Chapter 2
Artistic Activism, Public Debate and Temporal Complexities: Fighting for Transitional Justice in Serbia

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A critical element of the transitional justice process is the public debate about the extent of guilt and/or responsibility borne by a state. In Serbia, this public debate has been marked by a resistance towards acknowledging Serb-committed atrocities during the wars in ex-Yugoslavia. This resistance ranges from an uncritical and complete denial that crimes were committed, to a sense of uncertainty about the 'truth', to attempts to explain away or justify Serbia's involvement in the wars.[1] Arguably, these debates about Serbia's relationship to the past are not just about the past, or a social memory of the past, but also about the present and the future, how the past is recalled in the future and the future direction of Serbia. That is, public debates about transitional justice involve a sense of temporal complexity.

This chapter, a collaborative piece between a British academic and two artists living in Serbia, explores the role of art within the public debate about transitional justice in Serbia, picking up on the theme of temporal complexity. Both Biliana Rakočević and Jovana Dimitrijević have undertaken a number of artistic projects aiming to stimulate public debate about the memory of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia and the future direction of Serbia. In this chapter, we focus on two particular

[1] Discussion of attitudes about Serbia's relationship to the wars is widespread. See Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik 'Knowledge, Acknowledgement and Denial in Serbia's Responses to the Srebrenica Massacre' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2009): 61–74; Jelena Subotić *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 38–82 and Daša Duhaček 'The Making of Political Responsibility: Hannah Arendt and/in the Case of Serbia' in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe* ed. Jasmina Lukić et. al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 205–221.

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projects. The first, which is an element of Biliana's artistic engagement, is documentary photography of the activities of the feminist–pacifist organization, Women in Black (Belgrade). Women in Black insist upon the necessity of facing the past and assert the need to accept collective responsibility and guilt for the war crimes committed by the Serbian state and society during the 1990s. The second project, 'Section 175', relates to a 2009 exhibition developed by Jovana. In this exhibition, she aimed to highlight the connections between denial of Serbia's criminal past and negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Through a personal reflection by the artists about the projects they have worked on, this chapter seeks to consider how their works have sought to engage with the public debate about the process of transitional justice in Serbia, highlighting the temporal complexities that are inherent in the process. Through their artistic engagement, both Biliana and Jovana disrupt the linear narrative often presented about transitional justice. This disruption opens possibilities for alternative ways of thinking about transitional justice.

It is difficult to define the rapidly expanding concept of transitional justice[2], but arguably, it is conventionally understood by international actors as a predominantly legal process of facing past human rights abuses, incorporating practices such as tribunals and international criminal courts. Certainly, this is the case in Serbia, where international transitional justice efforts have concentrated upon Serbia's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which, as Jelena Subotić argues, has meant that 'Serbia [has] managed to get away with domestic politics as usual, limiting or blocking serious consideration of crimes of the past and individual and societal complicity in them'.[3] While we do not wish to detract from the importance of the legal process, we argue that transitional justice needs to be located within a broader social and political context. This echoes the point made by Bell and O'Rourke that the scope for a feminist consideration of transitional justice lies 'in terms of a broader feminist theory of transition'.[4] Paying attention to the broader context in Serbia would, for instance, notice the oppression of homosexuals and/or public resistance to transitional justice. Creating space for the consideration of alternative approaches to transitional justice highlights the need for a broader conceptualization that notices the social and political context. We argue that these alternative approaches can be viewed through artistic practices as art exposes the temporal complexity of transitional justice.

We aim to highlight ways in which art can act as a critical intervention in processes of transitional justice, rather than merely a means of helping the survivors of an atrocity. As Vikki Bell suggests, artworks tend to be 'poorly

[2] Christine Bell 'Transitional Justice, Interdisciplinarity and the State of the 'Field' or 'Non-Field'' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice,* Vol. 3 (2009), 7.

[3] Subotić, *Hijacked Justice,* 39–45, 47, 81.

[4] Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, 'Does Feminism need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007), 42.

understood as facilitative or therapeutic visual accompaniment', where artistic engagement is thought to be 'merely illustrative or a witnessing of social and political issues'.[5] For us, art can be utilized to explore alternative processes of transitional justice, opening up public debates about the best way to achieve transitional justice via exposing the temporal complexity of the process. Through understanding art as a critical intervention, Jovana and Biliana offer a critique of a purely legal aspect to transitional justice, highlighting the importance of social change alongside the legal and institutional changes. In calling for an alternative vision of transitional justice, we do not intend to fix the precise configuration of that alternative. Attempts to reconceptualize concepts, processes and practices carry the danger of reproducing problems inherent in current conceptualizations.[6] Furthermore, as Jovana suggests, some alternative visions are potentially elitist and exclusionary. However, we suggest that art stimulates the exploration of alternatives and provides a space for reflection and consideration.

This chapter opens with an overview of the transitional justice debate in Serbia and a discussion of temporal complexity. Attention will then turn to a detailed reflection from Jovana and Biliana on their artistic activities before concluding with a consideration of the ways in which art can play a part in the disruption of a coherent and linear narrative about transitional justice. All three authors recognize that transitional justice is not merely about the past, or facing the past, but also about the future and future social memory. Understanding the temporal complexity of transitional justice opens possibilities for alternative ways of framing the issue in a society marked by a cultural resistance and denial of the war crimes committed.

Debating Transitional Justice in Serbia and Temporal Complexity

Serbia has a knotty relationship to the wars and conflicts that characterized the disintegration of Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Officially, the Serbian state did not go to war, and there was little war-related fighting on Serbian soil. However, Milošević's Serbia was seen as the protagonist of violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. It is likely that the Milošević-controlled Yugoslav army actively aided the military machinery of the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs.[7] Contemporary Serbian politics is characterized by a number of highly competing

[5] Vikki Bell 'Contemporary Art and Transitional Justice in Northern Ireland: The Consolation of Form' *Journal of Visual Culture* Vol. 10, no. 3 (2011), 325.

[6] Laura J. Shepherd *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* (London: Zed Books, 2008), p. 172.

[7] Nenad Dimitrijevic 'Serbia After the Criminal Past: What Went Wrong and What Should Be Done' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008), 19.

narratives about the extent to which the Serbian state and society can be said to be responsible for the atrocities committed during the wars in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. These debates continue to inform many policy decisions in Serbia[8] and shape 'the way Serbia is seen by others, and the way Serbs see themselves'.[9]

A particular point of contention centres on the events that took place in Srebrenica, eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 11 July 1995. The Srebrenica massacre is viewed as one of the worst atrocities of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where at least 7,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys went missing, presumed executed.[10] Surveys suggest that around 50 % of the (Serbian) population doubt if Srebrenica ever happened and query the circumstances surrounding these events.[11] These doubts may be a result of complete denial of events, or reflect 'the lack of readiness to publically acknowledge facts that were privately known', or interpretative denial.[12] In 2010, social and political tensions regarding the memory of Srebrenica were reasserted as the National Parliament passed a declaration condemning the crimes in Srebrenica.[13] The months before the declaration was passed were marked by discussions about how to interpret the events that took place in Srebrenica during July 1995: Was Srebrenica genocide, a war crime or a forgery?[14] Another point of contention relates to the extent of Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY, in particular the state's willingness to hand over indicted persons. While high-profile suspects such as Randovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić were arrested (in 2008 and 2011, respectively), views about the ICTY remain very negative within Serbian domestic politics.[15]

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[8] Laura McLeod 'Configurations of Post-conflict: Impacts of Representations of conflict and Post-Conflict upon the (Political) Translations of Gender Security within UNSCR 1325' *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2011), 605–622.

[9] Dimitrijevic 'Serbia After the Criminal Past', 6.

[10] The most relevant ICTY decision to date about Srebrenica relates to Radislav Krstić. See http://www.icty.org/x/cases/krstic/cis/en/cis_krstic.pdf (accessed 10 July 2012).

[11] Obradovic-Wochnik 'Knowledge, Acknowledgement and Denial' 62.

[12] Dimitrijevic 'Serbia After the Criminal Past', 5–6 and Obradovic-Wochnik 'Knowledge, Acknowledgement and Denial'.

[13] 'The Declaration of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia Condemning the Crimes in Srebrenica' Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia (No. 20/10).

[14] For instance, Milan Bačević, the chair of the executive of the Serbian Progressive Party, suggested that Srebrenica was not a genocide and was a forgery made by the Hague. B92 'SNS: U Srebrenici nije bilo genocida' (retrieved www.b92.net on 17 October 2011). In contrast, Slobodan Vuksanović of the Democratic Party of Serbia described Srebrenica as a war crime, rather than genocide. B92 'DSS: Srebrenica—ratni zločin' (retrieved www.b92.net on 17 October 2011).

[15] Jelana Obradović-Wochnik, and Alexander Wochnik, 'Europeanising the 'Kosovo Question': Serbia's Policies in the context of EU Integration' *West European Politics* Vol. 35, No. 5 (2012), 1176; Marlene Spoerri and Annette Freyberg-Inan, 'From Prosecution to Persecution: Perceptions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in Serbian Domestic Politics' *Journal of International Relations and Development* Vol. 11, No. 4 (2008), 350–384.

The ferocity of these debates about Srebrenica and Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY means that civil society groups and non-governmental organization (NGOs) in Serbia seeking to publically assert the necessity of political and social responsibility and the importance of facing the past often face abuse—as documented by Biliana Rakočević in her photography (discussed below). NGOs are generally viewed negatively in Serbia for a range of reasons: they are thought to be unnecessarily critical of the government and too politicized.[16] The concerns held by certain groups, like Women in Black, about 'facing the past' mean that there is a generalized public perception that the campaigns of these NGOs are 'condescending or confrontational'.[17] This suggests that it is difficult for activists concerned with transitional justice to feel that their voice is accepted, and there is a sense of frustration amongst activists that their views about the necessity of facing the past are—generally—not considered to be legitimate or valid notions in Serbia. In this particular social and political context, Jovana and Biliana are working to resist denial, or rationalization of the Srebrenica massacre. Through their artistic projects, they seek to create a space for public discussion about Serbia's transitional justice agenda.

Art can play a role in transitional justice processes aimed at confronting the culture of silence, denial or rationalization.[18] Art can provoke public debate, as intended by the photographic exhibitions of Ron Haviv, whose 'Blood and Honey' exhibition explores the wars that took place in ex-Yugoslavia.[19] The exhibition travelled around Serbia in 2002, finishing in Novi Sad, a city north of Belgrade in September 2002.[20] When the photographs were exhibited in Novi Sad, the organizers wanted to create a space to enable public discussion of the photographs.[21] To achieve this, the photographs were initially displayed without any titles or explanations: instead, a blank piece of paper and a pencil were placed next to each photograph and visitors were encouraged to record their responses.[22] The

[16] Åse Berit Grødeland 'Public Perceptions of non-governmental organisations in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Macedonia' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Vol. 39 (2006), 232–236.

[17] Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik 'Serbian Civil Society as an Exclusionary Space: NGOs, the Public and 'Coming to terms with the Past'' in *Civil Society and Transition in the Western Balkans* ed. Vesna Bojcic-Dzelilovic, James Ker-Lindsay and Denisa Kostovicova (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan, forthcoming 2013).

[18] See James Weaver and Jeanne Colleran, 'Whose Memory? Whose Justice? Personal and Political trauma in Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*' *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2011), 32; Rosemarie Buikema'Performing Dialogical Truth and Transitional Justice: The Role of Art in the Becoming Post-Apartheid of South Africa' *Memory Studies* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2012): 283.

[19] Ron Haviv 'Blood and Honey' can be viewed at http://photoarts.com/haviv/bloodandhoney/ (retrieved 6 December 2011).

[20] Marija Gajicki 'Case Study' in *Documents on Ron Haviv's Exhibition 'Blood and Honey' in Novi Sad* (Novi Sad: Vojvodjanka-Regional Women's Initiative, 2003), 17.

[21] Gajicki 'Case Study', 21.

[22] Gajicki 'Case Study', 21–22.

responses reveal the tensions that shape the transitional justice debate in Serbia. For instance, one set of photographs shows Serbian paramilitary soldiers (known as 'Arkan's Tigers' after the unit's leader, Željko Ražnatović-Arkan) attacking and killing three civilians in Bijeljina, north-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina.[23] Some of the comments written by visitors to the exhibition in Novi Sad suggest that the photograph is doctored or that the photographer is presenting a one-sided story.[24] In contrast, one comment states that 'those who did this… they are war criminals'.[25] While this discussion further highlights the range of positions adapted towards transitional justice in Serbia, we can also draw out the notion that art has a role to play in the public debate about transitional justice processes, aiming to draw out a sense of truth and acknowledgement about the violence committed.

The organizers of the 'Blood and Honey' exhibition in Novi Sad were seeking to stimulate discussion about truth and memory of the recent past. Transitional justice is frequently framed in terms of 'facing the past': the process is said to be about the 'attempt to deal with past violence in societies undergoing or attempting some form of political transition'.[26] 'Facing the past' is generally about the creation of a social memory that is deemed to be truthful. The role of memory and truth is viewed as a critical element of facing the past, as Elizabeth Porter explains: 'choices about what is remembered and forgotten, and stories told truthfully and those covered over or suppressed have massive moral implications for individuals, groups, communities and politicians and influence the direction in which a country moves'.[27] In relation to Haviv's exhibition in Novi Sad, the blank sheets of paper were intended to provoke a discussion that would draw out a discussion about 'the truth' of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia. For the organizers of the Haviv's exhibition, this was a 'brutal project' which was 'very painful, but we thought it was the only way to overcome our problems'.[28] That is, the process of 'facing the past' involves remembering 'the truth' as a means of dealing with contemporary social problems.

Campaigns to reconsider 'the truth' about the past utilize a rationality suggesting that dealing with 'the past' will enable the achievement of a positive future which is deemed morally acceptable. In this respect, an intrinsic connection is forged between 'the past' and 'the future' in the rhetoric of transitional justice, producing a coherent and linear narrative. However, transitional justice is a complex normative process involving perceptions and beliefs about what it means to come to terms with the past. As such, transitional justice has a greater degree of temporal complexity than it might initially appear, as all temporal moments—past,

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[23] *Documents on Ron Haviv's Exhibition 'Blood and Honey' in Novi Sad* (Novi Sad: Vojvodjanka-Regional Women's Initiative, 2003), 118.

[24] *Documents on Ron Haviv's Exhibition, 119*–122.

[25] *Documents on Ron Haviv's Exhibition,* 120.

[26] Bell 'Transitional Justice, Interdisciplinarity', 7.

[27] Elizabeth Porter *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2007), 126.

[28] Interview, Marija Gajicki coordinator of VIVISECT, Novi Sad: 13 May 2008.

present and future—are infused with *interrelated* normative claims and ambitions. Hopes and ambitions about the future direction of that community are related to perceptions about the past and political debates about how to deal with past human wrongs. Utilizing the notion of 'transitional justice' belies narrative coherence borne out of the desire to 'rationalise a set of diverse bargains in relation to the past as an integral endeavour, so as to obscure the quite different normative, moral and political implications of the bargains'.[29] Thus, the temporal complexity of transitional justice in part arises from our 'moral agency [which] determines how we deal with the past'.[30] We argue that art can play a role in disrupting the coherent narrative of temporality invoked by revealing the politicized normative claims of transitional justice.

Artistic Engagement

To consider the possibilities of artistic engagement in a public debate, Biliana and Jovana reflected upon their projects and considered how their works have sought to engage with the public debate about the process of transitional justice in Serbia. The process was as follows: Laura wrote some initial questions that guided a draft reflective account, which formed the basis of discussion in a recorded face-to-face meeting in Belgrade during September 2011 and follow-up email communication. Working with the transcripts[31] of these recordings, Laura edited the reflective accounts for clarity. These reflective accounts were finalized by Jovana and Biliana.

These processes of reflection are a useful way of highlighting the temporalities embedded in our narratives about transitional justice. Our aim is to draw attention to the temporal complexity of transitional justice disrupting the linear narrative (that progress can be secured via legal judgements about the past) we often present. This disruption opens opportunities for alternative visions of transitional justice to complement the legal process. In reflection, our temporalities are exposed as we attempt to explain our actions and beliefs. These reflections highlight the political and politicized nature of Biliana's and Jovana's artistic activities, stressing our perspective that art can be taken as a political statement as the artistic endeavour is taking place within, and responding to, a particular context. The controversy surrounding transitional justice processes in Serbia means that these artistic engagements are a political and politicized statement aiming to contribute to and stimulate public debate about transitional justice.

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[29] Bell, 'Transitional Justice, Interdisciplinarity', 6.

[30] Porter, *Peacebuilding*, 128.

[31] We would like to thank Adam Hardie for transcription of the recordings.

Biliana and Documenting the Public Activities of Women in Black

In 2005, Biliana started taking photographs of the street actions and performances enacted by activists of Women in Black, a feminist–pacifist NGO that has fought for political responsibility for the past 20 years. Women in Black insist that transitional justice is a critical element of their pacifist position.[32] Since the fall of the Milošević regime, Women in Black have sought to reject the social and political denial of Serbian responsibility and guilt through street actions, public campaigns, visiting the sites of crimes committed in the name of Serbia (such as Srebrenica).[33] A central aspect of the group's position on transitional justice is the necessity of facing the past and accepting responsibility and guilt for the war crimes committed during the 1990s. In this section, Biliana reflects upon her use of documentary photography to record the activities of NGOs working for transitional justice through a poem.

For Biliana, her own documentary photography opened up a range of new questions regarding how to capture her sense of frustration about the (growing) difference between popular public opinion in Serbia that preferred to deny the necessity of transitional justice and the campaigns pursued by NGOs that insist upon facing the past (which include, amongst others, Women in Black). She documented a number of Women in Black campaigns during 2008 and 2009, not only photographing the activists, but also the resistance faced by activists. Biliana has captured the various types of resistance and oppression in response to the public campaigns of Women in Black: from the heavy police presence that is deemed necessary to protect their street actions, to the violent chants of the far-right organization Obraz,[34] to the drawing of a swastika on the window of Belgrade's philosophy department by students on anti-fascism day 9 November 2009. These photographs are powerful reminders of how resistance to transitional justice processes is embedded in all aspects of society: for Biliana, her photographs capture hatred.

In her reflection, Biliana explores how engaged documentary photographs can play a role in transitional justice processes, suggesting that photographs are simultaneously records of the past and records of today. That is, there is a sense of temporal complexity in photographs, as they tell a story about how people are reacting to the process of 'facing the past', they simultaneously capture the problems of the present about Serbia's future direction. Via her photographs, Biliana aims to show us how to see, encouraging us to identify the problems and take action to improve the lives of people. These points are reinforced when

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[32] Stašta Zajović *Transitional Justice: A Feminist Approach* (Belgrade: Women in Black, 2007), 61.

[33] Zajović, *Transitional Justice,* 64–70.

[34] Obraz is a Serbian far-right, nationalist, neo-nazi, clerofascist organization who swear allegiance to the Serbian nation and Serbian orthodox religion. In June 2012, the Serbian Constitutional Court ruled to ban the actives of Obraz.

Biliana suggests that documentary photography can be a means of educating young people in Serbia about the wars and Serbia's role in these wars. These pictures, 'worth a thousand words', demonstrate how the transitional justice process is fraught with temporal complexities. Biliana reflected upon her experiences of documentary photography via a poem that she wrote in December 2011. An extract appears below.

> What is Transitional Justice? Another big word?
> I am tired of words, I want Action!
> Transitional Justice as a notion, an Idea of transitional way passing through the Past to the Future, without being secure and certain of Today.
>
> Engaged I became in 2005 when I started to work for Women in Black and other feminist and women's NGOs.
> I wanted so badly my photography to be useful, to be used for some purpose and then I Saw.
> … Nobody cared! I was so shocked with what I SAW!
> How to reconcile all these deaths in Life of the Present … Srebrenica … Vukovar … Višegrad …
> What I have seen I photographed. I saw more, but was crying more.
>
> How to reconcile Art and Life … How to use Art in Life to Show.
> Words are a tool, but too long words make us tired.
> Visual is more practical.
> My Tool is my Photography. I need to reach public. I need to show my Photographs, the records of the Past, the records of ToDay.
> Needing to show you more of I have SeeN, through my engaged photography. It is not Art you will see but the Emotions of Life.
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> There are so many photographs of before. Of before war. Of wars before.
> In Documenting all the Political Transitional Life of Serbia.
> I have seen all these activists on the Left… behind the Death in this Life of TODAY.
> Do I need so much this Past to live in my Present?
> I see. I record. I show You to See.
> Do You SEE? If you see why don't you react?
>
> What is the truth when we organize activities for 8th March, International Women's Day, and we have a cordon of policemen around us?
> For protection or are we, Women in Black, the worst part of this Serbian Society?
> Remember the past to live in your present. But my present is also a problem.
> We have choices about what to remember and what is forgotten.

I will never forget the International Day of Human Rights in 2008.
On one side you have the Citizens of Belgrade and NGOs and on the other side Obraz. Obraz are full of hate, nationalistic and Nazi oriented, and they were showing us the Finger.
Is this supposed to be normal?
On the Day of Human Rights?
How do you feel when you see young students drawing a swastika in the heat of their breath on the window of the Philosophical Faculty of Belgrade?
I am shocked!

How to teach the war of yesterday, the wars in Bosnia and Croatia?
Most of young people do not understand the real issue here.
Mostly they were told and they believe.
The education of young people is necessary to preserve normal life for them.
We must show the truth.

The only way for me is to show you my photographs. You will see. You will feel something.
They said that a picture is worth a thousand words. So please look. See. Watch. Here are the proofs.
Here are the witnesses.
Here are the Photographs.
And you are my public.

In her poem, Biliana describes her frustration about public resistance towards transitional justice campaigns, exploring her strategy of capturing and recording the opposition faced by Women in Black activists. Her insistence that there are choices to be made in what we forget and remember highlights that individuals are responsible for their understandings of transitional justice. Biliana's worry about how to teach the wars is a reminder of the politicized nature of memory: best described as a worry about the practice of memorialization. Memorialization can be described as the 'various processes and forms of collective remembrance… a process fundamental to recovering from trauma and atrocity'.[35] In a study of youth responses to sites of memorialization, it was found that such sites could promote new knowledge and understandings, contributing to an increased emotional understanding of the human consequences of atrocity.[36] Through their performances, Women in Black are aiming to increase knowledge and understanding of Serbia's roles in the wars: Biliana's visual record of the resistance faced by activists is indicative of the opportunity that exists to rethink collective and individual memories. The temporal perspective reinforced here serves to remind us

[35] Brandon Hamber, Liz Ševčenko and Ereshenee Naidu, 'Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization in Societies in Transition' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2010), 398.

[36] Hamber et al. 'Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities?', 397–420.

that processes of transitional justice inevitably involve a reshaping and recrafting of memory. The politicized nature of this process is not merely a debate about *how* to remember the past: it is also debate about future ambitions, about the way in which the past is configured in the future, about the frustrations of the present. Through encapsulating the opposition faced by Women in Black, Biliana's photographs challenge the linear narrative about transitional justice, highlighting the difficulties, if not the impossibility of collective agreement about how the past can be thought about in the present and the future.

Jovana and 'Section 175'

Jovana's reflection focuses on a December 2009 exhibition that she designed, called 'Section 175' held at the Student Cultural Centre, Belgrade. Jovana seeks to make connections between past human rights abuses, transitional justice processes and social violence against homosexuals. Jovana's personal narrative (below), written in September 2011, highlights possibilities for thinking about alternative processes for conducting our daily lives.

> I live in post-war Serbia, and we love to say that there was never a war in Serbia. True. Instead, Serbia took wars elsewhere and caused four civil wars in one decade on the territory of what was known as Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These wars politicised the position of homosexuals in Serbian society—and continue to do so. If you say that you are homosexual, many say that you are not Serbian, and you are told to 'go to Croatia': you are unwanted. It is seen as anti-Serbian to be homosexual. These wars have continued to shape the political reality in which I live, where elite politicians are not interested in thinking about the deeper structural violences that their policies cause. Serbia is corrupt as our political elites refuse to face the past because they fear for their own future. As they see it, any mention of Srebrenica might decrease their popularity with voters. So, they make corrupt compromises and avoid public statements about war crimes to retain power. I have taken much of my political inspiration from the radical ideas of Women in Black, a network of feminist-pacifists that I joined in 2004, and believe that transitional justice is an inevitable link to the future, and the future exists in the present. Even after the fall of the Milosevic regime in October 2000, the refusal to accept political responsibility remained and in some respects we became our own threat. Srebrenica victims remained invisible to many Serbs for quite some time—even 10 years after the massacre. I first learnt about the horrors of Srebrenica after a trip to Holland in 2002.
>
> In this context I started developing a series of performances called Section 175, named after a paragraph in the 1871 German Criminal Code, which was used by Nazi Germany to persecute, arrest, and kill homosexuals. While on a trip to Berlin, I saw a monument to the homosexual victims of the Holocaust, and at this moment I was excited: I was so excited that I couldn't wait to come home and do something with it. I felt that we in Serbia could learn from the experiences and understanding developed in Germany about how to respond to collective guilt and responsibility. Like in Nazi Germany, homosexual people have faced oppression in Serbia. To achieve a transitional justice that includes social reconciliation, it is critical to ensure homosexual rights. In December 2009, I wanted to carry this idea further, and held an exhibition in central Belgrade. My project, 'Section 175' is a very personal story, offering another way of thinking about living in Serbia.

As you entered the gallery space of the 'Section 175' exhibition you were faced with blood-red, worn-out shoes placed on top of shiny silver stickers that had 'Srebrenica' printed on them in white capital letters. I wanted to create this idea of inviting people inside and asking them to look at themselves. The stickers which had 'Srebrenica' printed on them were designed in 2008 by Boban Stojanović, the director of Queeria, a homosexual rights organisation. The shiny surface reflects your face as you look down at the stickers: you are meant to see yourself and realise that you are responsible too for the atrocities that took place at Srebrenica. The shoes that were placed on these stickers had been painted blood-red. Through my activism with Women in Black, I wore out my shoes, and I wanted to show that there was an effort being made by some Serbians to stress the necessity of transitional justice. We were not all completely deaf and blind to the issues: there were women who walked the streets, stood in the streets because they believed in something: the necessity of facing the past.

Apart from symbolising the efforts made by activists to raise awareness of importance of transitional justice, the shoes are also symbolic of different moments of time in the transitional justice process. Shoes hint at those lives that have been lost, provoking us to reflect on these lives. But, by placing them around the gallery, I expressed how the trails of the future are already there and we can see some future genocide because there is one thing that remains after every trial: an error. We are in a constant trial and error process. All of my blood-red shoes displayed in the 'Section 175' exhibition were later part of the 'One Pair of Shoes, One Life' street performance held by Women in Black to mark the anniversary of Srebrenica on 15 July 2010. The 'One Pair of Shoes, One Life' ultimately aims to collect 8,372 pairs of shoes to reflect each person killed by genocide at Srebrenica, to remind others of the lives lost and to insist upon the acceptance of political responsibility from the Serbian government, whose officials and military officers gave the orders for the massacre.[37] I felt that these shoes belonged to this campaign. The intention of Women in Black is to build a monument that would somehow incorporate the shoes. I am proud that my work will become a part of that monument.

As part of the exhibition, I wore a white silk gown and painted my face white with dark black eyebrows. As people watched, I would then whip myself with roses and used a razor blade to carve the Star of David into my arm until my arm bled. I used the Star of David as a way of symbolising the concentration camps of the Holocaust, to make people think about the German experience, and the German process of transitional justice, and how it could be relevant to Serbia.

Performances are important to me. Performances are rituals. It's not impossible to buy or sell them, but if we begin to value this one moment more than anything our hands could hold, it might be a step out of the cycle, and make us think in alternative ways. So, to produce art, or to produce justice, is still just a means to go beyond production. I prefer recycling when it comes to materials. I never buy anything. Performance and hoarding are my methods. I could never say that I need a million dollars to make this or that. How can we expect justice in the world where art is expensive? Transitional justice is the best justice we can have and while I'm not entirely happy with it because achieving transitional justice won't bring back the dead; I aim to go beyond transitional justice with my art. Transitional justice, and art, can be overrated, expensive and very capitalist. And it's capitalism that produces so many wasted bodies. So, in my art, I am this wasted body—that I use for performances, including carving the Star of David on my arm—and I am the transition. I believe that both art and justice should be a transition out of oppression. They are not goals, but tools, and the combination can set us free.

[37] Olivera Simic and Kathleen Daly ''One Pair of Shoes, One Life': Steps towards Accountability for Genocide in Srebrenica' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 5 (2011), 477–491.

In her narrative, it is clear that Jovana's exhibition, like Biliana's photographs, offers a space for reflection about the transitional justice process. Jovana's work is driven by the desire to present an alternative vision for how transitional justice can be achieved. For instance, carving the Star of David on her arm becomes a means of drawing attention to the predicament of homosexual people in Serbia, highlighting a connection between contemporary social oppression of homosexuality and resistance towards transitional justice processes. Likewise, displaying blood-red shoes to indicate the lives lost at Srebrenica in an exhibition about homosexual rights and transitional justice pushes us to consider and take seriously the connections between human rights abuses and oppression of homosexuals. Many activists—including Jovana—highlight that the nationalized social and political environment in Serbia which evades cooperation with the ICTY or violently rejects Serbian complicity in Srebrenica is an environment where homosexuality is considered to be anti-Serbian; hence, 'go back to Croatia'.[38] Noticing the connections between transitional justice processes and social attitudes towards homosexuality addresses the challenge put forward by Fionnula Ni Aolain that feminist scholars should 'address with more precision and imagination the experiences of harms done to women, finding new ways to acknowledge the complexity of harm for women in transitional contexts'.[39] These connections are not only important reminders of the contested nature of *what* and *how* to remember an atrocity, but also of the temporal complexity that is invoked when Jovana makes these connections in her artistic activism. For Jovana, transitional justice is not just about remembering the atrocity in Srebrenica, it is also about recognizing the broader social and political context in Serbia that enabled Srebrenica to happen. For Jovana, the very act of what we remember is critical to the future direction of Serbia: How can contemporary violence towards homosexuals be addressed if the Serbian state and society does not recognize connections to the violence of the broader social and political context that enabled the atrocity at Srebrenica?

Stressing the importance of the present and the future challenges the strictly chronological notion of time in transitional justice. This echoes the notion put forward by Berber Bevernage that alternative forms of justice offer an 'implicit rejection of the quasi-reversible time of justice' and as such 'all injustice is, fundamentally, irreversible'.[40] Nevertheless, 'it is precisely the emphasis on the endurance of historical injustice and on the presence of the past…[which] transforms remembrance and historical truth into forms of justice'.[41] As Jovana points out, 'transitional justice won't bring back the dead', but there is still a value in the process of transitional justice because it is possible to achieve meaningful justice

[38] See http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/Serbia for some discussion of the connections (accessed 10 September 2012).

[39] Fionnuala Ni Aolain, 'Advancing Feminist Positioning in the Field of Transitional Justice' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2012), 207.

[40] Berber Bevernage, 'Time, Presence, and Historical Injustice' *History and Theory* Vol. 47 (2008), 155.

[41] Bevernage, 'Time, Presence'.

offering a 'transition out of oppression', which, for her, includes a future where homosexuals are free. For Jovana, achieving deep and long-lasting justice requires disrupting the linear story of progress and the claim that facing the past will solve the problems of the present, highlighting that social violence in the present is connected both to how the past is dealt with and to how the future is hoped for. Through challenging the idea that transitional justice is merely a process of facing the past, Jovana makes connections to the present, highlighting, like Biliana, that the present is also a problem. For Jovana, contemporary social oppression towards homosexuality is simultaneously connected to how the Serbian role in the war crimes of the 1990s is configured and the future direction of Serbia.

Conclusions: Temporal Disruption and Working for a Better Future

Through their artistic engagement, both Biliana and Jovana offer an alternative to the liberal vision of transitional justice as meeting certain legal conditions. This is not a rejection of these important legal and institutional transformations necessary for transitional justice, but a call for a broader vision. For them, it is necessary for transitional justice processes to address social violence in contemporary Serbia: whether the violence is opposition to Women in Black, or opposition to homosexuality. There is some scepticism about the ability of liberal visions of transitional justice to be successful in addressing these social violences, in part because, as Jovana puts it, 'transitional justice is our ticket to the EU and bigger salaries… [meaning that] the concept is treated like merchandise'.[42] Jovana suggests here that the danger of liberal visions of transitional justice is that the process becomes instrumental, and does not deal with the deeper problems present in Serbian society. Art provides space for personal and public deliberation upon what transitional justice means, opening alternative ways of thinking about how to deal with past human rights abuses. In part, these spaces are created because the linear narratives about transitional justice are disrupted via artistic engagement, allowing us to tap into a broader vision of transitional justice with a greater degree of temporal complexity.

In urging for temporal complexity, both Biliana and Jovana are urging us to not 'make frontiers with our past', as 'the limitations of facing the past limit our present'.[43] Through their artistic engagement, both Biliana and Jovana are not merely offering a critique of the past or present but—critically—highlight how the past is remembered and the connections of these memories and perceptions of the past to our hopes for the future. The implication here is that linear narratives of

[42] Interview by Laura McLeod with Jovana Dimitrijević, Belgrade 19 September 2011. See Subotić *Hijacked Justice* for more discussion about the role of the EU in transitional justice in the Western Balkans.

[43] Email correspondence with Biliana Rakočević 25 March 2012.

transitional justice limit the possibility of radical social change. Disrupting the linear temporality of the narrative opens the possibility of escaping the (temporal) limitations of transitional justice. Biliana and Jovana disrupt the linear narrative of transitional justice through their artistic engagement in two ways: first, by revealing the politicized nature of transitional justice processes and second, by emphasizing hopes and dreams for the future.

The first way that both Biliana and Jovana disrupt the linear narrative about transitional justice is by revealing the politicized nature of transitional justice processes via their artistic engagement. Biliana's photographs serve to remind us that facing the past involves an element of choice 'about what is remembered and forgotten', although she argues that there are limitations about what we can remember and forget: that 'in Serbia it is more about the choice about what is given to us to remember and what is collectively wanted for us to forget'.[44] Additionally, Jovana highlights the politicized nature of art, even where artists claim that their work is not political, arguing that 'you can't have art that is not political. Because… [we all live] in this context and whatever you do, counts in a way. I think it's just a cop out, to say stuff like "oh, I'm not political".[45] Revealing the politicized nature of both artistic engagement and transitional justice disrupts our temporal understanding of transitional justice as a process dealing with past human right abuses in the present transitional moment.

Second, Biliana and Jovana also disrupt the linear narrative about transitional justice because they take the future as their starting point for their artistic engagement. In other words, they believe that facing the past is a future-centred notion that the very process of facing the past affects how the future looks. Understanding the importance of the future in public debates about transitional justice potentially opens alternative ways of framing the issue in a society marked by cultural resistance and denial of the war crimes committed. By pushing for a deeper consideration of transitional justice, the very process of transitional justice can address the social violences that exist in the present. Jovana believes that her work 'wouldn't make any sense if [she] just dealt with the past', as she is aiming to improve the future.[46] In this respect, recalling the past is about the direction of the future. It is Serbia's future that is at stake, not Serbia's past or the memory of Serbia's past: facing the past is a future-located notion, and so the future is thrust to the forefront in their artistic projects related to transitional justice.

Challenging the liberal linearity of transitional justice raises questions about what the achievement of transitional justice looks like. Transitional justice as a process striving to achieve closure is fraught with difficulties[47] and so the

[44] First quotation Porter, *Peacebuilding*, 126. Second quotation: email correspondence with Biliana Rakočević 27 March 2012.

[45] Interview by Laura McLeod with Jovana Dimitrijević, Belgrade 19 September 2011.

[46] Interview by Laura McLeod with Jovana Dimitrijević, Belgrade 19 September 2011.

[47] See Brandon Hamber and Richard A.Wilson 'Symbolic closure through memory, reparation and revenge in post-conflict societies' *Journal of Human Rights,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2002), 35–53.

'achievement' of transitional justice is not an endpoint *per se*, but rather a set of processes enabling change. However, whether the changes effected are 'good', 'bad' or 'value-neutral' is open to debate.[48] Art has an important role to play in these debates in providing a space for reflection about the practice of transitional justice via exposing the temporal complexity of transitional justice. Specifically, we suggest that art stimulates exploration of alternatives. One such alternative is the women's courts currently being established by a coalition of women's organizations in the Western Balkans.[49] The women's courts challenge existing ways of dealing with gender justice and reconciliation by asking women to testify about their experiences of conflict and their visions for the post-conflict context, making recommendations which will be disseminated to the region's formal legal systems. Jovana is currently working on a film about the Women's Courts as a means of provoking deeper consideration about the project. Art serves to remind us that we have choices about how to pursue transitional justice and plays an important role in exposing the possibilities of alternative visions of transitional justice, via exposing the temporal complexity inherent in the process and practice of transitional justice.

How to continue the disruption of the linear narrative of (liberal) transitional justice? Both Biliana and Jovana believe that it is important to provoke reflection, and critical to this is the use of art that represents these alternative ideas in an accessible manner. Jovana believes it critical to develop innovative communication to increase the chances of a receptive audience of people who publically or privately resist acknowledgement of Serb responsibility for the war crimes committed.[50] She argues that utilizing recognizable popular culture and making 'unexpected combinations' (such as drawing on elements of Japanese horror in a documentary film about Women's Courts) is a more effective ways of reaching people who are 'outside' the circle of activists who already support a wide range of perceptions about transitional justice.[51] Biliana agrees that it is imperative to 'transmit information better' as 'knowledge is a must'.[52] The open nature of street performances offers a strong path towards artistic engagement in the future, as street performances push the casual stroller to stop, look and listen simulating reflection. Visual mediums, including photographs and film, are also means of provoking consideration upon the transitional justice process.

Finally, we believe that utilizing the notion of temporal complexity allows for a feminist vision of transitional justice which 'incorporates non-hegemonic practices' and is 'aware of the complexities and contradictions of its own dominant

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[48] Bell. 'Transitional Justice, Interdisciplinarity', 6.

[49] Public proceedings will begin in 2013. See http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/impact/success-stories/top-10-wins-for-womens-movements and http://www.zenskisud.org/index.html (in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian). Accessed 6 September 2012.

[50] Jovana Dimitrijević email correspondence 27 March 2012.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Biliana Rakočević email correspondence 27 March 2012.

discourses'.[53] Simply increasing the number of women involved in transitional justice processes 'does not equate in any simple way with a feminist reshaping' of the agenda.[54] It is therefore about challenging or critiquing the agenda. Using art to draw attention to the social resistance or violence towards those urging for political responsibility challenges the effectiveness of the legal liberalism of conventional approaches to transitional justice. Using art to disrupt the conventional temporality of the narrative about transitional justice can open up a greater understanding of the complexity of transitional justice.

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[53] Ni Aolain, 'Advancing Feminist Positioning', 207.

[54] Bell and O'Rourke 'Does Feminism need a Theory of Transitional Justice?', 34.

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