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THE TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINARY OF VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ'S *PREDATOR*

Abstract: The 2008 work *Predator* by Vladimir Arsenijević introduces a transnational imaginary as a means of moving away from collective memory and mourning for the past in order to rebuild identities void of war at the foundation. The transitional work, both in terms of form and content, challenges the position of Serbs and former Yugoslav nationals to position themselves beyond the fixed borders, nations, and even nationalities of the region in exchange for an embrace of the current and future forms of transnationalism. Moving the various settings of the work through the countries of Denmark, England, the US, Germany, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Spain among others the work constructs a "novelesque whole" complete with various pieces and iterations of self. In this article I offer examples of the construct of the transnational imaginary provided in the text, indicating that this work offers a text that (re)engages and (re)imagines Serbian place within the world.

Key words: Transnationalism, trauma, hybridity, diaspora, global, local, globalization, post-Yugoslav

In considering the cultural images of the Yugoslav successor states during the early 2000s, one is perpetually haunted by the specter of conflicts and suffering from the preceding decades of the 1990s – global conflicts of grand scale moderating a new modernity. Great wars precipitate massive movements of people; refugees leave violent, familiar-turned-unfamiliar spaces, in exchange for unknown territories to become someone else's Other. Our post-Socialist age has produced great suffering and collective trauma, traversing national, ethnic, and linguistic barriers to coalesce on foundations beyond these markers of nation. This creates spaces for new relationships to be formed under the banner of transnationalism, "a condition in which despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders [...] certain kinds of relationships [...] now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common–however virtual–arena of activity" (Vertovec 2009: 3).

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Transnational narratives or systems of definition and belonging can be defined with the nation as its base, which serves to provide a reference point for diaspora, but the transnational can also be located through other networks, which come to be defined through connections formed from a transnational imaginary, which, despite its mutability due to new settings, is premised on shared global sentiments, experiences. Equally formative to these transnational networks, which aredefined by social, cultural, economic, and linguistic factors, is the national setting.

Vladimir Arsenijević's 2008 fictional work *Predator* features a transnational framework as a fundamental means of globally understanding man's present. The work centers on war and subsequent movement, narrative threads that connect all characters and storylines together; therefore, itencompasses thesemantics of a specific iteration of the transnational imaginary defined by war, consequential human movement, death, and destruction. However, underlying the text is a probe into what motivates an individual to forsake the traditional boundaries ofdefinition and settlementin exchange for a more nuanced, hybrid definition of self devoid of the vertebrate systems of nationalism: the flag, the nation, national anthem, etc (Appadurai 2006: 21, 25). In this article I engage with Arsenijević's text in a number of ways, primarily through the lens of transnationalism and themes from trauma studiesin order to locate the transnational imaginary as articulated in Arsenjević's text, particularly its references to collective trauma, war, and exclusion. In addition, this article will discuss how to situate Arsenjević's *Predator* in the broader range of post-Yugoslav, post-war Serbian literary worksof the late 1990s and early 2000s. Unlike other works from the time, *Predator* isset not in the immediate locales of Serbia or even the Balkans, but the larger world. I argue that choosing to engage with the world, thematically, physically (through the movement of people), as opposed to familiar terrain, Arsenijević positions Yugoslav conflict, trauma, and post-conflict movement into a broader narrative to (re)engage and (re)integrate Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav history / histories, culture(s), and people(s) into global contexts. Thus, the transnational characterization of Serbian trauma as premised on conflict and "deterritorializing" – or, in this case dematerialization of the nation – gives rise to a (re)articulation of the self and recasts individuals as bodies informed by interaction with international flows of information through and with "distant peoples" (Shohat and Stam 1996: 145).

In *Predator*, images and informational flows provide afoundation – not totality –for the individual, linking people together who would seemingly otherwise share nothing (aside from the human condition). Through the novel, we meet individuals who are linked through global citizenship, travel, and dislocation, who are blocked from participating in the steady notions and means of national dissemination. However, through their unpredictable paginal interactions, the global south (Iraq and former Yugoslav space) is put into a dialogue with eachother and the world.

Prior to exploring the themes of the novel itself, however, it is important to provide a historical backdrop for *Predator*, a work that was greatly anticipated and well received in former Yugoslav countries (Pančić 2009). The book was an anomaly among its contemporaries. According to Slobodan Vladušić in his article "Neorealism in Serbian Prose of the 1990s: Its Development and Transformation", there appeared a rise in literary Realism and neo-Realism in the immediate post-war Serbian literary scene. The literary antecedents of contemporary realist, and therefore neo-Realist, Serbian fiction can be traced to Arsenijević's much-acclaimed novels *In the Hold* (1994) and *Andjela* (1997). *In the Hold* is set in Belgrade during the Yugoslav succession wars and focuses on the life of a nameless narrator and his wife, Andjela, a pregnant drug dealer and recovering addict. The young couple is trying to retain some semblance of normalcy, despite the destruction of Serbia'ssocial and political infrastructure. The nameless narrator is faced with friends who are being drafted and subsequently dying in the wars; the narrator himself actively avoids answering the door for fear of being drafted. The protagonist and his wife have very little, but in the midst of the society falling apart, they await the birth of their child, hinting at the possibility of a vastly different future. *In the Hold* is metaphorically symbolic of life "in the hold" of a ship, projecting the liminality of the existence between life and war embodied in the narrator's nearly solitary, self-reflective experience.

Offering a feminist reading, Jasmina Lukić regards the narrator of the work as a self-aware character, estranged from his society, who rejects the comfort of the nation, "patriarchalnationalism," and "masculine heroism" so easily accepted by his compatriots. He creates his own reality, abandoning the firmament of his parents' generation, and he and his wife collectively embrace "supreme unity against the world outside" (Lukić, 2010: 258). This position, in great contrast to what will surface in *Predator* but in keeping with the Serbian literary ourve of the time, depicts Serbian society as introspective and isolated, perhaps a literary verisimilitude of Serbia during the times of the crisis and beyond.

In the Hold debuted with great critical acclaim, and Arsenijević became the youngest author ever to receive the coveted literary *NIN* prize for fiction in 1994 (Vladušić 2009: 142). According to Slobodan Vladušić, *In the Hold*, together with its follow-up, *Andela*, presented Realism that was supposed to project a *totality* to be accomplished through a planned cycle, *Cloaxa Maxima*. However, Arsenijević only completed two of the four novels, thus never accomplishing the *totality* he sought to portray (Vladušić 2006: 151). Vladušić notes that "the [*NIN*] award, as well as a very warm critical reception of the book, implied that something new had happened in Serbian literature...[because] there is a huge discrepancy between [earlier] postmodern poetics and the neorealistic poetics of Arsenijević's novel" (Vladušić 2006: 151). This Neorealism marked a shift in the primacy of the whole to emphasis on the fragment – specifically, a "fragment" which is not

tied to any particular form, suggesting that perhaps this type of Neo-Realism is incapable of expressing a totality.

Vladušić further considers the place of Neorealism in literary works of the 1990s in *U potpalublju* (*In the Hold*) and *Anđela: Cloaca maxima II Sapunska opera (Anđela*) by Vladimir Arsenijević as indicative of an emerging tide away from the poetics of Postmodernism. Collectively, these books evince a turn to Realism,owing to their first person narrative and their attempt to capture the zeitgeist of 1990s Serbia. In addition, I believe it is worthwhile to note that aspects of the trend continued into the early 2000s in *Dnevnik srpske domaćice* (*Diary of a Serbian Housewife*, 2000) by Mirjana Bobić-Mojsilović and *Ples sitnih demona* (*The Dance of the Petty Demons*, 2001), *Đavo je moj drug* (*The Devil is my Friend*, 2002), and *Kandže* (*Claws*, 2004), all by Marko Vidojković.

Within this then emerging Realism, writers displayed broad diversity. Some are considered to be serious writers, whose works are well known and well-respected. Others have created what would, in effect, be considered pop-literature, which, in my opinion, is incredibly important in determining the direction of contemporary Serbian literature since it enjoys wide readership and signals popular tastes and communal sentiments. Works by Vidojković and Bobić-Mojsilović are emblematic, perhaps, of pop-literature but contribute significantly to the body of post-war literature by using varying degrees of hindsight to illuminate prewar and wartime Yugoslavia. They are important in drawing indisputably large numbers of readers as they have reached bestseller status. Specifically, *The Dance of the Petty Demons* has been translated into English and German, suggesting the potential for an even broader audience.

Literature scholar Zoran Đerić does not specify what makes the works of the younger generation realist or neorealist, but he articulates the new poetics as "fear for oneself, friends and family, [and] egocentrism" (Đerić, 345). He is quick to note that this new Realism bears no relationship to the Realism that followed WWII. Lacking in the new works is the Socialist "we" having been replaced by what Đerić calls the "assured 'I' (*Nesumnjivo Ja*)". He defines these works as generational, coming-of-age stories, with "contemporary social-economic, cultural, and daily war [realities] in the background, if not in the center of the events" (Đerić, 345).

Despite Vladušić's use of "neorealist" and Đerić's use of "realist" to describe the same type of works, I believe that the two terms explain the same phenomenon. Vladušić defines Neorealism primarily through a work's structure, including the absence of wholeness and totality. Traditional Realism is closely related to the phenomenon of the body and the perspective of the narrator'seye, but Vladušić posits that in the newest iterations of Serbian Neorealism, there is a "tendency to replace the eye with the ear" meaning that what is heard, as opposed to what is seen, becomes the focus of a given work (Vladušić 2006: 154). In this description Vladušić includes the triumph of the ear (an agency of recording)

over the eye (an agency of sight) as a convention of neorealist narration (Vladušić 2006: 154). In realist or neorealist Serbian literature, the narrator realizes that he cannot preside over the world around him, only that which he experiences directly. Here Đerić's classification of the *Assured I* proves useful, as it conveys a circumscribed world for a narrator, who can only express his own personal, singular reality of the things that he can see.Vladušić's Neorealism and Đerić's Realism overlap in nearly all parameters, save their own nomenclature. Therefore, I will use "Neorealism" to describe the post-conflict Serbian literary phenomenon focusing on the *neo* in Neorealism, to express the newness of the literature, while recognizing the poetics that Đerić describes and the cultural currency held by the Realism of the time, to stress how *Predator* illustrates a sharp movement away from the literary trends of the time.This change in aesthetic position represents a movement away from Serbian localism, and pushes for Serbian inclusion and global engagement as a reflection of the transnational position that Serbs and other former Yugoslavs assumed, along with others in the world in the late 1990s and early 2000s. *Predator* thus serves as a work of "literature of normalization" where Serbian literature steps away from the "neighborhood" and (re)engages with the world.[2] As such, the "object of memory" and "object of mourning" becomes disentangled from the Yugoslav experience, rendering the point and experience of trauma something universally shared by means of individual struggles as viewed through the lens of a globalized collective presented in the wide-open world of *Predator*.

As the book jacket of *Predator* notes, the piece "creat[es] a novelesque whole" owing to the interconnectedness of the stories. This open-ended understanding of the work posits it is not quite a novel, an idea that Arsenijević supports (Nikčević, 2013). In fact, as a result of the blurring of genres, I opt here to refer to the individual storylines in the book as story-chapters, indicating that each can stand alone as a individual story, although in isolation the stories would negate their collective wholness and interconnectedness.

Just as the first two works of Arsenijević attempted to show the everyday reality of an ordinary Serb in Belgrade during the Yugoslav wars and the exercising of the only choices available (resistance, compliance, desertion), *Predator* illustrates a post-war 21st century reality that voids differences between citizens of the world, embracing the transnational and global, therefore departing from the localized themes and war-time subjects of the aforementioned novels in many ways and opting instead for genre and aesthetic movement abstraction and settings that rotate among Denmark, Germany, Spain, former-Yugoslav

2 I borrowing here from the idea of "Cinema of Normalization" from Jurica Pavčić, where the self-Balkanization and war in films from former Yugoslav countries has been exchanged for active heroes capable of problem solving (Pavičić 2010: 48). War enters into the narrative frame through legacy and history.

space (Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo), Iraqi Kurdistan, England, and the U. S. *Predator* is not quite of the earlier postmodern ilk, but not quite of neorealist either, evidencing that *Predator* stands apart from its immediate literary ancestors. What I hope to do here, however, and what I believe to be most important in this text,is not to categorize the work itself in terms of genre or aesthetics, but to analyze the structure and themes as a means and exposition of the transnational imaginary as experienced through the characters of the novel.

Predator takes place over a period of approximately 20–25 years and primarily documents the life of the Nihil Musa Baksi. Nihil is a Kurdish Yazid who becomes a cannibal out of hunger during his long, unjust imprisonment under Saddam Hussein's regime. Significant about his first cannibalistic act is that he eats his best friend, Musa, out of delirium, distress, and confusion – a horrific act of amicide that will repeat itself in the work in the story-chapter "Dumbo's Death". After eating Musa, Nihil assumes the name of his friend and becomes "Nihil Musa", retaining this name until the end of the work, when he decides to begin a new life, where upon he reclaims "Nihil", a name that recalls nihilism, nothingness, a disconnect from society. He has no home, no family, nothing, so the name is befitting (Arsenijević 2008: 163). His cannibalism offers comfort, and ironically seems to reaffirm life for him. His cannibalistic urges surface when important lives have been taken away from him, proving that he is capable, and seemingly very interested in, taking life from others. In fact, the incorporation of Musa into his name provides initial proof that he is capable of destruction and creating voids. His basis of self was negated, so he has negated Musa, hence Nihil Musa.

After recovering from battle wounds in England, Nihil Musa moves to Denmark to seek asylum, where he sells bread and interacts with other asylum seekers, among whom is a Bosnian named Hassan (nicknamed Dumbo because of the appearance of his ears) whose story and descent into nothingness is recounted in "One Minute: Dumbo's Death", and a Danish photo journalist and documentarian, Hanna, whose details and ensuing demise from HIV are recounted in the chapter-story *Neukorenjenost* ("Rootlessness"), the title for which originates from a picture taken by Hanna depicting a Serb comforting a dying Kosovar Albanian, and *Zemljaci* ("Countrymen"), which recounts, among other things, Nihil Musa's second cannibalistic act where he eats "crazy Vanja," a friend of another Serb who we learn of through his stream of conscious rants. The title *Neukorenjenost* offers critique of the Western voyeuristic gaze of the Other, through a photograph of a woman holding a dying man, which becomes the focus of an art show. This conjures the voyeuristic images of death that Western media outlets produced during the Yugoslav wars. The title hints that perhaps the two characters, like all others in the film, are unrooted – in that they are expatriates in a foreign land. It also hints that as a Serb and Albanian, there would be no humanity between the two individuals because they share no roots; they have no commonalities.

Another compelling plot development takes place in the same chapter-story when Marija, a Serb woman who has lived in Berlin for a long time, and an Albanian man, Fatmir, attend a presentation entitled "Serbia v. Kosovo: No Acceptance/No Repentance", which makes the Serb and Kosovo conflict personal by creating a dialogue between an ethnic Serb and Kosovar Albanian. Each individual is asked about their experiences during the war with reductionist views of what it means to be a Serb and Kosovar Albanian through the characters of Marija and Fatmir. The most significant of their interactions comes during a talk at the Grosse Hände cultural center under the title "Serbia Vs. Kosovo: No Acceptance/ No Repentance", which was meant to show the civilized, *European* side of Kosovo and Serbia (Arsenijević 2008: 60). The text notes that the presentation goes awry when the conversation moves to the subject of the severity of Albanian suffering, a point on which Marija and Fatmir concur. Marija, however, departs from Fatmir's discussion to interject that "Albanians are, unfortunately, not the only victims of the Milošević regime" (Arsenijević 2008: 63). Marija makes a statement, which I believe is fundamental to understand the themes and forms of transnationalism as they exist in this work, namely that "[i]t is important to know that that we are all victims" (Arsenijević 2008: 64). We have all experienced trauma – we are al engaged in our own processes of mourning. This victimhood is not meant to remove agency or offer an escape, but rather serves to recognize the affective relationship that being a victim has on the position of the subject. The narrative logic of *Predator* commands that our global connections and "transnational solidarity" originate in our suffering and our collective response to it (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996: 6). Rather than offering definitive responses, *Predator* presents characters reckoning with their once stable identities made fluid as a result of suffering and unfixed identities and roots.

In the same scene, Marija continues by stating "we are all Albanians" to help the audience, and the reader, understand that many non-Albanians suffered at the hands of Milošević, and declares, "We are all Albanians", to which Fatmir replies, "Some of us more than others", which evokes laughter from those in attendance. Marija simply wants the audience to understand that many, even Serbs in Serbia, suffered under Milošević, not only Albanians in Kosovo. However, this more nuanced understanding of suffering in Milošević's Serbia does not correspond well with the accepted portrayal of the war where by all Serbs were linked together in collective guilt, there by glossing over appeals for differentiation and possible multidirectional trauma.

To place this dialogue into a broader context, this scene recalls Croatian author Slavenka Drakulić's May 20, 1999 *Nation* article "We Are All Albanians", in which she responds to a letter written by Arsenijević to a Croatian friend in Zagreb who believed the Serbs lacked remorse for Albanians in Kosovo. The text of the letter is included in Drakulić's piece:

> "On account of lack of pity for the fate of Kosovo Albanians, I know (from my own experience – and I know that I have no bad feelings whatsoever directed toward anybody, least of all Albanians) that it is very hard to care about somebody else's problems if you are personally experiencing major problems of your own at the same moment. There is no favoritism in this society. Everybody is too busy surviving here to be able to feel any remorse... Remorse is a privilege of the well-nourished, clean and civilized. And we are all Albanians here. All of us: Serbs, Montenegrins, Hungarians, Slovaks... Poor, underfed, degraded, oppressed. And I mean ALL of us, even those who have supported Milošević with all their heart through all these years of terrible hell" (Drakulić: 1999).

Hence, when, in *Predator*, Arsenijević alludes tothis letter, and by extension Drakulić's article, showing that through the laughter in the audience, "Albanian" is but a simulacra offering an outlet and redemption of their collective remorse, presumably for their veritable inaction in the conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia (Johnstone: 2002). In keeping with the logic of the text, most identities are at least mutable and multifaceted at best and negated at worst. Marija is simply trying to express that all suffered under Milošević, the same idea Arsenijević was conveying in the letter to his friend, the essence of which was misrepresented and misunderstood by Drakulić and, by extension, the West.

Through the scene in the novel with Marija and Fatmir, the work as a whole expresses the importance of the individuality of experiences, thoughts, and actions, advancing the agenda so important to the young and educated class in Serbia; it removes guilt and responsibility from the collective (the amorphous mass of Serbs), and respects the wishes, expectations, and opinions of the individual. However, in tackling the importance of the individual, Arsenijević stresses the importance of the individual as it relates to the collective. Victimization happens personally, but its effects are felt globally and our choices and reactions are likewise collective and global.

Moreover, the omnipresent discussion and commentary on the Yugoslav conflicts, particularly from the Serbian and Kosovar points of view through the voices of expatriate Fatmir and Marija, are removed from the context of the wars by virtue of their lives lived abroad. Their position as members of diasporic communities is important in the formation of "triadic communities" – globally dispersed but self-identifying as members of an ethnic community, the territories in which they reside, and the spaces from which their ethnicities originate (Vertovec 1999: 449). This triangulation of belonging proves relevant for nearly all characters in the text, as the definitions they offer for themselves are representative of said triangulation of belonging. That the text is essentially written for members of Ex-Yugoslav space, provides an active engagement in this triangulation of identity, whereby those reading become a part of that greater transnational diasporic community simply through the act of reading.

Interesting to note in reference to the earlier discussion on NeoRealism, is how the scene with Fatmir and Marija mirrors discussions in the same chapter that Dren, a young Albanian from Kosovo has with Serbs who have killed his father and who are squatting in his family home (Arsenijević 2008: 65–66). Scenes such as these privilege both the eye and the ear individually, and in doing so recall the parameters of NeoRealism set forth by Vladusić. However, both fail, and the eye and the ear find the characters incapable of rectifying the personal challenges – their victimhood renders them powerless, as agency is taken away from the individual. The characters are only able to watch or hear the events as they take place, evoking the powerlessness of those living in absentia of their country. This reality of removed perspective is reflected in all transnational individuals in this work: Nihil, Dumbo, Jim Rice (Oahu Jim), Marija, Dren, and all the others who carry a Geneva Convention Passport. In the text, such individuals include "Iraqis, Kurds, Maroccans, belorussians, Russian and Ukrainians, Armenians, Germanis and various Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Cubans, Koreans, and various Yugoslavs: Serbs, Croatians, Macedonians, bosniand, Hercegovinians, and even a Kosovar Albanian" (Arsenijević 2008: 41). All of them are considered "world brothers" by "crazy" Vanja from Belgrade, who may be the passing jester in the work ironically offering truth.

Though the work is clearly an effort to confront the aftermath of war in general, it is particularly focused on the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars and its relation to other global events. Wars are personal, but they are likewise shared experiences, and how telling that the shared perspective of war comes from a citizen of a former member of the non-aligned movement (Iraq), further hinting at the connections shared between Serbs and other nations not just in the post-war context. The historical span of the story-chapters provides a space to examine and draw conclusions about them, which the author indirectly does, not just through the character of Nihil, but also through the characters themselves whose displacement is the direct result of the wars or political environments that caused the wars. Other characters and their story lines in *Predator* relate to one another, and relate back to Nihil in some way—his transnational nature and transience provides an example for other characters in the work. He insists in the opening scenes with Oahu Jim that he is a Yazidi and Kurdish, but what meaning do those terms convey? In this work the very notion that identities are fixed and stable presents as constructed performances of identity. For Nihil, an individual living a transientexistence, identity is created from nostalgia and memory. As such, it proves false.

Given these metaquestions offered in *Predator*, at first glance the textmay seem a clean break with the works that established Arsenijević as an important generational writer, but it relates to the earlier texts in that many of the refugee characters are from nations that composed the former Yugoslavia and are the same generation of the characters in *In the Hold*. Wartime realities from Yugoslavia are also featured in the work, and detailed in the ways in which they changed

individuals moving them from fixed notions of self to nuanced, variable, remembered identities. By focusing on a Kurdish minority and how Nihil's once idyllic life was forever transformed by the 1988 gas attack on Halabja, Arsenijević inserts the Yugoslav wars into a larger, global context and ultimately takes ex-Yugoslav space and its former citizens out of obscurity, and relates the Yugoslav wars to other horrific conflicts and attacks in the twentieth century, thereby placing Yugoslav legacy into a global framework of understanding. In addition, the complex characters in *Predator* illustrate the universality of experience and consequences of war and the trauma of conflict and disassociation from familiarity. However, the work presents a platform from which to experience and engage with the world, which is offered as a connecting point for the story lines and characters. Thus, a Yazidi Kurd can be connected to a Danish artist as easily as he can be a Bosnian drug addict and British television star (Oahu Jim) who has lost his significance, and "doesn't have a name anymore" (Arsenijević 2008: 12).

The specific components of the transnational imaginary of *Predator* operate through the universal and specific and global and local. Those universal aspects of culture that are present for each individual are at foundation of the characters in the novel, this "everyday transnationalism" affords sustained interaction and negotiation of self and other and familiar with strange. (Boccagni 2012) Regarding the connections in the text, Arsenijević notes in a 2013 interview with BH Dani that *Predator* is a literary tuber, rhizomatic; every story derives from the story, the episodes are branching. (Nikčević 2013). *Predator* extends beyond itself – its branches and roots provide routes and roots, to use Paul Gilroy's terms, connecting those outside of the text through experience resulting in solidarity. The "assured I" is multiplied in a community of glocalpeers.

If we consider Nihil Musa to be a protagonist in the story, owing to the fact that his story is pivotal for all others to connect, then he becomes that "assured I". His biography, networks, and his direct connections to others – his friends and even Oahu Jim – provide a framework and narrative thread connecting others in the work. Also relevant are his means of contact, whichcast him in the role of progenitor of the transnational imaginary in this work. In his nothingness and lack he becomes a cultural chameleon, creating spaces of belonging for himself in cultural contexts devoid of specificity, save the bread he bakes daily that provides his sole link to his sending culture.

The routes of disseminating the transnational provides a means by which communities can be established. In *Predator* technological flows of information feature prominently in this work as a primary means of communication. Media likewise provides a way to connect these individuals to their roots for these otherwise unrooted individuals. Examples in the text include the following: Nihil and Oahu Jim meet online in a virtual online community fromyourdarkestdreams.com (Arsenijević 2008: 9); Hanna communicates with her father about her life, being HIV positive, and her artistic success in the text through messages formatted as

emails (Arsenijević 2008: 154–7, 170–1,183–5); Nihl gets his screen name from the American VHS cassette with the title "Predator" handwritten on the case, and Arnold Schwarzenegger suggests the means and routes of American globalization (Arsenijević 2008: 127). Moreover, the hyper-masculinity displayed by Schwarzenegger resonates with the Kurds as a reflection of American power and might, who Nihil's family and friends are celebrating (Arsenijević 2008: 87). Finally, Vera, who lives in the suburbs of London with her soon to be ex-husband, decides to return to Belgrade to help her mother, who she sees on the news through the medium of the television (Arsenijević 2008: 207).

Geography and cultural specificities have become minimalized in the face of globalization – the world exists and is mirrored throughout daily interactions – rendering borders and boundaries virtually meaningless. The chronology of *Predator* traces the emergence of the global in the local and the local in the global through individuals who are impacted by the simultaneous negation of the meaning of boundaries and the broader definition of the nation as it exists inside and outside of the political boundaries of territory. The characters in *Predator* fundamentally define themselves through their cultures, their language, their homelands, despite the primacy of the "here and now" as characterized by Arsenijević, where these ethnic boundaries are tenuous in our world of dislocation and displacement (Nikčević 2013). Nevertheless as objects of nostalgia, they are significant for the individual carrying the sign. Because of their importance, "cultural differences are something that we must carefully cherish and protect, something with which everyone person must constantly value, protect, and be familiar with, and with which every person must live" according to the text (Arsenijević 2008: 54). In that in our globalized world individuals are defined by multiple instances of belonging, respecting cultures also supportsthe personal hybridity held by so many. Individuals in *Predator* necessarily posses "fragmented loyalties" reflecting their movement and cultural affinities that can be recalled or channeled if presented with the necessary means or motivation for mobilization – for instance, Vera's desire to help her mother, despite her established family life in London. Not so different is the ability to operate with a creolized identity and respond to the expectations and necessities of their "transnational lives" defined by their multiple aspects of belonging (Vertovec 2009: 53). Consider in this context Marija and Fatmir, who, despite their temporal and spatial distance from the conflicts in Kosovo and Belgrade in 1999, still display a deep connection to them, and feel through their nationalized – be they imagined or actual – convictions, the need to explain their ethnicized positions. Likewise, their experiences of living in Western European nations, presumably for considerable periods of time, also affords them knowledge of the expectations of the audience – their use of English and exposition of accepted narratives of victimhood in the case of Fatmir, and explanation of unacknowledged victimhood by Marija, illustrates that their hybridity

allows them access the necessary cultural idioms to argue their points for they have accepted and embraced their transnational selves.

In this piece, it was my goal to define and illustrate manifestations of the transnational imaginary by focusing on the specific iterationsthat exist in the text through a close reading of its content. While this list is not exhaustive, it provides more than a foundational basis for establishing the transnational world that *Predator* creates. The historical relevance arises in its movement from not only the literary trends of the time, but also a challenge to reengage with the world through offering characters whose narrative positions are informed by their transience, hybridity, and multitude of experiences. Thus, Vladimir Arsenijević's *Predator* presents the transnational as broad, even universal – something that the contemporary age demands be created within individuals, be it through diaspora, negation of borders, or connectionsin various forms. While the work is engaged primarily with war and the affective nature of trauma, it is undeniably focused on the Yugoslav context and removing post-Yugoslav contexts beyond the post and beyond Yugoslav to create meanings beyond trauma and nostalgia, fomenting instances of belonging that are more global and inclusive rather than insular and solitary. In exploring the themes of post-war Serbian cultural awakening, the context in this case, of course, is global, and, therefore, is in step with post-war Serbian *Realpolitik* and its need to reengage with the world by recognizing Serbia and Serbs as transnational.

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THE TRANSNATIONAL IMAGINARY OF VLADIMIR ARSENIJEVIĆ'S *PREDATOR*

Summary

The 2008 work *Predator* offers a literary canvas as a means of moving away from collective memory and mourning for the past in order to rebuild identities that advance beyond the specifics of war, in exchange for the universality of trauma – in its various forms – as foundational. In the article, the author builds upon the work of other critical writings that observe major trends of the previous generation of works, which focus on the self, immediate surroundings, and familiar cultural networks. These literary works primarily engage in questioning the place of former Yugoslav space in post-war settings, in recognition of a reality positioning Serbs and Serbia (and by extension other former Yugoslav spaces) as outside of the orbit of normalization – a process that prioritized articulating the nation, its systems, people, and place within the Global North. Beginning with these literary antecedents as backdrop, the author explains how *Predator* departs from the aesthetics and structures of previous works; it does not simply move in immediate locales of Serbia and other ex-Yugoslav space, but is set in various global spaces, including Denmark, England, the US, Germany, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Spain. In fact, the cast of characters includes citizens from many more territories than the countries in which it is set. In positioning ex-Yugoslav citizens around the world, the author of the article illustrates how *Predator* challenges the place of Serbs and former Yugoslav nationals to (re)position and

(re)form identities beyond the fixed borders, nations, and even nationalities of the region in exchange for an embrace of the current and future forms and networks of transnationalism: diasporic, temporal, and the everyday among others.

Key words: transnationalism, trauma, hybridity, diaspora, global, local, post-Yugoslav

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