REMEMBERING TO REMEMBER: Three Photojournalism Icons of the Bosnian War
Jurich, Joscelyn
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attention to the aural dimensions of the videos could be read in relation to how they contribute to Neda's and Zarmeena's status as victims. The screams and cries for Neda to "stay with us" demonstrate the spectators' pain at losing Neda, and reiterate her fragility as she moves from life to death. Likewise, the intimate, embodied qualities of mobile telephony would be further complicated by a study of proximities to contentious political figures, such as Saddam Hussein during his execution. However, what this brief investigation of text, readership, and mediation suggests is that, as Rodaway proposes, "Touch is above all the most intimate sense . . . and it is the most reciprocal of the senses, for to touch is to be touched."[25]

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NOTES **1.** *Neil Genzlinger's November 17, 2009, article claims that only five months after Neda's death, the momentum gained during the protests had already started to dissipate. Neil Genzlinger, "That Face of Protest in Iran, Fading Fast," the* New York Times, *November 17, 2009, http://tv.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/arts/television/17death.html.* **2.** *Different spellings of this name have been used in various media, however the version used in this essay is the one used in most coverage.* **3.** *The RAWA website contains an impressive archive of news reports about RAWA, its activities, and human rights violations in Afghanistan. The Associated Press, November 17, 1999, release "Taliban Publicly Execute Woman," is one such article about Zarmeena's death. See www.rawa.org/murder-w.html. Distributed by BBC Channel 4, the film is also available online at a number of sites including Google Video. See http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4201322772364661561#.* **4.** *Laura U. Marks,* The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses *(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).* **5.** *Paul Rodaway,* Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place *(New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.* **6.** *Marks, xii.* **7.** *Ibid., 152.* **8.** *There are several different recordings, along with many tributes and remixes online through sites like YouTube. Indeed, there is even criticism that the raw footage depicting Neda's death is a hoax. A version that records the death from a slightly more distant perspective is available at www.dailymotion.com/video/x9oltq_neda-agha-soltan-shot-in-iran_news. For both videos, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlehNLfk90c&oref=http%3A%2F%2F and www.youtube.com%2Fresults%3Fsearch_query%3Dneda%2Bdeath%2B%2522two%2Bvideos%2522%26aq%3Df&has_verified=1.* **9.** *See, for example, the full-length version at RAWA's website: www.rawa.org/zarmeena.html.* **10.** *The George Polk Award for Videography was given to "the anonymous individuals responsible for recording the shooting death of 26-year-old Neda Agha-Soltan at a June protest in Tehran, Iran, and uploading the video to the Internet." See www.liu.edu/About/News/Polk/Previous.aspx#2009.* **11.** *Details of the prize can be accessed through RAWA's website: www.rawa.org/novartis-award.htm or that of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University: www.sais-jhu.edu/pressroom/press-releases/MA2002/Novartis_2001_Winners_032602.html.* **12.** *Nazila Fathi, "In a Death Seen Around the World, a Symbol of Iranian Protests," the* New York Times, *June 22, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/world/middleeast/23neda.html.* **13.** *"How Neda Agha-Soltan Became the Face of Iran's Struggle," the* Guardian, *June 22, 2009, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/22/neda-soltani-death-iran.* **14.** *RAWA News, "Taliban Publicly Execute Woman," Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, www.rawa.org/murder-w.htm.* **15.** *Ana Tortajada, quoted in Juan R.I. Cole, "The Taliban, Women, and the Hegelian Private Sphere,"* Social Research *70 no. 2 (2003): 802.* **16.** *Nima Naghibi, "Seeing Beneath the Veil: Saira Shah and the Problems of Documentary," in eds. Tina Mai Chen and David S. Churchill,* Film, History and Cultural Citizenship *(New York: Routledge, 2007), 51.* **17.** *Naghibi, 53.* **18.** *Ibid., particularly 54–55.* **19.** *Rodaway, 48.* **20.** *Ibid., 12.* **21.** *Ibid., 160.* **22.** *Marks, xii.* **23.** *Ibid., 162.* **24.** *Mortensen, 10. For a more sustained analysis of the digital pathways the footage took, see Mette Mortensen's "When citizen photojournalism sets the news agenda: Neda Agha Soltan as a Web 2.0 icon of Post-Election Unrest in Iran,"* Global Media and Communication *7, no. 1 (2011): 10.* **25.** *Rodaway, 41.*

REMEMBERING TO REMEMBER:
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First, a brief vignette:

July 11, 2005
Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Women weeping over open graves, waiting for their sons or husbands or cousins or friends to be passed hand-to-hand and placed in the earth, into the hollowed ground still rain-filled from the downpour the night before. A father and grandfather sobbing, wailing, and screaming the name of their son and grandson as his coffin is lowered into the ground. The grandfather heaves and moans, trying to enter the grave. His son and several other men restrain him, and finally pull him away as earth covers the pine coffin. Several people faint and are carried to makeshift first aid tents.

It is like nothing I have ever seen before. Except on television or in photographs. The images are familiar: the coffins passed hand-to-hand. The weeping mothers. The mass graves strewn with skulls and bones. The burials. The location is foreign, as it almost always is. Some of these images flash like icons before my eyes and before my camera, which I am using as a shield between myself and the heart-wrenching horror surrounding me. These are images of distant suffering imprinted on my imagination, and I have seen photographers taking the same photographs, not only in Bosnia but in many places around the world. I can recognize everything. And yet I recognize nothing.

No image—amateur or professional—could capture the sounds, smells, or shrieks of that day. The photographs I later saw of the mass grave outside of Srebrenica could never reveal the haunt and hush as it was unveiled, or the tremor in the voice of the translator for the Chairman of the Bosnian Commission on Missing Persons as he brushed away tears. He told us that the shattered skulls and bones below us were approximately fifty of those "who never made it" from Srebrenica to Tuzla. The images of girls and women mourning couldn't convey their sobbing or wading through mud to bury their relatives. The wide-angle shots of the commemoration couldn't capture the day's cacophony of disparate yet interconnected sounds: the dzenaža (funeral) prayer, whose final lines implored, "That Srebrenica/Never happens again/To no one and nowhere!"; the cries of men burying their sons and grandsons; the whir of European Union Force helicopters circling above hills that might contain more scattered remains of those massacred at Srebrenica.

The day had nothing of the placidity or artistry possessed by photographs of even the most horrific events; nor was it akin to the most vivid description we might find in the accurate and well-crafted reporting of Roger Cohen, Roy Gutman, David Rohde, Ed Vulliamy, or any of the myriad other reporters who worked in Bosnia during and after the war. I wonder if what I did that day—photographing burials, talking to family members of individuals massacred, talking to Bosnians who had returned to live in Srebrenica after years away—bears witness? Or was I merely "there"? I have seen all of this before, yet I have felt none of it before. I have never experienced it.

> *"O the terror, the suffering, for all the world to see, the worst terror that ever met my eyes . . . I pity you, but I can't bear to look."*
> —*The Chorus,* Oedipus at Colonus

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The Bosnian War (1992–95) has been discussed in the United States largely in terms of the following aspects: the definition of "the West" (what David Rieff terms a "dubious euphemism"[1]); the failure of the United Nations at Srebrenica; and the moral weakness of Western Europe—all culminating with the Srebrenica massacre. According to Richard Holbrooke, chief architect of the Dayton Peace Accords, the massacre resulted from the U.S. and Europe's refusal to threaten Serbia with air strikes as early as 1992. Not intervening, he wrote in his book about the Dayton negotiations, *To End a War* (1999), was "a huge collective failure of the West." The Bosnian war, and the siege of Sarajevo in particular, are put forth as prime examples of the "CNN effect"—the theory that it was the television coverage of the war that ultimately roused public interest in the Bosnian crisis and pressured the U.S. to back NATO strikes against Serbia.

From positions of safety, we are able to see. Or are we? Tiresias was the blind seer, Oedipus the once-sighted who could not truly see. More than a decade after the Bosnian War's end, we might rethink what we actually saw.

THE ROMANCE OF RUINS: VEDRAN SMAILOVIĆ

"Reality is recognized in its wholeness only as it shatters to bits."
—Semezdin Mehmedinović, from the poem "Ruins" (1992)

During the siege of Sarajevo, Vedran Smailović, the principal cellist of the Sarajevo opera, put on a tuxedo, took up his cello, and sat outside a bakery where the day before, on May 27, 1992, twenty-two people were killed and more than one hundred injured while waiting to buy bread. Amid mortar, rubble, and the constant risk of sniper fire, he played Albinoni's lyrically melancholy *Adagio in G Minor* each day for a reported twenty-two days, in tribute to each of the individuals killed.

As described in the *New York Times* and in most major newspapers in the U.S. and U.K., Smailović, who became known as "The Soul of Sarajevo," represented the triumphant, cultured city whose spirit would not be crushed. *New York Times* correspondent John F. Burns led his June 8, 1992, article, "A People Under Artillery Fire Manage to Retain Humanity," by describing Smailović's tribute to those killed in the Breadline Massacre. Burns wrote that Smailović "could be speaking for all survivors trapped [in Sarajevo]" when he quoted the cellist: "My mother is a Muslim and my father is a Muslim, but I don't care. I am a Sarajevan, I am a cosmopolitan, I am a pacifist."[2]

Smailović was a man of the metropolis, a man of the multiethnic, multicultural world—in short, a person like *us*—perhaps even a *New York Times* reader. A *Daily Telegraph* article described Sarajevo as "the front line of European civilization,"[3] and the act of cello playing effectively transformed Smailović into a frontline soldier fighting the war of culture against barbarism, and life against death.

There is little threat of the "dark Balkans" in the image of Smailović, who was first photographed by Mikhail Evstafiev and again by numerous other photographers, including Jon Jones and Paul Harris. Would Harris's portrait of Rozika Militić, dubbed "the battling granny of the village of Kamenica"[4] after she used the Serbs' own arms against them, have roused such admiration for the triumphant, defiant individual? Gap-toothed and smiling broadly, she wears a camouflage flak jacket, an automatic rifle slung over her shoulder.

Yet this portrait of Militić, and Harris's photograph of three Bosnian Croat soldiers just returned from battle triumphantly displaying a war trophy (an Orthodox cross seized from a Serb they have just killed), might be closer to the image many have of the Balkans. As British author Rebecca West wrote in her historical travelog of the former Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (1941): "Violence was, indeed, all I knew of the Balkans: all I knew of the South Slavs."[5] More than fifty years later, how many in the U.S. and Western Europe imagined the Balkans similarly? In the early 1990s, some Americans and Western Europeans would have concurred with West; their historic popular memory of the region comprised little more than the 1914 assassination of Archduke of Austria Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, murderous Ustaša and Četniks during World War II, and perhaps even what historian Maria Todorova has detailed as the fraught concept of *balkanization* itself.[6]

The truism that "age-old ethnic hatreds" were ubiquitous in and inherent to the region was put forth most vigorously by then U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger to justify non-intervention, and manipulated by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić to justify murder. Even the most esteemed journalists could not resist describing the Balkans as a fabled land of blood and honey, a dark land obsessed with an often mythic view of its own history, prone to extremes of emotion that might erupt at any time, with or without provocation. "The notion of killing people . . ." Cohen wrote in the *New York Times* in 1994, "because of something that may have happened in 1495 is unthinkable in the Western world. Not in the Balkans."[7] Burns began his 1992 profile of Karadžić by writing: "In the Europe of the earlier part of this century . . . the word Balkan became a synonym for things obscure, laden with unpleasant surprises, menacing."[8] As Peter Maass points out in his own account of reporting on the Bosnian war, *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War* (1997), equating the entire region with "ethnic rivalries, tribal warfare" and an "uncivilized" populous was "a comforting explanation because it defined the violence as an anti-modern and anti-Western phenomenon."[9] And if these barbarous tribal warriors of the Balkans were bent on self-extermination, what responsibility, if any, could an outsider possibly possess? The 1990s wars, then, were merely the logical extension of a land plagued by violence—a "what goes without saying" naturalization, Roland Barthes might have argued—that led some to believe in the inevitability of the brutality that ensued.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag argues that each photograph embodies its own quotation, maxim, or proverb. If so, the photograph of Smailović might bear an ancient maxim: *Ars*

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longa, vita brevis (in the midst of fleeting and fragile life, art endures). In the midst of uncontrollable destruction, the individual artist remakes the world, even if only briefly, even if it might cost him his life. Or it may be one more modern, from Samuel Beckett's *The Unnameable* (1953): "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." The photograph implies that this is perhaps the only moral position—albeit a powerful one: it is the responsibility of the living to remember the killed and to embody a creative life force even in the midst of death. It is a reassuring idea, and a romantic one. For a war that historian Carole Rogel described as "the Spanish Civil War of the 1990s for liberal intellectuals abroad,"[10] it made sense that the musician's image would speak to those invested in the international, cultured city of Sarajevo and its "soul," embodied by Smailović. Their concern with Bosnia-Herzegovina and the besieged (is there not something romantic about the word?) city of Sarajevo in particular, was a nostalgic harkening back to such "emblematic" struggles as the Spanish Civil War.

Sontag herself was (in)famously attached (some might argue "committed") to Sarajevo and produced Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) there in July 1993. In her essay "Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo," in which she painstakingly recounts the triumphs and obstacles involved in staging Beckett's play (including her own quite incongruous complaints about late props and infrequent baths), Sontag writes that after her initial trip to Sarajevo in April 1993, she decided to produce the play there because she didn't want to be a mere "witness" but instead wanted "to pitch in and do something . . . I had come to care intensely about the battered city and what it stands for."[11] In 2005, shortly after Sontag's death, it was announced that National Theatre Square in Sarajevo would be renamed "Susan Sontag Theatre Square."

Not everyone was enthusiastic about Sontag's interpretation of "doing something" as directing Beckett's play at the height of the conflict. Theater director Dubravko Bibànović told the *Irish Times*, "[Sontag] did it for herself and nobody else. It said nothing about Bosnia or Bosnian culture."[12] Jean Baudrillard's response to Sontag's "intense" caring for the city, and those few Western intellectuals who followed suit, was also far from complimentary. Baudrillard described Sontag's staging of *Waiting for Godot* as nothing more than "cultural soul boosting"[13]; her concern, he said, was chiefly motivated by a narcissism and purposelessness particular to Western culture. The Sarajevans, he wrote, "are strong, and we, who look to them for something, anything to revive our strength and our lost sense of reality, are weak . . . reality is what [Sontag] and the Western world most lack. To re-create reality, one must go where the blood flows . . ."[14]

The blood flowed in streams during the Breadline Massacre, and though photographs of the violence were published in the *New York Times*, *TIME*, and in the press worldwide, much attention was given to Smailović in the U.S., most prominently in a July 1992 *New York Times Magazine* essay photographed by Jones and written by Burns. Engraved as if on a tombstone, in a Victorian Gothic font more appropriate for an Edward Gorey etching than a photo-essay about "an ancient Balkan capital," its headline was "Dying City: Murderous Civil Strife Threatens an Ancient Balkan Capital that Survived Two World Wars." Alongside a full-page photograph of Smailović, the physical and psychological ruins of the war are shown: the wreckage of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a Croatian village ("most Croats are Catholic," the caption below informs us) bombed by the Serbs (in another mini-lesson for an audience assumed to know little or nothing about the basics of the conflict, we learn that the "the attacking Serbs are of the Eastern Orthodox faith"). In contrast to the medieval barbarism of the enemy is the sole survivor, culture.

Another *New York Times* article by Cohen ("Music Helps Sarajevo Stay Sane During War," October 23, 1994) uses Smailović to introduce the story of young music students and music teachers carrying on as their city is demolished and their fellow citizens killed day after day. Angelina Papp, a Serbian music teacher from Belgrade still teaching in Sarajevo's largely destroyed conservatory, tells Cohen an artist like Smailović is removed from politics and violence: "Musicians . . . are people who see war as something very strange to them. All musicians of the world speak the same language: the language of their scores. Moreover, music has no limits and so it poses the question, why must we live in this cage?"[15] Smailović himself responded angrily when asked by the *Boston Globe* to name his ethnicity: "I am ethnically musician, you should put that."[16]

The political and historical moment may be a cage, as might ethnic identity. For people saturated and victimized by the political moment, seeing ethnic identities twisted and used against each other, Smailović's and Papp's actions bring to mind Primo Levi's statement that "to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization."[17] But for those looking at the photograph from positions of relative freedom and safety, Smailović was not only upholding civilization; his image was reassuring, even pacifying. In his 2004 essay, "Vermeer in Bosnia," Lawrence Weschler describes how War Crimes Tribunal

Above
Photograph by Mikhail Evstafiev of Vedran Smailović playing the cello in the partially destroyed National Library, Sarajevo, 1992

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Judge Antonio Cassese periodically retreated from The Hague to look at paintings by Johannes Vermeer at the Mauritshaus, to experience "a centeredness, a peacefulness, a serenity" completely lacking in the stories of rape and torture he heard daily.

Though not an artwork, the image of Smailović is an artfully choreographed portrait of an *individual*: eyes downcast, a strip of long, light brown hair falling alongside his cheek. Solemn and focused, surrounded by chunks of rubble, he seems oblivious to the photographer. In the background is the bombed-out fragment of what was once a concert hall, possessing the elegance and damaged "eloquence" Sontag identifies in "sheared-off" buildings and strewn bodies. What remains of its pointed arches aim at an unnatural light pouring in through the wrecked roof, imparting the quietude and grace of a Vermeer.

Smailović's image made a major international impact, used chiefly to discuss the individual's (and by extension, the "cultured" city of Sarajevo's) resistance to the barbarity of an attack on civilians, the "uncultured" side effect of war. But who remembers the story of the twenty-two people killed in the breadline—the impetus, after all, for Smailović's tribute? The majority of the photographs of the Breadline Massacre in the American press were blurry stills taken from CNN footage, images of nameless bodies strewn across a nameless street.

Sontag argued that photographs (particularly photographs of atrocity) may haunt, but do not provide understanding. None of the photographs of Smailović playing his cello tell us anything about his circumstances or those of the war. We do not see the bakery or its remains; we do not know the particularities of his ethnicity, nor might we necessarily remember them had we read the articles about him—particularities that in the context of the time and place, undoubtedly matter (is he a Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Muslim, none of the above?). Knowing only the year the photos were taken (1992) does not explain the context: was this before or after the Mostar bridge was destroyed? (Before: the bridge was destroyed by the Croatians in November, 1993.) Were UN "safe havens" already designated in Sarajevo and other cities? (Not yet.) Had the U.S. and NATO yet threatened air strikes? (No.) And when exactly were sanctions against Serbia imposed? (May 30, 1992: three days after the massacre.)

Nor do we learn the story of the Breadline Massacre, Smailović's tribute, nor of Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor* (most of the composer's works were destroyed during the World War II bombing of Dresden; the adagio Smailović played was reconstructed in 1945 by musicologist Remo Giazotto). The problem here, Sontag might have noted, is not that we remember the images of the "The Soul of Sarajevo," but that we remember *only* the photographs, enraptured by the ruins surrounding him, forgetting or completely ignoring the surrounding historical, political, and social contexts. Smailović himself, now living in Northern Ireland, disputes the very reporting central to his legend. "I didn't play [just] for 22 days," he told the *Times* of London in 2008. "I played all my life in Sarajevo and for the two years of the siege each and every day."[18]

Nearly two decades later, few may remember Smailović's name, but the image and ideas embodied in his photograph have a vigorous life outside of the original context. The photograph was used on the cover of Brian Hall's 1995 book about the breakup of Yugoslavia, *The Impossible Country: A Journey Through the Last Days of Yugoslavia*, and a similar image of musicians playing in the rubble is used on the cover of Maass's *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War* (1997). It even inspired "Sarajevo Requiem," a dance staged in 1993 by choreographer Shannon Hobbs. "That one photo really affected me," Hobbs told Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times*.[19] The photograph of Smailović, wrote Kisselgoff, "crystallized the horrors of a war [Hobbs] felt hard to grasp," and the dance "was about an image rather than an experience . . . a highly dramatic study of deterioration."[20] In 2008, Canadian writer Steven Galloway published a novel set during the Bosnian war entitled *The Cellist of Sarajevo,* which includes a minor character based on Smailović (who was outraged by the work and has demanded financial compensation from Galloway). And in April 2011, Smailović's creative response to the massacre was featured in an op-ed by James Heflin about how artists might respond to the killing of Osama bin Laden ("Art in Paradise: A Cello in the Rubble"). Sontag wrote, "The landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins."[21] Perhaps viewers of Smailović's photograph, like the Romantics, saw beauty not only in the cellist's act, but in ruins, the ruins of Sarajevo, the ruins of a civilization that his playing sought to restore—or at least recall.

Contrast these lofty notions with Bosnian poet Semezdin Mehmedinović's description of his ruined city in his poetry collection, *Sarajevo Blues* (1992): "The glass on the street," he writes, "is less an example of 'a shattered image of reality' than the wide, light-brown bands of packing tape that 'whole' panes are held together with in Sarajevo."[22] The real ruins are not the shattered bits of glass covering the street, but the broken sections that have been pasted together to create a fragile and false whole. These ruins are decidedly unromantic, part of the reality of everyday life in wartime. Imagine,

Above
Prisoners at Buchenwald Concentration Camp by Margaret Bourke-White; first published in *Life* magazine, April 11, 1945
Facing page
Cover of *Daily Mirror*, August 7, 1992

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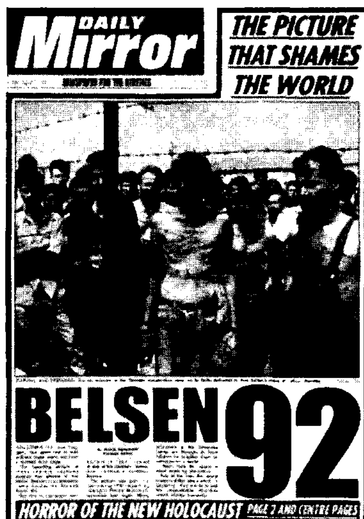

too, for a moment, that the international public had been presented with Šahin Šisić's brutally intimate images of the Breadline Massacre—the blood-soaked sidewalk, the blood-soaked shopping bags—with the frequency with which we saw Smailović's calming photograph.

Did it comfort those not directly affected by the conflict to know that someone, somewhere, was doing something as risky as Smailović's tribute? And in the easy embrace of this image, a "war photograph" that is in effect a moment of peace, did we allow Smailović's bravery to stand in for the lack of our own?

THE PROBLEMATIC MIRROR OF MEMORY: FIKRET ALIĆ

> *"What's the difference between Sarajevo and Auschwitz?"*
> *"At Auschwitz they had gas."*
> —*Joke popular in Sarajevo during the siege*

Barthes opens his essay "Shock-Photos" (1979) with an observation by theater historian Geneviève Serreau: some photographs are horrific chiefly because we look at them from positions of freedom. Nowhere, perhaps, is this distinction as clear or as poignant as when viewing the image of a prisoner behind barbed wire, like the photograph of Bosnian camp prisoner Fikret Alić. Yet it is an image replete with moral and intellectual ambiguity.[23]

The image is a still from television news footage shot on August 5, 1992, at the Serbian detention camp Trnopolje in Prijedor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, by Britain's Independent Television News (ITN) anchor Penny Marshall and Channel 4 news reporter Ian Williams. Their broadcast on August 6, 1992, presented the first visual evidence of the Serbian camps and their role in the Serbs' ethnic cleansing.

Yet it was not uncomplicated evidence. The photograph roused debate about whether genocide was occurring in Bosnia. A visual echo of Margaret Bourke-White's 1945 photograph of prisoners at Buchenwald, the image of Alić also raised questions about the ethics and accuracy of framing the Bosnian War in terms of the Holocaust.

Alić's image appeared on August 7, 1992, on the cover of Britian's *Daily Mirror* ("Belsen 92"), and *Daily Mail* ("The Proof"), and in the U.S. ten days later on the cover of *TIME* ("Must It Go On?"). Examining the three headlines gives insight into the different implications of the photo. Certainly the *Daily Mirror*'s "Belsen 92" links the Serbian camp with the Nazi camps textually as well as visually—thus suggesting the need for international military intervention. Belsen was liberated by the British in 1945, infusing the photograph with another powerful collective association. *The Daily Mail*'s "The Proof" posits the photograph as confirmation of something previously only speculated, bearing none of the moral weight of the connections made by the *Mirror*. The photograph is evidence—but of what? The Holocaust reference is still strong enough to imply that Nazi-style concentration camps were being run in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *TIME*'s headline is the subtlest and most universalizing: Must human beings torment and brutalize one another like this? Must this not be stopped?

The letters to the editor of *TIME* in response to the photo ranged from those arguing the Bosnian War was an internal conflict and not an international humanitarian one (echoing Zbigniew Herbert's poem "Mr. Cogito Reads the Newspaper," which describes foreign suffering as remote: "too great a distance covers them like a jungle / they don't speak to the imagination / there are too many of them / the numeral zero at the end/changes them into an abstraction"[24]) to those who advocated immediate military intervention.

But there was a contradiction between what the photograph referenced and *TIME*'s cover article, a contradiction that permeated the larger debate about the image. "The shock of recognition is acute," the article opens. "Skeletal figures behind barbed wire . . . Two and a half million people driven from their homes in an orgy of 'ethnic cleansing' . . . Surely these pictures and stories come from another time—the Dark Ages, the Thirty Years' War, Hitler's heyday."[25] But turn to page two, and an insert entitled "A Lexicon of Horrors" spells out the difference between "Death Camps," "Concentration Camps," "Internment Camps," and "Detention Centers." Despite the opening paragraph, the reader is now asked to confront the specific differences between the Serbian camps and the Nazi concentration camps and to distinguish between these historically distinct moments. Yet does the referential power of Alić's image allow for this?

It was precisely this referential power that made the image the center of controversy in 1997 when Thomas Deichmann, a German freelance journalist for the British magazine *Living Marxism*, wrote that the still image of Alić behind barbed wire as well as the entire ITN report misrepresented a refugee camp as a concentration camp for the purpose of hastening international military intervention against the Serbs. ITN responded by suing *Living Marxism*, its editor, and the magazine's printer for libel, and threatening *The Independent on Sunday* with legal action for running a press release by *Living Marxism* that argued the photograph was a misrepresentation. In 2000, ITN won the libel case over *Living Marxism*, and the journal closed shortly thereafter.

Vulliamy, a *Guardian* journalist and former Balkans correspondent, testified for ITN in the libel suit. Vulliamy

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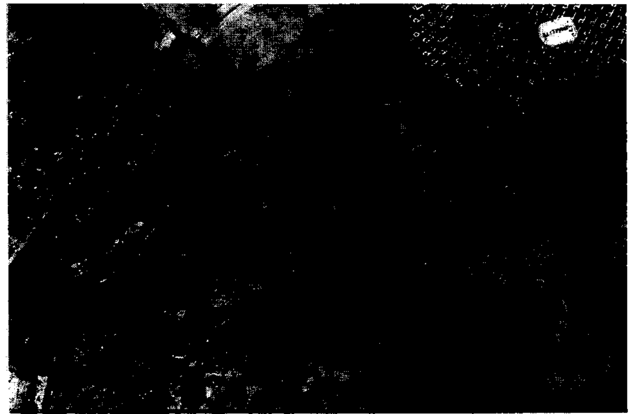
argued the Serb camps should not be confused with concentration camps, although in the *Guardian* he described the camps as "a pale but unmistakable imitation of the Third Reich."[26] In 1999 Vulliamy, who had been compared to World War II correspondent William Shirer, wrote a lengthy article in *International Affairs* detailing the West's failure in Bosnia and implicating it in allowing genocide. In its concluding paragraph, Vulliamy writes: "The appeasement of the pogrom in Bosnia-Herzegovina betrays the world view of a generation—to which I belong—which grew up following the defeat of the Third Reich and which was fooled into believing that the bullies of history need not triumph."[27] As with the discourse surrounding the photograph of Alić, Vulliamy chooses the highly charged and historically resonant words "pogrom" and "appeasement." His comments here, and indeed throughout the entire article, seem to be a remorseful response to Martha Gellhorn's seminal 1945 essay, "Dachau." In addition to the similarities between the Dachau prisoners Gellhorn describes and the photo of Alić, she concludes her essay by imploring, "Surely this war was made to abolish Dachau, and all the other places like Dachau, and everything that Dachau stood for, and to abolish it forever."[28]

Photographs may be "a means of making 'real' (or 'more real') matters that the privileged and safe might prefer to ignore," wrote Sontag.[29] Yet as Barbie Zelizer points out in *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye* (2000), there is the chance that a photograph may also become an "overused" icon of atrocity. When photographs echo other photographs, their power may be diminished. The referential image—in this case Bourke-White's photograph of Buchenwald prisoners—may so easily fit into a narrative with which the viewer is familiar (or assumes he or she is) that the historical resonance of the echoing photograph is lost. The constant risk that a photograph of atrocity may numb the viewer seems doubly present with an image, such as that of Alić, which recalls what Zelizer somewhat problematically terms "the familiar Holocaust aesthetic," embodied in Bourke-White's photograph. The question Alić's image raises is not only whether an echoing photograph of atrocity has an increased or neutralized energy, but also what type of critical scrutiny is required when viewing an image that references another possessing a monumental emotional charge. If photography is indeed, as Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, the "mirror with a memory," it is a mirror that reflects a complicated image when infused with a double layer of memory.

The Holocaust reference raises another question, central to Zelizer's argument. Is our understanding of contemporary events, often dependent upon textual sound bytes, even more reliant upon the ability to reference a stockpile of what Sontag appositely terms "visual sound bytes"? In the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was our historical and political knowledge of the region so skewed and so lacking that we latched onto a more familiar visual framework? And prior to seeing this photograph, were many in Europe and the U.S., as Leon Wieseltier suggested, basking in a sort of post-Holocaust optimism, what he calls the "post-Auschwitz honeymoon?"[30] One of the consequences of the Bosnian genocide, he argues, is that "we may never again say 'never again.'"[31]



Alić's image plunged viewers into the murky and morally ambiguous ground of comparing genocides, and the risk of "moral habituation" that Zelizer reminds us can come with an overuse of an atrocity image. It also raised the question of whether our historical memories are so fragile or so postmodern that our understanding of the present must necessarily be referential.

Aside from these essential but relatively academic issues, there is Alić himself. Originally from Kozarac, the same town as Serbian war criminal Duško Tadić, he is now married, has a child, and has moved back to Bosnia-Herzegovina from Denmark, where he lived for several years. "But I still have nightmares," he told the *Guardian* in a 2002 interview. "I wake up in the night dripping with sweat and I still have a lot of physical pain."[32]

HORROR ITSELF: FERIDA OSMANOVIĆ

Yea, I am gone: I am gone my ways.
Mine is the crown of misery,
The bitterest day of all our days.
—*Hecuba, in Euripedes's* Women of Troy

The bitterest event in the Bosnian War was without question the Srebrenica massacre of 1995, a horrific ending to an increasingly despairing chronology of events, leading from the Breadline Massacre, to the uncovering of Serbian camps, to the massacre at Srebrenica, where approximately 7,500 Muslim boys and men were killed by Bosnian Serbs on July 11. "It's beyond words," said a man from Tuzla, a few days after the massacre.[33]

In mid-July, Associated Press photographer Darko Bandić was alerted by some children around Tuzla of a woman hanging from a tree, her noose not a rope but a shawl and belt braided together. "I saw so many really awful things in Bosnia's war, [this suicide] was just yet another of them," said Bandić. "I did wonder what

Above
Photograph of blood-soaked sidewalk by Šahin Šišić taken minutes after the Breadline massacre, Sarajevo, May 27, 1992
Facing page
Photograph by Darko Bandić (for the AP) of Ferida Osmanović published in the *Guardian* on July 15, 1995

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horrific things must have happened to her to drive herself to take her own life. But I never found out. I never even knew her name until a year later."[34]

Ferida Osmanović hanged herself in the fields surrounding Tuzla on July 11, 1995, after her husband was seized in Srebrenica by the Bosnian Serbs. Just days before, she had convinced him to stay with her and their two children rather than escape into the woods, sure that Dutch UN troops would protect them. Osmanović was buried with the grave marker "Unknown," and remained anonymous for six months after her photograph was published. She was finally identified when Bandić's photograph was shown to her orphaned children, Fatima and Damir. The image of Osmanović is desperate not only because of the circumstances surrounding her suicide, but because the viewer in 1995 and 2011 knows we are witnessing an *ex post facto* image—after thousands of Muslim men have been slaughtered, after the worst genocide on European soil since World War II, and after "never again" had happened again.

On July 15 the *Guardian* published Bandić's photograph and was the only newspaper in Britain to do so. It ran the photograph without a caption but next to the following report: "In a crowd of over 10,000 refugees sprawled across Tuzla's cornfields, a young woman hanged herself yesterday. No one knew her name. No one wept for her when her body was cut down from a tree, and only a single policeman kept vigil over the corpse as it lay abandoned at the gate of the heaving, sweating camp."[35] The *New York Times* also published the photograph of Osmanović on July 15, with the following caption: "As terrorized Muslims who had been forced out of the United Nations 'safe area' at Srebrenica gathered in an emergency camp in Tuzla yesterday, the body of one of the refugees, a women of about 20, was found in a grove of trees, where she had apparently hanged herself."[36] Compared with the *Guardian*, its plainly explanatory quality seems a conscious attempt to neutralize the image's horror. The photograph appeared on the front page of the *Washington Post* the same day. Pointing to the photo of Osmanović in the *Post*, Vice President Al Gore told President Bill Clinton:

> My 21-year-old daughter asked about this picture. What am I supposed to tell her? Why is this happening and we're not doing anything? My daughter is surprised the world is allowing this to happen. I am too.[37]

Several days later, the photograph of Osmanović was shown and discussed at President Clinton's meetings with American and European officials about air strikes against Serbia. An aide present at the meetings described an "absolutely debilitating sense that the West was standing by [in Bosnia]."

This was witnessing of the most impotent sort. The Breadline Massacre took place in May 1992; Serbian "ethnic cleansing" camps were revealed to the world with the publishing of the Alić photo in August of that year. By January 1995, Sarajevo had been under siege for one thousand days. The West had been "standing by" for a very long time. Osmanović's photograph was horrifying evidence of inaction and the deadly consequences of prolonged observation without action, but it was certainly not the first.

In late July 1995, the *Miami Herald* ran Osmanović's photograph alongside an op-ed called "The Last Rational Act in Bosnia." "We really know what is happening in Bosnia," wrote Sue Reisinger. "This woman's death crystallizes the insanity of it all for the whole world to see. The picture could not be any clearer. Irrational? This may well have been the last rational human being in Bosnia."[38]

The only artwork included in Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* is Francisco Goya's "Tampoco" (1810–14), an etching from his "Disasters of War" series (1810–20). In it, a French soldier reclines with a bemused, almost wistful expression on his face in front of a long line of Spanish civilian corpses hanging from trees, his head resting in his hand, a gesture resembling Auguste Rodin's *Thinker* (1902). A corpse hangs from the tree across from him, its head droops heavily, and the dead man's pants have fallen to his knees, a mysterious, insinuating detail. The Napoleonic soldier looks in the direction of the body, but not directly at it.

Osmanović's photograph does not implicate anyone, as does Goya's "Tampoco." But the viewer of her photograph is relegated to a position of helpless witness-bystander. If the West might "stand in" for anything here, it might be Goya's soldier, and Osmanović's suicide the West's moral death. And for those who argued that the wars in the former Yugoslavia were largely male

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affairs, a female suicide has yet another layer of significance.

Is it even possible that any proverb or maxim exists to embody what we see in this photograph? Perhaps an excerpt of a poem by Lliljana Trkulja, a Bosnian imprisoned in Mala Krsna Camp in Tuzla, is more fitting:

> Again, the pain and longing is still in me; no return,
> There is no future.
> Emptiness alone.
> Hence, I ask you only: DON'T ASK ME
> HOW I AM AND IF I CAN LIVE.

****

> *ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?*
> *VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.*
> *They do not move.*
> —*Samuel Beckett,* Waiting for Godot

On May 26, 2011, the day former general Ratko Mladić was arrested, a Bosnian friend of mine posted a link on his Facebook page. It wasn't a link to one of the myriad news reports about Mladić's capture, the allegations against him, or even the protests in his support. It was to the photograph of Ferida Osmanović.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag asks a pertinent question: "Who are the 'we' at whom such shock pictures are aimed?"[39] The answer has become more complex as we now have access to a wide range of shock photographs.

"Here then on the table before us are photographs," quotes Sontag, referencing Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938). The "thought experiment" Woolf is proposing to the reader and to her male character is a group of photographs showing "the mangled bodies of adults and children," how "war . . . levels a built world."[40] In a perhaps ironic or particularly candid turn (or both), Sontag writes "Sheared off buildings are almost as eloquent as bodies in the street. Look, the photographs say this is what it's like. This is what war does. And that, that is what it does, too . . . war dismembers, war ruins."[41] The internet has become our new table. Since the Bosnian War, the shock photo has become more shocking—not because its subject matter is necessarily more repugnant than in the past, but because the shock photos with the most resonance are often taken not by photojournalists, but by soldiers or citizens, and are circulated electronically, internationally, and at rapid-fire pace. The traditional elements of looking at a photograph: intention, context, representation, reception—have been turned upside down and made even more complex than they inherently are.

Yet the question remains—one that many critics raise but answer weakly: What do we do with what we've seen? "Viewing images may now stand in for action itself," Zelizer correctly reminds us.[42] Adds Alan Trachtenberg, "People also need to learn how to translate the witnessing evoked by images into effective political action, a problem within the political culture in which the images are assigned certain work to perform."[43] "What we are shown horrifies us," says John Berger. "The next step should be for us to confront our own lack of political freedom," he insists.[44]

So as not to echo Vladimir and Estragon's stasis, we might well consider all these ideas. Yet we might also challenge ourselves to examine what prejudices we bring to images and whether, in the case of Smailović, we are seeking to understand, to confirm what we believe is true or think we know, or to be comforted. We might examine the case of Fikret Alić and revisit the complex idea of the image as memory mirror. And we might look back at the photograph of Ferida Osmanović and rethink not only the horror of Srebrenica, but the horror of standing by. Perhaps then we would begin to look as Tiresias did, seeing much more than those who have sight.[45]

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