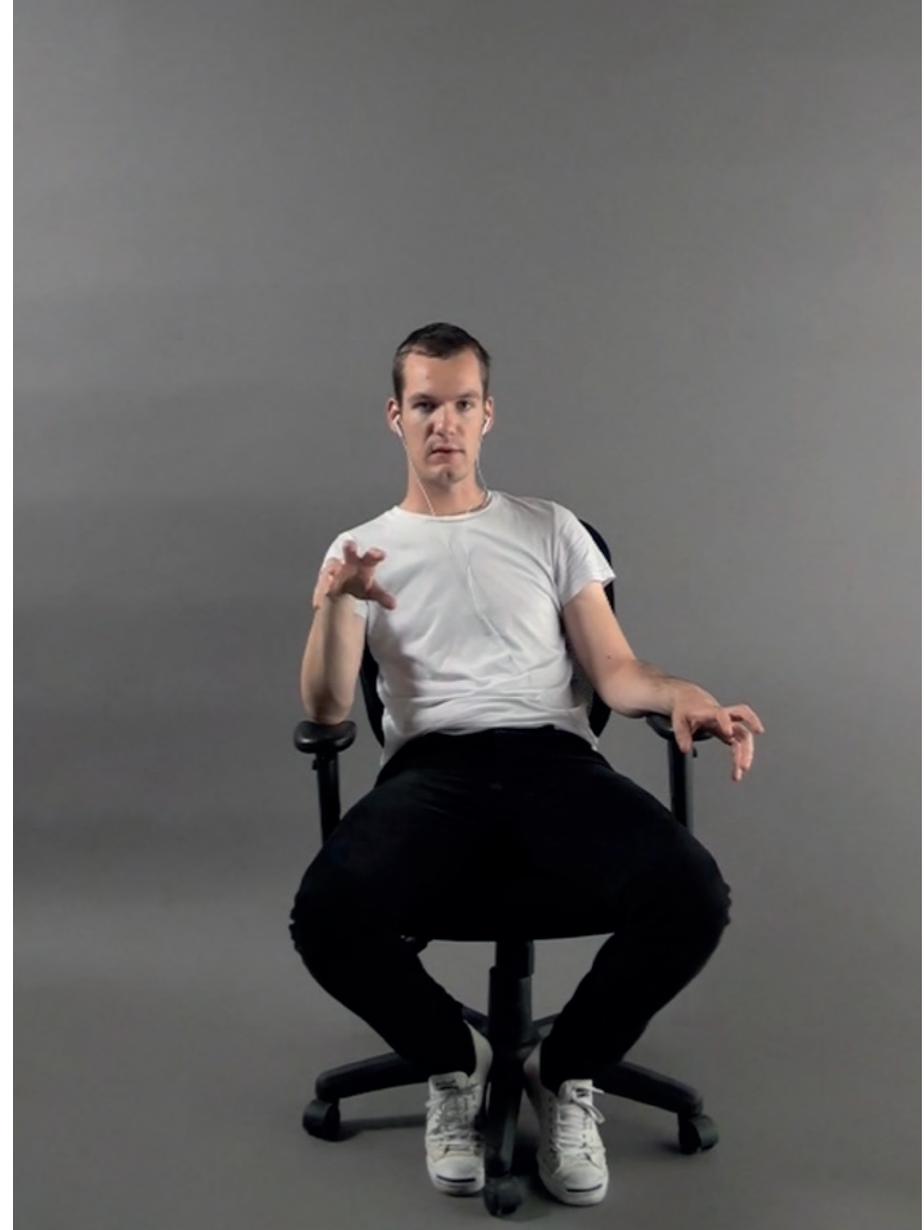


add contexts, nuances, prehistory and 'post'-history from the last 30 years. They suggest macro-historical perspectives, questions of geopolitical power structures, ideology and diaspora, to name a few, at the same time as they cleave to what is human, close-at-hand and universal. When experiencing Avdagic's works, it becomes clear to me that 'those who speak' and 'we who are mute' have far more in common than that which differentiates us.

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But art, if it means awareness of our own life, means also awareness of the lives of other people – for style for the writer, no less than colour for the painter, is a question not of technique but of vision: it is the revelation, which by direct and conscious methods would be impossible, of the qualitative difference, the uniqueness of the fashion in which the world appears to each one of us, a difference which, if there were no art, would remain for ever the secret of every individual. Through art alone are we able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own and of which, without art, the landscapes would remain as unknown to us as those that may exist on the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists, worlds more different one from the other than those which revolve in infinite space, worlds which, centuries after the extinction of the fire from which their light first emanated, whether it is called Rembrandt or Vermeer, send us still each one its special radiance.

Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*. Volume 6: *Time Regained*, p. 932



In search of...

Tijana Mišković

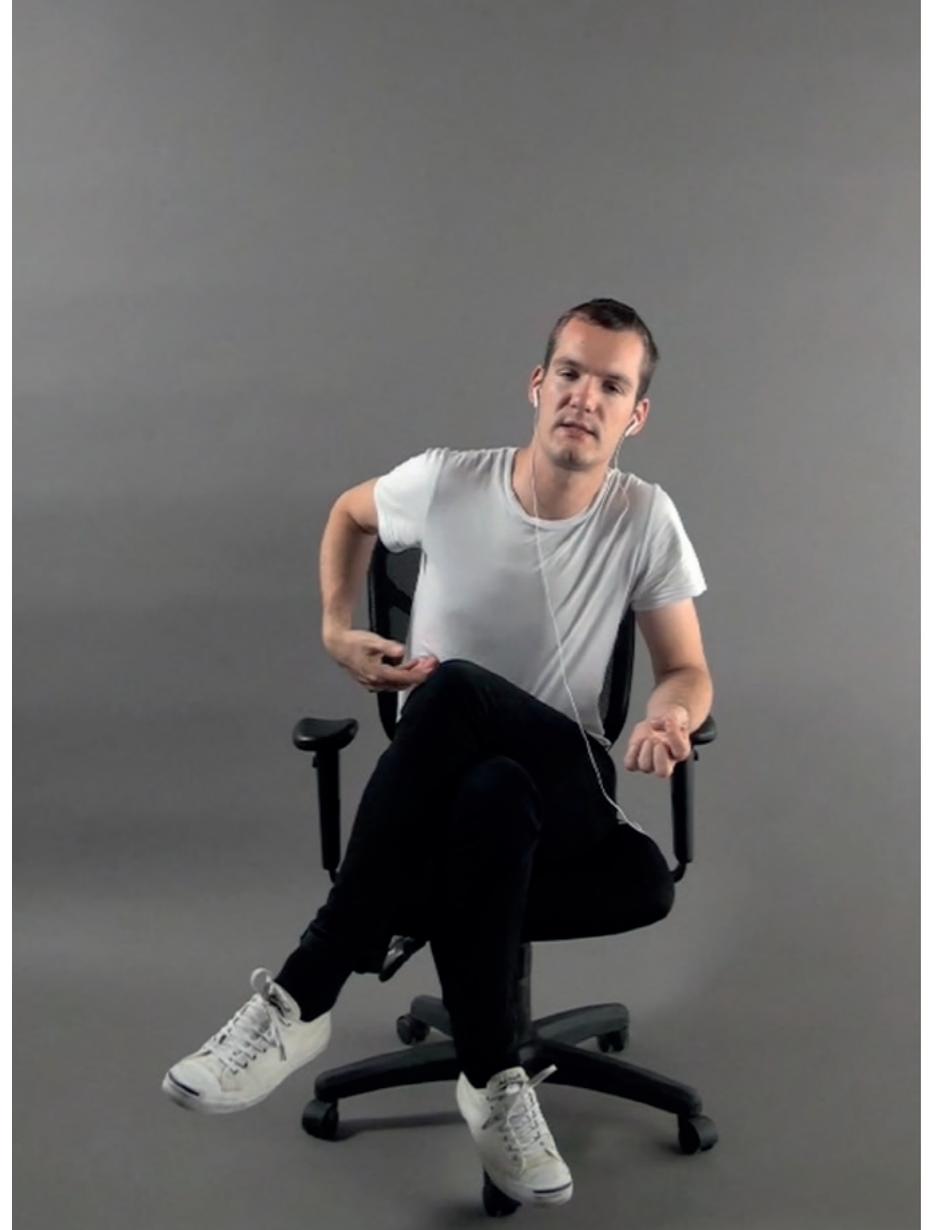
A reflection on the meaning of memory and language in Damir Avdagic's artistic practice

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Damir Avdagic's primary artistic medium is video. This means he expresses himself through moving images with sound. He also uses a scenography that is generally neutral in style. Rather than illustrating a fictive setting, it quite simply shows the setting of the film studio. The protagonists in Avdagic's videoworks appear in situations resembling auditions or interviews. They are not cast on the basis of their ability to gestalt fictive roles but due to their actual social and cultural profiles. The performances include readings, translations and conversations. While the basic principles for the performances are developed by the artist, the participants' reactions are spontaneous. There is thus constant alteration between predetermined and improvised elements in the performances. In terms of content, Avdagic's works activate questions about remembrance and identity across generations and cultures, a focus which is clearly supported by the conceptual and formal strategies of the artworks. Oral transmissions and testimonies thus play a key role in the performative stagings in the videoworks. Here, persons belonging to the Yugoslav diaspora gain the opportunity to put into words their own or inherited memories of the culture they come from – a culture that continues to shape their identity as well as the new culture they have entered.

In general, one could say that Avdagic's works unfold in a field of tension between the past and the present. The past is evoked with the help of personal and collective memories that are embodied in the present via the protagonists' language, facial expressions and gestures. Avdagic's primary interest, however, is not in the historical past but in how the past is remembered and in how these memories influence the development of transcultural identities. Rather than historiography/ official history writing, he is more interested in how the history comes to expression in everyday situations and conversations between individuals. Cultural memory therefore plays a crucial role in the understanding of Avdagic's artistic practice and needs elucidation.

In the following paragraphs, I will therefore look more closely at the concept of cultural memory by emphasising its collective and its dynamic natures, both of which are mnemonic mechanisms particularly relevant for understanding Avdagic's practice. Thereafter, I will turn my attention to Avdagic's



performative strategies, which, by focusing on language, facial expressions and gestures, expose the challenges of translation. Lastly, I will point out the relevance of Avdagic's practice in light of the dynamics of memory and the cultural translations that characterise our transcultural world today.

The collective and dynamic mechanisms of memory

The social aspects of cultural memory are thoroughly described in Maurice Halbwach's pioneering works *Les cadres sociaux* (1925) and *La mémoire collective* (1950). In these books, Halbwach argues that cultural memory is created collectively and in social communities. The connection between memory and collective identity has been developed further by Aleida and Jan Assmann (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Assmann 2011), who, in the 1980s, introduced the concept of communicative memory as including 'those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications' (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995: 126). This type of memory differs from the institutional memory mediated through official memorial sites such as monuments and in institutions such as museums and libraries (Erl1 2011a). Collective and communicative memories are building blocks in Avdagic's works. The works often involve persons with the same cultural background exchanging anecdotes, memories and testimonies that comprise a mutual frame of reference.

In the work *Prolazi izmedju 1980-2021 (Passages Between 1980-2021)* (2021), for example, we see young people who came to Norway as children due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s. The group members sit in a circle and read aloud witness statements and stories about the Yugoslavian conflict. The texts stem from their parents' and grandparents' generation. From time to time their performative readings are interrupted and they start sharing spontaneous reflections on what it is like being a young 'Norwegian Bosnian'. The participants laugh whenever they identify with each other's sometimes-comical anecdotes about cultural misunderstandings. They recognise themselves in each other's stories and clearly share an emotional affection. In the course of the video, it becomes obvious that trans-cultural and trans-generational conditions constitute their mutual frame of cultural reference. As the stories resonate with each other, a sense of kinship and synergy is strengthened among the performers. This feeling of fellowship distinguishes the group from the Norwegian context but also stresses the members' distance to that which is Bosnian-Herzegovinian – things they only know of through the stories of their parents and grandparents.

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Prolazi izmedju 1980-2021 / Passages between 1980-2021, 2021, HD-video, sound, 32:41 min

This kind of group identity and feeling of solidarity are basic principles in a diaspora.¹ Based on William Safran's criteria for diaspora – later expanded by Robin Cohen (2008) – it is possible to emphasise three main aspects of the definition of diaspora: dispersal, orientation towards the homeland, and community fellowship. One could thus say that diaspora is a condition that 1) arises when a group of persons is displaced from one place to several others; 2) is maintained inasmuch as these persons retain an orientation towards the place or culture of origin at the same times as they are part of the new society; and 3) is cultivated, to one degree or another, in a community (Cohen 2008).

The collective and communicative aspects of generating and sharing memories have been crucial for the dynamic understanding of cultural memory in academic circles. Scholars such as Astrid Erll have, since the 2000s, theorised the mobility and flexibility of memory. Erll's (2011b) concept of 'travelling memory' has proved to be especially useful as an overarching term. She describes it as a useful metaphor to understand how memories travel between cultures, locations and social communities (Yellow Brick Cinema 2017).

According to Erll, memories 'are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and, in the process, create communality across both space and time' (Erll and Rigney 2009, 1). She outlines how memories travel through *carriers*, that is, persons who move from one place to another, media such as books and films, *content* that enters new contexts, *forms* that are repeated from one event to the next and thus function as patterns or templates, and *practices* such as actions and traditions that are often passed down from one generation to the next (Erll 2011b).

Persons who, like Avdagic and his family, have fled from one place and settled in another, function as carriers of cultural memories. The memories travel with persons, and their mediation often happens between generations. In his works, Avdagic focuses especially on trans-generational connections and frictions that arise due to migration. This he does, among other ways, by challenging the traditional pattern for the mediation of memory. To be specific, he lets a younger generation of the Yugoslavian diaspora recite lines formulated by an older generation, as in *Prolazi izmedju 1980–2021 (Passages Between 1980–2021)* (2021),

¹Here I think of the diaspora concept that pertains to a traditional 'victim diaspora', which primarily encompasses Greek, Jewish and Armenian migrants, but also the modern diaspora concept that, since the early 1990s, has been used when referring to migrants, refugees and guest workers from other parts of the world.

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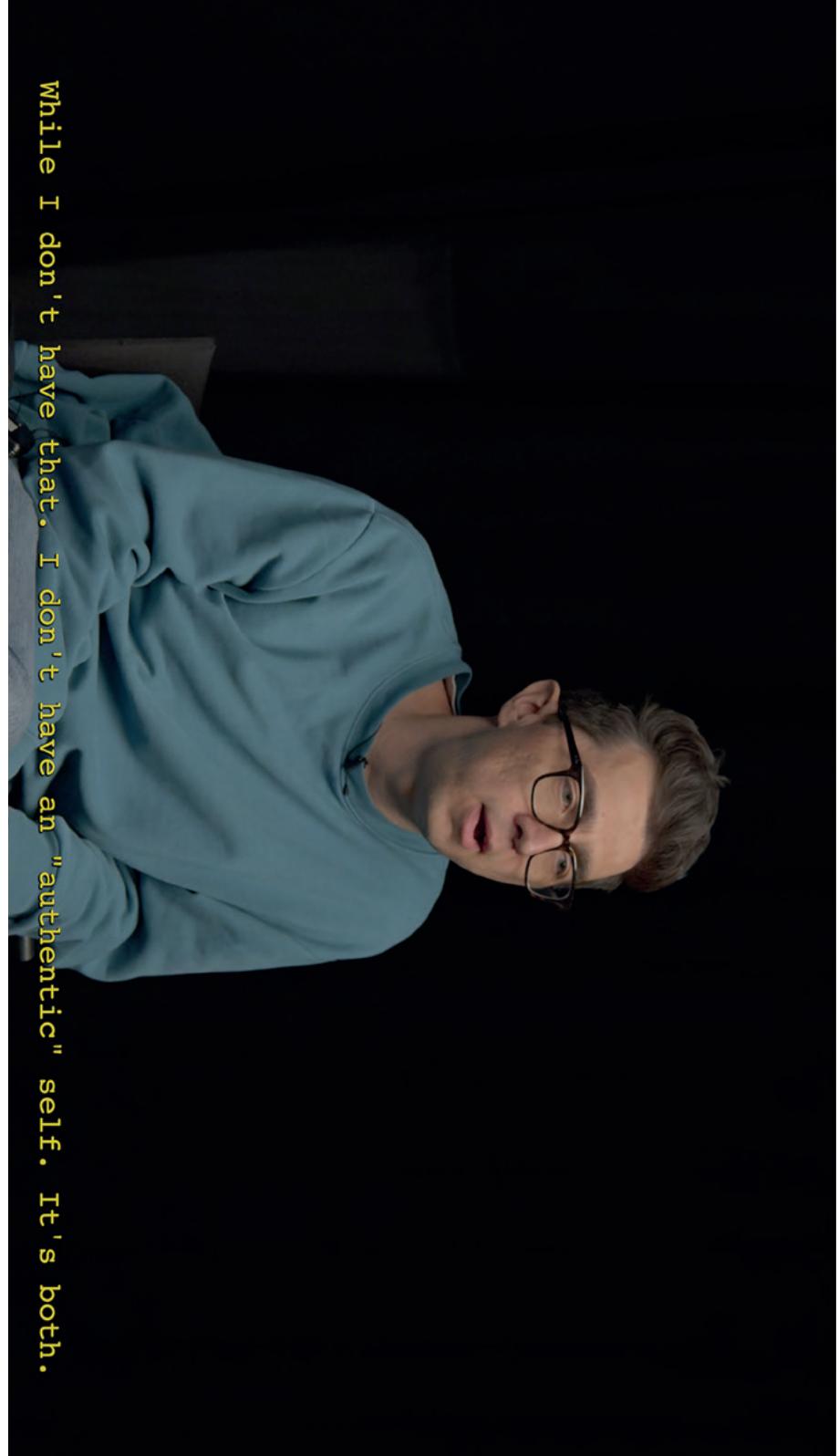
I remember the police woman who played with me while they interviewed my parents,

or vice-versa, when he has an older generation recite lines formulated by a younger generation, as in *Repriza/Uzvraćanje* (*Reprise/Response*) (2018). In the latter, we hear a 60-year-old participant say 'And I will be reading Damir A, who was born in 1987 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina'. He reads aloud from the manuscript and utters a younger person's statements as if they were his own. With this re-enactment, the boundary between the performer and the protagonist is obscured, exposing the complexity of the trans-generational mediation of memories.

For families living in diaspora, the transfer of memories from the older to younger members is one way to preserve a connection to the original culture. This transference often deliberately provokes a feeling of positive nostalgia. Traumatic memories, by contrast, tend to be transferred on a subconscious level. In the work *Repriza/Uzvraćanje* (*Reprise/Response*) (2018), we see the 60-year-old reading aloud the younger person's statements. He says: 'My mum and dad have always been like, you know: "Cuvaj se, cuvaj se, cuvaj se" (Take care of yourself, take care of yourself, take care of yourself) and all that, so I feel I am very anxiety-driven.' The 60-year-old then steps out of his role and continues: 'I am very familiar to that because it is what my wife says to our son. This is the overprotective immigrant mothers and fathers who, from their experience, only knew that life is hard, and that the world is a dangerous place. You know there is a saying in our language: "Koga ujede zmija taj se i gusteru boji." (The one who is bitten by the snake also fears the lizard).'

Several of Avdagic's works examine how these emotional and at-times traumatic memories from the war and the migration are communicated from generation to generation in families living in diaspora. To understand the interaction between a personally experienced memory and a relayed memory, one can, with benefit, use Marianne Hirsch's coined concept 'postmemory'. She explains it thus: "Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation (Hirsch 2012: 5). Avdagic and his generation, who were too young to experience the war in Yugoslavia, have inherited other people's traumatic memories about the violent events, not to mention their anxieties and worries. The older generation's memories live on as fragments or echoes that effect the younger generation's identity.

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While I don't have that. I don't have an "authentic" self. It's both.

Language, facial expressions and gestures

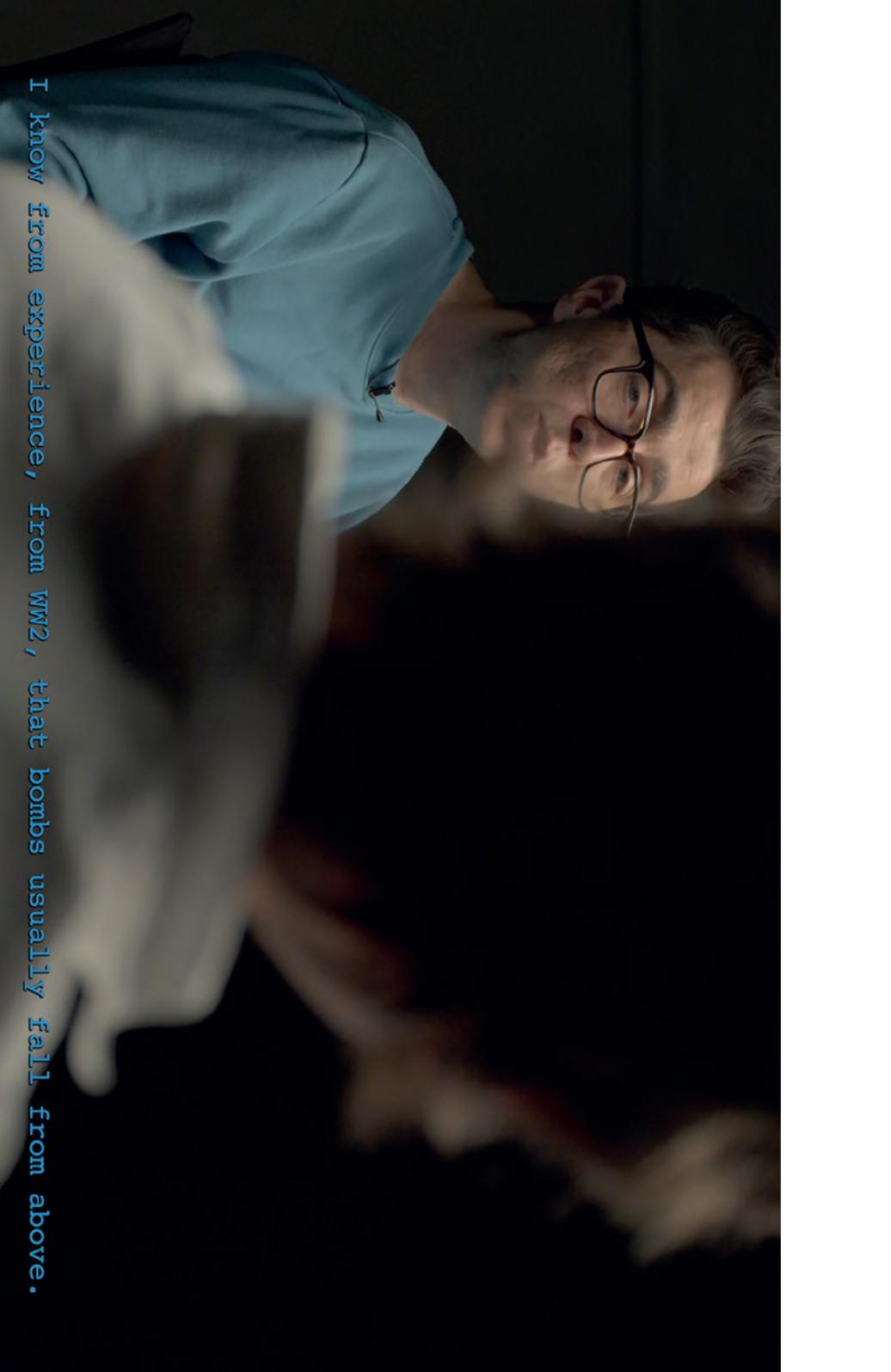
How are these collective and dynamic memories communicated and passed on? It happens through language – and, at least in most of Avdagic's works, through the spoken word in combination with facial expressions and gestures.

When language is used to transfer meaning from one context to another, the meaning usually needs translation. But as is well known, a good translation is not based solely on linguistic knowledge. It requires multicultural understanding, as Umberto Eco describes in the book *Experiences in Translation* (2001). As Eco explains, translation is not merely a matter of making comparisons between two languages, but of interpreting a text in two languages – a task requiring the translator to move between cultures. When the translator has insufficient linguistic abilities or poor understanding of the cultural contexts the translation is intending to bridge, challenges emerge and can manifest themselves in facial expressions and gestures that are used to compensate for the inadequacy of language.

Two of Avdagic's earlier works are good examples of these compensatory mechanisms. In the first video work, *Citanje (Reading)* (2013), we hear the artist trying to read a letter from his father that explains how the father was smuggled out of war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina. Avdagic's reading of the letter is far from fluent. The words are mispronounced, the tonality fails to follow the sentence constructions and the articulation is imprecise. The halting reading reveals an obstacle in the son's and the father's ability to understand each other despite their family ties. Avdagic's lacking ability to master his mother tongue is a direct consequence of the war, the father's flight and the family's migration to Norway. The audio of the videowork is a (sound) image of the son's challenge to understand – not just the language his father writes in, but in equal measure, the context from which he writes, and its consequences.

In the second video work, *Prevodenje (Translation)* (2014), we see Avdagic doing simultaneous translation. He receives a source text via headphones and translates it while looking directly into the camera, all the while gesturing with his hands and arms and making a range of facial expressions. It is clear that the translation process is a challenge and that his body and facial expressions must come to his aid. What he tries to translate is a sound recording of a conversation between himself and his father, in which the father explains the conflict in Yugoslavia. This is a conflict Avdagic cannot remember because he was so young; he therefore has difficulty understanding it to the same extent and in the same way as his father.

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I know from experience, from WW2, that bombs usually fall from above.

In both video works, the artist focuses on the challenge of translation. The staging in these works is devoid of distracting elements. The translator and his struggle to translate are all we see and hear. Nevertheless, this insistence on exhibiting a handicap does not suggest self-pity. Quite the contrary: it seems like an act of courage to show so honestly the struggle that unfolds when one tries to understand a language, a generation and a culture as one should know, but does not. It is a courage sustained through sincere motivation and a desire to understand one's belonging in all its complexity.

This honest statement about wavering between the known and the unknown is perhaps the actual result of the translation; it is not merely a matter of moving from a source text to a target text, for in the process, a new text emerges, a new position situated in-between the source and the target contexts. The translation process can therefore perhaps be compared to Homi Bhabha's (2010) definition of 'the third room', a concept he develops in connection with his hybridity theory that challenges the idea of cultural 'purity'. Both the notion of hybridity and 'the third room' build on a processual understanding of culture, where the culture, instead of *being*, is constantly in the process of *becoming*.

Just as with translation, the hybridity and 'the third room' are characterised by two actions: a rupture that removes one from the original culture, and a reestablishment in a new culture or new system. This reorganisation, driven by both the desire for connection and separation, stimulates a critical renegotiation of established structures in our society. What is a language? What is a culture? What is an identity? These are some of the relevant questions in a world in which migration is an increasing phenomenon. This new perspective emerging in 'the third room' is described by Niko Papastergiadis: 'By mixing things that were previously kept apart there is both a stimulus for emergence of something new and also a shift in position that can offer a perspective for seeing newness as it emerges' (Papastergiadis 2005: 57).

One can justifiably say that Avdagic, through his artistic practice, plays the role of a translator, but it is important to emphasise that he does not translate between different languages or cultures; rather, he exposes the ambiguity, unpredictability and complexity of translation. The quest to which we are witness in Avdagic's works is undoubtedly rooted in his own family's story of migration, but because his methods involve so many voices, the personal experiences soon become collective. Above and beyond this, one can say that this quest is more oriented towards a process rather than a goal. Avdagic is 'in search of'.

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He is in the process of finding out what it means to be a person in a transcultural reality where memory is always mutable and changing and translations are open and unfinished processes. His works do not give us answers. They give us insight into this search that increasingly characterises our world – a world where more and more people live in-between different cultures, times and places, yet without losing their sense of direction or getting lost. Quite the contrary: it is tempting to say that people with a multicultural background are the best at probing the terrain of a globalised world.

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[00:00:49.140] - Speaker 2
Jeg husker fargen på jordbær og bringebær syltetøy i Tanum asymotake. At de så skikkelig dlgg ut.
Knallsterke farger.

[00:01:03.510] - Speaker 3
Jeg husker at vi måtte gå. Hvor var det vi var, Sollihøgda, hvor vi måtte gå til et annet bygg for å få frokost og at jeg tenkte at det var veldig fart fordi det var så kaldt. Jeg husker politikvinnen som hang med meg og lekte når de intervjuet foreldrene mine når vi kom. Ja, var de Rygge da eller?;

[00:01:23.790]
Du var alene med henne?

[00:01:25.140]
Fornebu

[00:01:25.800]
Fornebu

[00:01:26.340]
Fornebu var det, ja.

[00:01:31.860] - Speaker 2
Jeg husker vi kom til et sted som var, et sted som het Rysstad i Valle som var fullstendig fjernt fra sivilisasjonen.

[00:01:41.920]
Selo

[00:01:43.380]
Og alt var sånn nasjonalromantisk og det var sånn troll overalt og det var sånn løftebytter. Så syns jeg det var veldig fint å være der. Vi bodde der bare et halvt år, men da var ilksom alt furu. Det var ikke noe annet enn furu der og skog.

[00:02:34.020]
Jeg husker snø. Vi kom til Vatsø. Så, jeg husker at jeg så etter isbjørner og pingviner for det ble vi fortalt at det var det i Norge.

[00:02:47.040]
I gatene.

[00:02:48.300]
Ja i hagen til folk. Hvor gamle jeg var, jeg vet ikke. Hvor gammel var jeg i 93? 5?

[00:10:05.660]
Jeg husker, det var en som kapret et fly på Fornebu, en bosnisk og han ville hjem eller noe sånt. Det var et TV rom i asylmottaket og alle de voksne så på nyhetene og da husker alle bare: "Å nei! Nå kommer alle til å tro at Bosniere er terrorister, at vi kaprer fly. Han har ødelagt alt for alle som er kommet her"

[00:00:55.980] - Speaker 2
Jeg tenker jo at de opplevde det jo veldig direkte. Bare å si hva du heter så blir du plassert i en kategori eller i en bås. Mens vi opplevde kanskje det som barn da men i Norge som voksne. Så det var litt mer flytende hos oss. Når du bor på asylmottak med folk også fra andre land. Så ser du at alle går gjennom det samtidig men på forskjellige måter kanskje.

[00:01:39.670] - Speaker 4
Jeg føler også at vår generasjon er veldig påvirket av hva slags, hva man har blitt fortalt av foreldrene. Noen har blitt for enda mer forsterket nasjonalisme mens andre er blitt enda mer åpne enn det våre foreldre kanskje har klart å være.

[00:02:01.920] - Speaker 3
Jeg tror det også kom, i allefall for deres generasjonen så var det. Ja, det var mer markant, jeg er enig med deg der, men samtidig så tror det der også var det noen må å trekke nær paralleller mellom flytende-ogvælganger, der også, fordi de var Jugoslovenere. Men så begynte alle disse nye begreperne å dukke opp, Bosnlak for eksempel, som før ble brukt for å egentlig bare omtale alle sammen i Bosnia området. For det var noe Tyrkere kom som begrep på. Plutselig var det noe nytt. Det ble et nytt begrep, muslim med stor M.

[00:02:15.000] - Speaker 2
Ja, så det var 1990 giftet de seg. Så med bildet av de to Bosniaerne, altså fire bosnere. Det var det de identifiserte seg, eller Jugoslovenere, man blir sånn. Hører du? Det blir så vanskelig å fortelle historien i det hele tatt. Fire Jugoslovenere. Det var det de var for hverandre. De var bestevenner. Og så to år etter så blir de delt opp i grupper av andre. Så jeg prøver å tenke litt sånn her hvordan det må ha vært for foreldrene mine fordi, når de kom til Norge så var de yngre enn det jeg er nå, for en identitetskrise det må ha vært, å gå fra å være jugoslovenere til å plutselig må finne seg en ny identitet som Bosniaere Hercegovinere. *

[00:07:40.970]
Ja, det er et sånt ikonisk bilde, på 90 tallet også.

[00:07:43.820] - Speaker 2

Ja, så det var 1990 giftet de seg. Så med bildet av de to Bosniaerne, altså fire bosnere. Det var det de identifiserte seg, eller Jugoslovenere, man blir sånn. Hører du? Det blir så vanskelig å fortelle historien i det hele tatt. Fire Jugoslovenere. Det var det de var for hverandre. De var bestevenner. Og så to år etter så blir de delt opp i grupper av andre. Så jeg prøver å tenke litt sånn her hvordan det må ha vært for foreldrene mine fordi, når de kom til Norge så var de yngre enn det jeg er nå, for en identitetskrise det må ha vært, å gå fra å være jugoslovenere til å plutselig må finne seg en ny identitet som Bosniaere Hercegovinere. *

[00:05:48.540]

Vi, også feiret alle alle helligdager som har vært. Vi har jo feiret Eid hos dere og det var helt magisk for da var det dødsbra mat og jeg lærte hva jeg skulle si så jeg fikk penger. Og vi feiret serbisk påske, det synes jeg var helt konge for da fikk vi farge egg og det jo høydepunkt. Så jeg er veldig glad for det i ettertid, at jeg ikke forstod. For meg var det helligdag liksom og de skulle på besøk til noen, og hvem det var tenkte jeg ikke så mye over.

[00:06:18.480] - Speaker 5

Jeg husker bare tenkte "Kanskje jeg får gave idag"

[00:02:36.960] - Speaker 3

Men så tror jeg for vår generasjon, akkurat som du sier, det er veldig flytende, jeg tror det har vært en didende overgang og så tror jeg vi i større grad har måtte finne ut av hva vår definisjon er.

Følelser
Jugoslovenere
Bosni etc

Definisjoner
et skift i definisjoner

du må fra fra

hvorfor var femalder
velgte å identifisere seg.

→ med Jugoslovenere

→ Bosnia
Norsk

Definisjoner

hvorfor var femalder selv

dan varis følelser selv

[00:35:32.500]

Ja/jeg føler det er mye sånn nevrotisme.

[00:35:33.250]

Ja, det er et nevrotisk folk.

[00:35:33.250]

Ja, som har egentlig vært ganske plagsom. Som man liksom ser et resultat av den situasjonen de har vært gjennom. Og som man føler seg litt offer for, at man blir pålagt de sine nevroser da. Det er alltid så mye sånn: "Pass på det. Pass på det." Det er sånn. Det er sånn. Men det er ikke relevant for her vi bor nå, men det sitter jo. Jeg husker min mor snakket alltid om. Jeg var veldig mye i skogen, når jeg var yngre og vi sov mye i skogen, sånn på barneskolen. Og så snakket hun alltid om en eller annen Maniac. Og jeg lurte alltid på hvem han Maniac var. "De kan være Maniac i skogen." Så tenkte jeg det var en person, men det er jo bare, de betyr det betyr jo Maniac på engelsk, som er liksom en voldtektsmann eller en psykopat.

[00:36:34.660] - Speaker 2

Så jeg var sånn: "Ja ok, det var det det var ja." Det var ikke en kis som skulle liksom.

[00:36:39.490]

Hvor lenge ventet du på å møte Maniac?

[00:36:44.210]

Jeg skjønte liksom, allerede da skjønte jeg at det var noe av henne sin nevrotisme, så jeg var bare sånn: "Jaja, det går sikkert greit å møte han."

[00:37:40.960] - Speaker 3

Det er jo også sånn. Hvem har ikke balkanske foreldre som er sånn. Er det salg på tannbørster så kjøper de 20 liksom. De hånstrer jo den dag idag, det er helt vanvittig. Jeg har snakket så mange ganger med min mamma om det. Hun kom her en dag: "Det var salg på tannbørster." Og så bare: "Hva skal vi med 10 tannbørster?" Det koster 10 kroner og vanligvis koster det 18. Vi har råd til 18 kroner og vi har råd til 10. Jeg har prøvd å forklare det så mange ganger. Hun bare: "Hajde pusti. Pönüda sto?" Vi kommer jo til å trenge tannbørster liksom. Det sitter så vanvittig i de, den der fordi de måtte jo. De måtte jo. De måtte jo og at det fortsatt den dag idag sitter. Selv om vi har samtale på samtale på samtale. Så er det sånn, kommer hjem med 8 liter vaskemiddel. Jeg bare: "Herregud, vi kan vaske det hvite hus liksom."

[00:38:32.020]

Vaskemiddel er, og sånn der

[00:38:32.020]

Tøymykner

[00:38:32.020]

Ja, Tøymykner

[00:38:39.550]

Vi bruker jo halv flaske per gang, det er jo.

[00:38:42.340] - Speaker 1

Men gjør ikke dere det? Har dere videreført? Jeg bare tok tok meg selv i, nå som jeg driver min egen husholdning, hvor mye sånn weird jeg har tatt med meg videre fra foreldre mine, hvor jeg ser på min norske ektemann og bare sånn: "Nema se para ali." Kasta bort på det og det. Og jeg kjøper på Europris sånn store Arjel vaskemiddel istedet for å kjøpe.

[00:39:03.070]

Men jeg rekker ikke fordi mamma kjøper det. "Lucija, jeg har vært på Europris og kjøpt omeksivac, eto pet litara sam uzela." Det er alltid omeksivac.

[00:1:39.660] - Speaker 3

Jeg føler jeg er i konstant identitetssjess, og nå, ved den jeg var liten, jeg husker selv om jeg var kjempe liten når vi kom som flyktninger så husker jeg utrolig mye fra asylmottaket, fra flyktningmottaket. Og spesielt sånn. Vi ble spurt isted hva foreldrene våre fortalte oss. Jeg husker at foreldrene mine holdt veldig mye i begynnelsen, når jeg var liten og prøvde å skjærme meg og beskytte meg, men de glemte å ta høyde for de eldre barna og det var de som virkelig sånn fortalte meg om Chechnikene, Serberne kommer. Jeg var livredd. Uten å ha et sånt bilde av det. Det er en historie hvor mamma og pappa forteller at jeg. De hadde endelig fått et bilde av pappa fra militæret, når han var førstegangstjenesten. Og da hadde jeg ropt ut: "Sei Sei Pappa var Chechnik". Det viser jo at jeg ikke hadde noe forståelse av det. Også senere, jeg vokste opp med at vi skulle tilbake Stoltenberg sa at krigen var over til jul, han bare sa ikke hvilken jul. Så det ble jo en sånn greie hvor jeg virkelig trodde at vi skulle tilbake. Helt til jeg var 14. Og trodde at vi skal bosette oss. Og så var begge foreldrene mine lærere som vi bodde jo en del av året i Bosnia. Så jeg fikk veldig den identiteten og vi husker deg når vi endelig ble her i Norge og alt det der og jeg gikk på videregående og du har den der identitetstransaksjonen og jeg virkelig bare "Nei, jeg er Bosnisk, det er det jeg er, og ville ha det som. Og da husker jeg en av de som jeg så på som mine reserve-besteforeldre sa: "Nei, du er jo ikke bosnisk. Du er jo norsk!" Og det bare treff en sånn mage, klump i magen og det traff så inderlig. For plutselig så skulle hun definere meg og hvem jeg var og det ble tydelig at "Nei, jeg har ikke lov til å føle meg som Bosnisk for jeg kom jo til Norge når jeg var så liten og så har de alltid sagt: "Du snakker jo kvabergensk. Du er helt norsk." Mens for meg så ble det enda viktigere da å være enda mer bosnisk. Også så jeg kanskje helt hvor mye av det norske hadde i meg og. Selvfølgelig, jeg er jo oppvokst her. må ha liksom hver fortjent, men ingentier har helt lyst å ta deg tilbake helt fullstendig. Og så er det i Norge blitt veldig og jeg skjønner den kampen for at innvandrere skal få lov til å føle seg som norsk. De kampanjene vi har med: "Eg er Norsk eg og" Og så har jeg lyst til å skrive litt ut, men hva med oss som ikke føler oss helt norsk og synes det er greit og fint?

[00:1:4:38.350] - Speaker 5

Ja altså bare det at man er integrert tenker jeg liksom. Ja greit. Men jeg kjenner veldig mye, jeg kan gjenkjenne meg mye i det du forteller om den litt sånn identitets, ikke sånn nødvendigvis at jeg har tenkt veldig mye på det. Men det med at, for mine foreldre var så opptatte av at søsterne mine og jeg skulle integrere oss. Vi skulle virkelig, de ville at vi skulle få det til å. Nå har et nytt liv startet, selv om de også hadde i bakhodet planen om at på et tidspunkt så kommer vi til å fyrtte tilbake. Så de var veldig strengt med, dere skal lære språket dere skal snakke norsk bedre enn nordmann og sånn og det husker også på ungdomsskolen, når jeg opplevde det med at "Du er jo norsk!"

[00:1:5:35.080] - Speaker 5

Og så hadde jeg aldri helt tenkt så mye over det før jeg kom hjem og jeg tenkte liksom det var bare hyggelig at de sa det for da betyr det at jeg hadde gjort noe riktig da. Så jeg kom hjem og fortalte: "Mamma og pappa, idag på skolen sa de at jeg var norsk" Og de var veldig sånn. Det var ikke noe at de kjetnet på meg, men det var sånn: "Du må alltid huske at du er ikke norsk. Du er fra Mostar, fra Bosnia & Hercegovina og det er viktig at du har det i deg. Jeg tror de så i søsteren og meg, spesielt i meg da som ble jeg veldig sånn, man blir litt sånn kalt "Norvezanka" eller den norske i familien. Jeg hadde bare norske venner og det ble bare veldig naturlig for meg. Ja, jeg veit jo bare meg på en måte. Men så flyttet vi tilbake noen år senere. Planen var jo at vi skulle bo der og da var det jo også når jeg kom dit så var jo jeg "Norvezanka" norsk. "Du er jo norsk" ikkesant? Så man fikk aldri den der tilknytningen selv om du innerst inne følger.

[00:1:6:47.220] - Speaker 5

Jeg har jo alltid følt, når jeg kommer til Mostar, når vi kjører ned, ned, å herregud, hva heter det nå, ned, ved ja, en sånn vei da. Så ser må jo byen og så får man den nostalgien, du får den der "nå kommer jeg hjem" du får den "nå kommer jeg hjem, jeg kommer til byen". Se familie og får den tilhørigheten, det er veldig merkelig hvordan det liksom. Du har den tilhørigheten men så vet at du ikke har det også. Mentaliteten der nede krasjer veldig med mye av tankegangen min da. Og det med at, Disse definisjonene at du er Kroat, Bosnier, Serber, jeg synes det har vært vanskelig, spesielt når man kommer fra samme land, det blir bare så merkelig.

[00:08:36.170]

Ja, og nesten enda verre når du får spørsmål fra en eller annen nordmann som har vært borti en eller annen person fra Balkan og bare "Ja, hva er du?" Og så skal man begynne å prøve å forklare at "Nei, jeg er jo ingenting, eller jeg er Jugoslav, eller jeg er Bosnier" "Ja, men er du muslim? Jeg har en venninne som er" Og så blir man helt sånn. Hvordan skal man forklare? Man klarer ikke å forklare det for seg selv engang og man klarer hverfall ikke forklare det til en nordmann.

Vær fornuftig

Vår germanisk - definisjonen
og språk.

Three Statements about My Artistic Practice

Damir Avdagic

EN

1

My artistic practice deals with history, but I want to make a distinction between the 'big' history that carries meaning for nation states and institutions, and history as it is experienced by the human body and is carried, transferred and used every day. It is the latter that is of interest to me, and it motivates an ongoing process of conducting interviews, engaging in conversations and searching in archives to collect stories and statements about the socio-political shift in the 1980s and '90s in South-Eastern Europe.

History as a discipline operates with verification and evidence-based material, the goal being to give weight to certain events from a nation's past. Experience-based stories, by contrast, look at events from the perspective of individuals rather than those of nation states, institutions or victors of war. By establishing a view of history from the bottom up, I believe experience-based stories have the possibility to challenge dominant historical narratives and to establish an understanding of how historical events continue to pulsate and create echoes in the present.

2

In September/October 2021, I went to Bosnia and Herzegovina. My itinerary included Banja Luka (my birthplace), Donji Vakuf, Gligino Brdo, Grmeč, Kozara, Mostar, Sanski Most, Tjentiste, Vogosća and Zenica, and I visited these places to see ten monuments erected to commemorate places, events and persons with a connection to the anti-Fascist struggle led by Josip Broz Tito during the Second World War.

I travelled from Oslo to Frankfurt and thereafter to Sarajevo. On the aeroplane to Sarajevo, I met Mirsada. She had fled from Dobož in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Oxford, England in 1994, and was now in her 60s or 70s. She and her husband were enroute to visit her sister in Sarajevo. We started talking, and in the course of the conversation, she told me about an episode at a street kiosk:

I remember one time I went to Bosnia for a visit after the war ended. I was in a suburb of Sarajevo, and I passed a street kiosk. In the kiosk, where the newspapers were, I saw a book, a biography of Josip Broz Tito. There was a large picture of his face on the cover. I stopped and stared at it, but I looked over my shoulder several times to make sure no one saw me, that no one saw how interested I was in this book. I carefully asked the woman in the kiosk: 'Excuse me mam, is this book for sale?' She answered: 'Mam, as long as it is there, it is.' I bought the book but put it in my purse immediately.

For me, Mirsada's story describes a love for Yugoslavia and an emotional investment in the history of anti-Fascism, at the same time as it expresses fear of how this attitude could be perceived in a society so changed after the conflict in the 1990s.

The emotional investment in, and attraction to Yugoslavia as an idea, are things I can clearly recognise in myself, despite my own experiences being very different from those of Mirsada, who grew up during the time of socialism, who remembers both how Yugoslavia functioned as a society and how the conflict gradually developed in the late 1980s. I, by contrast, was born in 1987. I was 5 years old when the war broke out, and I had no memory of it, nor, for a long time, any understanding of the time before the war.

The same fascination I myself experience is recognisable in many members of my generation, not to mention artists around my age with a background similar to my own, who also work with related themes. I have looked to psychoanalysis when thinking about the origin of this fascination.

3

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan writes that the child wants to be the object of the mother's desire. The child wants to be in the place where the mother's desire is, but there is always something else that captures her attention. The mother's desire is fleeting and creates a riddle for the child about what the mother wants. In the book *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan writes as follows:

A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation the Other makes to him by his discourse. In the intervals of the discourse of the Other, there emerges in the experience of the child something that is radically mappable, namely; He's saying this to me, but what does he want?...The desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject in that which does not work, in the lacks of the discourse of the

Other, and all the child's whys, reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a why are you telling me this? ever-resuscitated from its base, which is the enigma of the adult's desire.
(Lacan, 214)

EN

If we read 'Other' in this passage as '(m)Other', we can understand that the child's constant questioning directed towards the parents has less to do with what the child literally asks about and more to do with a fundamental condition, one in which the child tries to interpret the parents' answers, and, by extension, their desire.

'Why is she telling me this?' 'What does she want from me?' 'What does she want me to do (so that I can become what she desires)?'

Our parents' generation, who grew up in socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War and during the Cold War, witnessed a unique system that was neither allied with the Soviet Union nor the West. This system remains as a project that did not exist long enough to achieve its full potential, but I believe many in my generation see it as a possible alternative to the situation we find ourselves in today. It was a possibility our parents had, but which they let slip away.

If we return our attention to Lacan and think of one generation as the mother and the next generation as her child, then I think my own generation's fascination with Yugoslavia, its history and its political ideals stem from the enigma of the parent generation's desire and my own generation's quest for answers.

'What did they want?' 'What did they try to do in this project called Yugoslavia?' 'Why didn't they succeed?' 'Have we inherited anything?' 'What is our responsibility?' and 'What do they want us to do?'

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And she always talked about some "Maniak" and I always wondered who this "Maniak" was.

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