

Please note: This is the pre-print, pre-reviewed and unedited version of an article that has since been published as "Berlin's Futurity in Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998) and Marica Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012)" in *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 51:4 (2015): 357-77.

**Berlin's Futurity in Zafer Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998)
and Marica Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012)**

Abstract

In this article, I trace some of the ways in which Zafer Şenocak's novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998) and Marica Bodrožić's novel *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012) employ Berlin as a cipher to re-negotiate memories of the Holocaust and WWII in conjunction with other pasts, that is the Armenian genocide and the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia, respectively. Both novels can be read as experiments in how to represent memories of these pasts in a way that does not monumentalize the past in service of national collective identity projects. Instead, both authors in part hand over the onus of remembrance to the reader and thereby open up a space for active remembrance to take place, in which the past is open to both the present and future. Drawing on theoretical insights by Aleida Assmann, Anne Rigney, and Michael Rothberg, I argue that the novels outline ways in which the intersecting memories of various European genocides and atrocities of the 20th century knotted in contemporary Berlin have what Amir Eshel calls futurity. However, Şenocak's 1998 novel is marked by its immediate post-*Wende* context and therefore depicts a Berlin hardly able to escape the pull of the German national past.

Bodrožić's more recent text, on the other hand, marks a shift towards depicting 21st century Berlin as a city of the present and future in which the past is mobilized beyond the German national context.

Introduction

Like no other city, Berlin concentrates modern German history within its boundaries; it was the capital of Prussia (1701-1918), the Second German Empire (1871-1918), the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), the Third Reich (1933-1945), and the German Democratic Republic (1949-90). In the course of history, Berlin was a centre for enlightenment ideals under Frederick the Great, a hotspot for liberal subcultures in the 1920s, and the site of the *Reichskristallnacht*. It was supposed to become the *Welthauptstadt Germania* according to Hitler's megalomaniac imaginations, and was in large part destroyed in WWII. With the building of the Berlin wall in 1961, post-WWII Berlin also became "a metaphor for divided Germany [as...] the land between the two great political systems" (Small and Ross 63). After re-unification, the city retained its metaphorical status and became the principal locality upon which post-*Wende* Germany self-consciously and publicly negotiated its identity. Given Berlin's symbolic significance for the reunified Germany, it is not surprising that the city has become a dominant topos in German literature since 1989. Given that "Berlin is a city of immigration par excellence" (Senocak, "Capital" 143), the topos has not only been popular with ethnic German-language writers but also with writers with non-ethnic German backgrounds. For example, Wladimir Kaminer's *Russendisko* (2002), Yadé Kara's *Selam Berlin* (2004), Emine-Sevgi Özdamar's Berlin-Istanbul trilogy, re-published together as *Sonne auf halbem Weg* (2006), Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage* (2006), Feridun Zaimoglu's *German Amok* (2002) and *Isabel* (2014), or Nellja Veremej *Berlin liegt im*

Osten (2013) all use Berlin as a cipher for Germany's past in order to negotiate issues surrounding identity and belonging.

In this article, I take a closer look at two further Berlin novels, that is, at Senocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998) and Marica Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012), to trace their use of Berlin as a site through which to renegotiate the historical atrocities committed on European soil during the 20th century. First, I analyze Senocak's novel in light of its alleged failure to adequately represent the Armenian genocide. Rather than being a failure, I argue that this lack of representation is the logical outcome of the novel's often acknowledged critique of memory and identity discourses in the Berlin Republic. In an attempt to avoid the monumentalizing and exclusionary tendencies of these discourses, the novel uses narrative gaps, fragments, ellipses, and allusions in order to engage the reader actively in a process of remembrance. In so doing, it also gestures towards future-oriented possibilities inherent in the past. In the second part, I offer a reading of Bodrožić's novel *Kirschholz and alte Gefühle*. Taking issue with post-Yugoslav Croatian memory and identity politics, the novel approaches representations of the past cautiously. Like Senocak, Bodrožić experiments with narrative silences and allusions in order to leave the represented past open for present and future renegotiation, and to safeguard it from becoming co-opted by identity politics. I conclude by showing that, next to all of their similarities, the novels' differ in their depiction of Berlin. Senocak's post-*Wende* Berlin is still mired in discourses surrounding the national German past, whereas Bodrožić's Berlin gestures towards the city's European future.

Senocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*: Berlin's Archival Traces of the Armenian Genocide

Since its publication in 1998, Senocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* was met with wide critical

acclaim. The novel forms part of a prose tetralogy consisting of *Der Mann im Unterhemd* (1995), *Die Prärie* (1997), *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1998), and *Der Erottomane: Ein Findelbuch* (1999). While varying greatly in genre and style, the four works are loosely connected by the figure of Sascha, who only really comes into being as something akin to a protagonist in *Die Prärie* and *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*.¹ In *Die Prärie*, Sascha introduces himself as a struggling, less than mediocre writer in his mid-30s, living in West Berlin in the late 1980s. After a series of highly sexualized relationships and some journalistic work, Sascha decides to leave Germany just before the fall of the Berlin wall and goes to the US to spend a few years as a writer-in-residence and German language instructor at a small college on the prairies. *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* picks up the narrative thread when Sascha, now with the last name Muhteschem and a wife called Marie, returns to Berlin in the summer of 1992, purportedly hoping that his wife will help him to make a home for himself there. His quest for a place called home in a post-*Wende* Berlin marked by identity and memory discourses with the Holocaust as its center becomes intertwined with an exploration of his family's past that is prompted by the inheritance of his Turkish grandfather's notebooks after the sudden death of his parents. However, the son of a Jewish-German mother and Turkish father, the blond and blue-eyed German Sascha speaks no Turkish, Russian, or Arabic. Only a combination of these would allow him to actually read the notebooks and to assess his grandfather's active role in the Armenian genocide, which Sascha suspects may have led to his grandfather's inexplicable suicide in 1936.

1 Even in *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*, Sascha remains “flatly drawn rather than richly dimensional” (Adelson *The Turkish Turn* 111). On this issue, Jochen Neubauer observes that the flat and at times inconsistent and self-contradictory nature of Senocak's protagonist Sascha is a conscious construction on part of the author to create a figure that defies easy categorization and thus points to the “Unbrauchbarkeit und Absurdität stereotyper und ethnizierender Zuschreibungen angesichts einer komplexen gesellschaftlichen Realität” (Neubauer 403, 452).

In the meantime, his wife Marie, a documentary filmmaker, is working on Talat Pascha, a former Turkish general implicated in the Armenian genocide who was killed by a young Armenian in Berlin in 1921. Whereas Marie is relentless in her search for an explanation of how a successful and enlightened politician such as Talat Pascha could become a war criminal, Sascha eventually ceases to look for answers about his grandfather's involvement and abandons his quest for a home with Marie. He leaves Marie and moves into an apartment in former East Berlin, where he invents a sentimental love story, a copy of which concludes *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* and offers an alternative reason for his grandfather's suicide.

While his novel has been widely and well received as an important work in post-*Wende* German-language literature,² Şenocak's treatment of the Armenian genocide in *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* has occasioned harsh criticism.³ Taking serious issue with the novel's depiction of the Armenian genocide, Friederike Eigler observes that the fragmentary way in which the novel alludes to the event comes close to a second tabooing of the genocide since the allusions are merely recognizable by the already initiated reader (76–7).⁴ Margaret Littler argues that the novel “both narrates too little (in its allusive treatment of Armenian history) and too much (by integrating this traumatic history into a sentimental plot)” (“Guilt” 358). Further, Moray McGowan points out that the novel fails insofar as it does not offer a narrative of “the massacres

2 Both Karin Yesilada and Jochen Neubauer also call it the *Schlüsselroman* of post-*Wende* Turkish-German literature (Yesilada 321, Neubauer 396).

3 Şenocak himself has been criticized for his stance on the genocide (e.g. see Stein). His *Welt Online* commentary on Turkey's censorship of Atom Egoyan's film *Ararat* (2004), for example, was interpreted as an attempt to question or even make an apology for the Armenian genocide (“Von Wölfen und Lämmern”). However, in an interview, tellingly titled “Der Genozid an den Armeniern als historische Tatsache”, Şenocak fully affirms the genocide, stating that the facts are all on the table (“Genozid”).

4 Regarding the fragmentary nature of the novel, Monika Shafi goes as far as to argue that “[u]ltimately, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* thus suffers from a failure of narrative cohesion and literary imagination” (210).

nor of the complex background to their contested historiography” (210). However, Andreas Huyssen approves of the fact that the text “represents the Armenian genocide as a gap, as an absence, though an explosive one” that stands in stark contrast to post-*Wende* Germany’s overt efforts at national self-definition, bolstered by an exclusive memory culture (“Diaspora” 163). Leslie Adelson explains that it was Şenocak’s aim neither to represent the Armenian genocide in a “metanarrative” nor to depict an “image of Armenian experience in any gripping detail” (*Turkish Turn* 119). Adelson further argues that the novel’s non-representational approach to the genocide is the result of the text’s attempt to “revive remembrance, to restore the deep breathing of historical memory otherwise stifled or frozen in a culture of *Betroffenheit*” (116). She concludes that the novel’s focus on a particular moment in German history, that is post-*Wende* Germany, prevents the text from “speak[ing] very effectively to an Armenian need for visibility” (119). Below, I elaborate on Adelson’s observation, detailing how Şenocak’s non-representational treatment of the Armenian genocide is the direct outcome of his critique of German memory practices during the 1990s.

Observing the proliferation of monuments in post-*Wende* Germany, Huyssen cautions that the “more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, the easier it is to forget” (“Monumental Seduction” 193). Huyssen touches on the paradox that building a monument, instead of ensuring lasting memory, may, as Ann Rigney points out, “in fact turn out to mark the beginning of amnesia” (“Dynamics of Remembrance” 345). As Adelson shows, Şenocak’s novel criticizes 1990s German memory practices for this reason, depicting a “German landscape of public memory in which ritualized speech and monumental commemorations of Jewish suffering and German guilt promote a sense of historical accountability, on the one hand, and an affect of

Betroffenheit obscuring the reasons for being moved, on the other” (*Turkish Turn* 116). As Senocak’s protagonist Sascha claims, memory has been replaced by *Betroffenheit*, which Sascha calls “die passende Befindlichkeit für Gedenktage, ein sentimentaler Begriff, der die körperliche Trauer aufhebt” (Senocak, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* 62).⁵ Instead of experienced and embodied remembrance, monumentalization can lead to ritualization in which emotions are merely “nachgestellt” leading to the “Geburt der Farce aus dem Geist der Tragödie” (62).⁶ In addition, externalizing remembrance essentially entails the end of remembrance as such, which is, as Rigney argues, “constantly in process, involving both recollection and forgetting in the light of changing patterns of relevance and shifting social frameworks” (“Divided Pasts” 93). Post-*Wende* Germany’s “Architekten des Vergessens” (*GV* 74),⁷ the novel cautions, might therefore be laying the foundations for forgetting and for the paying of mere lip-service rather than for continued remembrance. As Michael Rothberg also observes when commenting on Şenocak’s essayistic work, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* is intrinsically concerned with the search for new ways in which to remember the past (“Multidirectional Memory” 124–5). The novel’s curious treatment of the Armenian genocide therefore has to be read as an outcome of Şenocak’s attempt to find ways in which to narrativize the Armenian genocide in such a way as to enable remembrance, preventing that the novel itself becomes yet another monument.

5 Katharina Hall criticizes Sascha’s character because he fails to appreciate “the urgent Jewish need to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive on German soil”(77). However, this disregards the point made by Sascha, i.e. that the way in which this memory is commemorated in Germany, actually may prevent it from being actively remembered.

6 This play on Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* functions to undercut the preceding scope of the narrator’s sweeping observations regarding the German spirit. The narrative voice repeatedly undercuts its own authority throughout the text in like manner. For instance, the widely discussed passage about a German-Jewish-Turkish dialogue is followed by a comment on the groundlessness of such optimism (*GV* 89-90).

7 From this point on, I cite *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* as *GV* with page numbers in parenthesis.

In addition to ways in which to keeping remembrance alive, the novel also tries to foreclose any attempts to use the presented memories in processes of hegemonic, collective identity formation. In order to better understand the connection between memory and collective identity formation, a brief discussion of Aleida Assmann's understanding of cultural memory in its relation to the canon and archive is useful. Based on a social-constructivist understanding of cultural memory, Assmann points out that memory practices inherently involve processes of both cultural memory as well as forgetting, both of which in turn have an active and a passive form. The active form of forgetting can take the shape of violent destruction or censorship, such as that directed at "an alien culture or a persecuted minority" (Assmann, "Canon and Archive" 98). The passive form, in contrast, lacks intent. Objects are not materially destroyed but rather "fall out of the frames of attention, valuation, and use" (98) and can thus potentially be recovered by archaeology. Just like forgetting, memory has an active and a passive form. Active remembering is done by means of what Assmann calls the "canon," the "actively circulated memory that keeps the past present" found in, for example, displays in a museum (98). Passive memory, in contrast, is preserved in the archive and not publicly displayed. Rather, it is accumulated in museums' storerooms or other "peripheral spaces" (98). Drawing on Jakob Burckhardt, Assmann compares the canon to "messages" whose content is controlled by those in power (99). The canon thus aims at supporting "a collective identity" (109) and is propagated by institutions such as those tied to religion, art, and history. Recalling Benedict Anderson's imagined community, history in particular thus emerges as a powerful tool for nation states to consolidate their canon, producing narratives of the past to be "taught, embraced, and referred to as their [i.e. the nations'] collective autobiography" and publicly embodied in monuments and commemoration dates (101). The

archive, on the other hand, is populated by traces, “unmediated testimonies of a former era that can tell a counter-history to the one propagated by the rulers” (99). Historical archives thus store potentially available but as of yet not interpreted knowledge (103), which is potentially available for future interpretation. The challenge, however, lies in the fact that once these potentially counter-hegemonic traces of the archive are accessed, interpreted, and represented, they actually become messages and as such, part of the canon, liable to hegemonic utilization as part of processes of collective identity making.

In a parody of post-*Wende* Berlin identity politics, Sascha initially goes as far as trying to purchase membership in the German collective by means of claiming the archival history of a potentially genocidal grandfather. As Yasemine Dayioglu argues, Sascha initially attempts to integrate into post-*Wende* Berlin by trying to participate “über die Teilhabe an der Auseinandersetzung mit der Übertragbarkeit von Schuld” (104). Yet, his attempts to become part of any collective are ultimately abandoned. Instead, the novel criticizes the solipsistic and exclusive mechanism underlying the construction of a collective identity based on the past. In a short, peculiar chapter about Tante Hölle and Gute Eva, Tante Hölle lives in a small isolated hut with a dark, deep, maze-like chute beneath her bed, a “Gedächtnis” which is the source of her immortality and which is sustained by human sacrifice (*GV* 88).⁸ While not an allegory—the contradictory and fragmentary nature of the novel as a whole prevents any allegorical reading—the tale suggests that immortalized memory is merely the material for nightmarish fairy tales. In

⁸ When Good Eva comes to the hut, Tante Hölle throws her into her chute, encountering no resistance from Good Eva, who is said to have had a lifetime to practice obedience (*GV* 88). Alluding to the Grimm fairy tale Frau Holle, in which the protagonist is rewarded for following all orders she is given, Şenocak’s tale references the German discussion pertaining to the role of the *Wehrmacht* and general German population in executing the Holocaust. After the German publication of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* in 1996, this discussion took center stage because of Goldhagen’s claim that Germans participated freely and out of ideological conviction rather than because they were merely following orders (Niven 126).

fact, the quest for identity based on one's origins and past is a journey necessarily circling around the seeker, leading back to the subjective truths of one's own dark chute, the aborescent paths of which would take more than a lifetime to explore (87). As Şenocak points out elsewhere, the memory of the Holocaust in particular has become a means by which to both define German collective identity and to exclude all others from participating in it. As he contends, "history is read as a diary of the community of destiny (*Schicksalgemeinschaft*), the nation's personal experience, to which others have no access" (*Atlas of a Tropical Germany* 53). Focused on its own past, Germany revolves around itself, and like Tante Hölle, sacrifices any Other to feed its own chute. Part of the challenge in the novel, then, is to tell the story of the Armenian genocide in such a way as to not allow for the construction of yet another exclusionary identity, this time the one of the victims and perpetrators of the Armenian genocide.

In line with the novel's critique of monumentalizing the past in the service of a collective identity, Sascha gives up his reconstruction of a family history that would purchase him membership in the larger community of fate that is the post-*Wende* Berlin Republic. Instead of a family history, the reader is offered narrative ellipsis, undiscovered secrets, and unanswered questions. In the novel, many plot lines are either not developed or developed in ways contrary to set-up expectations (Eigler 66), and the reader is confronted with many omissions and contradictions (Neubauer 398). For instance, Sascha's father never tells an announced secret to Sascha. The reader never learns about the precise contents of the grandfather's notebooks and one does not know if Sascha himself ever uncovers the historical facts regarding his grandfather's life and death. Margaret Littler argues that the novel's fragmentary and citational style is part of its challenge to hegemonic post-89 German identity discourses ("Fall of the Wall")

54). Here I would add that it is also part of the novel's attempt to find non-representational approaches to the past to prevent that past from becoming co-opted in such discourses. In contrast to Sascha's wife Marie, a documentary filmmaker focused on what she deems to be objective facts, Sascha eventually instead decides "das Leben [s]eines Großvaters nicht zu rekonstruieren, sondern zu erfinden" (GV 38).⁹ Sascha likes Marie's first documentary film, which she found to be too dark because, for him, the darkness creates a welcome atmosphere "die nicht alles preisgab, was gezeigt wurde" (22). In the novel, things are similarly intentionally left in the dark, not given visibility, to save them from entering the canon and thus from the fate the memory of the Holocaust faces in Sascha's post-*Wende* Berlin.

Despite its critique of overrepresentation, the novel, however, does thematize the Armenian genocide, mostly via the historical figure of Talat Pascha. He is the central figure of Marie's documentary film and introduced via the Berlin location where he was shot by a young Armenian in the Hardenbergstraße in 1921. Further conversation between Sascha and Marie reveals that Talat Pascha was a mass-murderer of a stature comparable to Hitler (15). Halfway into the novel, the reader also learns that Talat Pascha started out as a teacher at a Jewish school in Thessaloniki and that he became a leader of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the *Ittihat ve Terakki* party, which opposed the sultanate and promoted a free civic Ottoman empire. Marie is interested in finding out how such a successful enlightened politician was able to become a mass murderer, co-responsible for the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Armenians during WWI (72). The text presents these names and events as if they were as well

9 Sascha's co-called invention is not completely dissociated from any kind of information or established facts. As Sascha points out, he has information about his grandfather that cannot be simply forgotten, and he wonders if the diaries are not part of his memory despite the fact that he cannot decipher them (GV 38).

known to the German reader as Goebbels, the SS, or Auschwitz. However, these rather sparse details about Talat Pascha of course raise more questions about him than they answer. For instance, what is the CUP? Who killed Talat Pascha and why? How did the German government deal with his assassination? And why was he in Berlin in the first place?

Rather than presenting historical and canonized facts about Talat Pascha, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* prompts the reader to ask questions such as these. Given the sketchy way in which Talat Pascha is presented, any curious reader will look up the figure him- or herself to learn that Talat ordered the arrest and execution of hundreds of Armenian leaders. This order marks the beginning of the genocide on April 24th, 1915. At the end of the war in 1918, Talat, with German help, fled to Berlin and thus to safety. Talat and others were then found guilty of massacring the Armenians and were sentenced to death in absentia by an Ottoman tribunal, set up on July 5th, 1919 due to pressure by the victorious Allies (Boeblian 55). Since Germany refused to extradite members of the Turkish leadership, Talat Pascha, however, continued to live unharmed in Berlin, until Soghomon Tehlirian, an Armenian survivor, shot and killed Talat Pascha on March 15, 1921, in front of a villa in Hardenbergstraße, Berlin (60-1).¹⁰ Marie is disappointed after visiting Hardenbergstraße with her camera team, finding that there is nothing to record. However, it is her focus on Talat Pascha rather than Tehlirian, which prevents any living images to arise. It is not Talat Pascha himself but rather the Berlin trial of Tehlirian that made the Armenian genocide visible to a shocked German public for the first time. In Berlin, civilians and military personal such Dr. Johannes Lepsius and Otto Liman von Sanders acted as witnesses and provided evidence that soon made the trial into an “indictment of the Ottoman

10 Tehlirian was most likely part of Operation Nemesis, an operation “designed to track down and kill the Genocide’s chief perpetrators” (Boeblian 59).

Empire's – and Talat's crimes" rather than Tehlirian's, who was acquitted on the grounds of temporary insanity (Bobelian 64). Somewhat ironically, Marie does not make a documentary on Tehlirian, whom she merely refers to as "this young Armenian" (GV 15). She is much more interested in and fascinated by Talat's psychology and by his wife (15), willing to document and make a monument to him in her film. *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*, on the other hand, by opening up questions about this young Armenian and Talat's presence in Berlin, invites one to discover a mostly forgotten Berlin courtroom in 1921, in which German judges and citizens made visible and condemned the massacre, which was also the first to be internationally called a crime against humanity (Tusan 62).

Rather than merely commemorating Berlin as the site of atrocities to never be repeated, the novel thus points to a Berlin story that can be used positively, gesturing to the possibility of a more just future in which human rights are safeguarded by an international community. As Littler proposes, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* is "as much a novel about the future of Berlin as an excavation of forgotten pasts" ("Fall of the Wall" 57). In her analysis, informed by Deleuze and Guatarri's notions of minor literature, deterritorialization, and lines of flight, Littler argues that the text's openness towards the future derives from Sascha's character, which, like a line of flight, manages to escape any fixed identity ascriptions and can therefore flee from the "reterritorializing power" of cultural memory (56). I would add that Tehlirian is a concrete example of how one can obtain a glimpse of such a future in the novel. Pointing to the trail of Tehlirian directs the reader to the beginning of international discourses condemning crimes against humanity and thus, his story constitutes a moment of futurity, to use Amir Eshel's term. In his study of selected post-1945 literary texts from Germany, Israel and the U.S. that engage

with the collective traumatic historical events of the 20th century, Eshel defines these texts' futurity as marking their ability to engage with the past in such a way as to point to the future: "Contemporary literature creates the 'open, future, possible' [David Grossmann] by expanding our vocabularies, by probing the human ability to act, and by promoting reflection and debate. I call these capacities of contemporary literature 'futurity'" (4). That is, texts dealing with the past have futurity to the extent that they view the past not only retrospectively but also prospectively (5), which presupposes that they are able to overcome the aporia of trauma and refuse resignation in face of what appears to be irredeemable humanity. The figure of Tehlirian is one way in which *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* mobilizes the futurity of the Armenian genocide. Şenocak's text, rather than getting stuck in the chute-like hole Germany has dug around the Holocaust, presents a dark hole "in dem ich andere atmen höre, aber nicht sehen kann" (GV 90). Asking questions that force the reader to actively seek out answers, Şenocak's novel encourages an active remembrance of the Armenian genocide that is open toward the future, one that breathes and has a certain degree of hope rather than being stifled by *Betroffenheit* or consumed by identity politics. While Adelson argues that the text gives breathing room to Holocaust remembrance at the expense of the Armenian genocide (*Turkish Turn* 116), I would argue that, at least in this instance, it gives life to both.

Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle*: From Sarajevo to Berlin

Like Şenocak, who came to Germany from Turkey with his parents at a young age, Marica Bodrožić came to Germany when she was nine years old. She was born in 1973 in Svib, in today's Croatia, and immigrated to Germany in 1983 (Feßmann 731). She studied cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis and Slavic Studies in Frankfurt and has published poetry, essays,

short story collections as well as novels. Bodrožić's highly poetic and philosophical work has won several literary prizes, including the Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Förderpreis in 2003, the Kulturpreis Deutsche Sprache in 2008, and the LiteraTour Nord and the European Union Prize for Literature for *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* in 2013. Her novel *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* (2012) is conceptualized as part of a trilogy yet to be completed.¹¹ As the titles of the first two novels in the trilogy, that is *Das Gedächtnis der Libellen* and *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* indicate, Bodrožić's work revolves around notions of memory and forgetting on an individual and collective level. The two novels negotiate these issues in two first-person narratives by two women who left the former Yugoslavia for Paris, where they become close friends during the 1990s, to eventually settle together in Berlin during the aughts. In *Das Gedächtnis der Libellen*, the first-person narrator Nadeshda, who left Dalmatia before the 1990s wars, gradually uncovers and attempts to come to terms with the emerging knowledge that her vanished father was a serial killer of little girls. Simultaneously, Nadeshda works through her failed relationship with the married Ilja, another expatriate, from whom Nadeshda becomes pregnant before moving to Berlin. By means of other characters from the territories of former Yugoslavia, including her best friend Arjeta, Nadeshda is also confronted with her former country's disintegration and the ensuing 1990s Yugoslav wars. The sequel *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* is set in 2011 and focuses on the first-person narrator Arjeta, Nadeshda's best friend, who was born in Sarajevo to a Croatian mother and Kosovo-Serbian father. Having left Sarajevo for Paris just before the 3 1/2 year siege of the city and after her brothers have been killed by a mine, Arjeta recounts the years

11 In several interviews, Bodrožić has indicated that the final novel will be told from the point of view of the Bosnian Ilja, father of Nadeshda's son and Arjeta's first love. Given that this third novel is likely to put certain aspects of the first two novels into a different light, my current interpretation of the novel necessarily remains preliminary to a certain extent.

she spent in Paris during the 1990s and then in Berlin after 2005. Over the span of two decades, she is plagued by absences or blanks in her memory, as she tries to come to terms with events such as the violent death of her brothers and father in Sarajevo, with post-Yugoslav nationalism, and with an emotionally abusive relationship experienced in Paris. She does so primarily with the help the Jewish-German Nazi concentration-camp survivor Mischa Weisband and her Croatian friend Nadeshda, eventually making herself a home in a new apartment in Berlin.

Like Şenocak's Sascha, Bodrožić's narrator Arjeta is preoccupied with establishing some sense of identity as she tries to come to terms with her past when confronted with inherited material. Instead of notebooks, Arjeta is faced with several bags of family photographs, "kiloweise Erinnerungen" (Bodrožić 31) that are incrementally handed over to Arjeta by her mother during her visits to Berlin in the aughts. Her mother struggles with what happened during and after the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia. Consumed by anger due to the death of her two sons and husband and the end of the socialist Yugoslav society she once knew, she eventually rips out all the photographs from their family albums and leaves it to Arjeta to re-sort the pieces into what Arjeta initially assumes has to become something "Vorzeigbares, eine glaubwürdige Chronologie" with a "geordneten Abfolge" (KH 81).¹² Describing her mother's camera, omnipresent throughout Arjeta's childhood like a "Waffe" (125), however, Arjeta eventually decides that the photos are inherently violent and do not reveal any truth about her life. In fact, the origin of many of the photographs make Arjeta highly uncomfortable because they "archivierten" not her childhood but rather her mother's obsessive efforts to capture her child's allegedly remarkable beauty (124). The photographic *Gedächtnis* represented by the bags of

12 From this point on, I refer to *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* as KH with page numbers in parenthesis.

family photographs thus becomes as oppressive to Arjeta as her ex-lover Arik's collections of photographs.

Arjeta's strained romantic relationship with the emotionally disturbed French war-photographer Arik culminates in Arjeta's discovery of Arik's "Archiv," which she inherits from him after his death (*KH* 156). This chilling archive consists of many meticulously documented and sorted albums of secretly taken photographs and memorabilia, in which Arik documented the life of the people around him, including that of Arjeta and Nadeshda. The archive provides a wealth of "detaillierten, dokumentarischen Nachweisen" (205) of both of their lives, reaching back even before either of them met Arik, because he had chosen and photographed them before introducing himself. While the novel refers to both collections of photos as 'archives', both her mother's and Arik's photographs represents what Assmann calls the canon. These archives are not "unmediated testimonies" like those found in archive as defined by Assmann, but rather "controlled messages" whose content is decided and used by those in power (Assmann 99). The power and potential violence inherent in Arik's archive becomes apparent from the comparisons drawn between Arik and Nadeshda's dragonfly collecting father described in the prequel *Das Gedächtnis der Libellen*. Like Arik, Nadeshda's father archived his dead dragonflies "fein säuberlich" in his "schreckliche Album" (Bodrožić, *Gedächtnis* 19), bequeathing the collection to Nadeshda as part of her terrible "Erbe der Libellen" (75), which includes the knowledge that he was a serial-killer of little girls. The similarity between the men is highlighted when Arik's face is described as that of a "davonrennenden Mörders" (*KH* 73) and when he appears as the "Mörder unzähliger Marienkäfer" in Arjeta's nightmare (152). What connects the two men is that they both quite literally fix the present so that it becomes an immutable past, thereby

foreclosing any other memories or interpretations. Thus, Arjeta feels that Arik's photographs try to force and contain her "in den Bauch [einer] Vergangenheit" (218) that is not her own. Therefore, Arjeta throws out Arik's archive in the same way in which she discards most of her mother's photographs.

The novel's rejection of such canonical archives is part of a larger critique of post-Yugoslav Croatian memory discourses. Just as Šenocak criticizes the memory politics of a Berlin Republic driven by the need for national self-definition after the end of the Cold War, Bodrožić takes issue with the ways in which memory became a central battleground in post-Yugoslav Croatia. The need to define itself both as an independent nation after 1991 and as a European country before accession to the EU in 2013, has led to complex official re-workings of the past in which WWII, the socialist past, and the Homeland War (1991-95) are being assigned new, officially endorsed meanings. As Liljana Radonic's work on Croatian memory politics shows, for example, officially endorsed historical revisionism had minimized the WWII victims of the Ustaša throughout the 1990s during Tuđman's presidency in post-Yugoslav Croatia. After Tuđman's death and in light of Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013, this was replaced by "a new view that recognizes the Holocaust, while presenting Croats as victims of fascism, this time of 'Serbian fascism'" in the aughts (Radonic 175, see also Banjeglav, Bet-El, and Jović).¹³

In the novel, Arjeta is confronted with these processes via her childhood friend Mateo, with whom she spent her childhood summers in Istria and who eventually studied philosophy, went to war, returned to his village and became a staunch nationalist. Representative of the kinds

13 Tamara Banjeglav similarly observes that political elites in Croatia have drawn parallels between the Holocaust and the Homeland War in order to represent themselves as victims and to emphasize Croatian suffering (Banjeglav 12).

of nationalist memory discourses taking place in post-Yugoslav Croatia, Mateo subsequently revises his genealogy and, for the sake of having a pure, Croatian lineage, “lässt [er] in seinem Stammbaum einfach das weg, was zu seiner neuen nationalen Identität nicht passt” (KH 170). Mirroring post-Yugoslav attempts by Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, and Montenegrans to engineer ethnically ‘pure’ languages out of Serbo-Croatian, Mateo also founds a club called “Schule für unsere vaterländische Sprache,” in which they do not only teach a supposedly purified Croatian but also lessons in “korrekter Geschichte” to be collected in a “vaterländisches Archiv” (177). Mateo and his group thus also make themselves “Herr über Feuer und Erinnerung” (181) by participating in the 1990s large-scale destruction or removal of almost 7,000 anti-fascist monuments and memorials that commemorated victims of fascism and the antifascist struggle (Radonic 169–70).

In line with the novel’s observations of the impact of war and nationalism on memory discourses and given its critique of stifling memories being imposed by others, Bodrožić’s work approaches fictionally representing memories of the atrocities committed during WWII and the 1990s Balkan wars very carefully. Like Šenocak’s Sascha, her character Arjeta rejects any monumentalizing and canonizing efforts to avoid co-option for identitarian purposes. And like *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft, Kirschholz und alte Gefühle* looks for ways in which it can let the memory of past events breathe, using conspicuous narrative ellipses and lacunae for that purpose. In fact, some of the major events of the novel’s plot are not narrated. The reader never learns the story of the German-Jewish character Mischa Weisband, Arjeta’s friend and father-substitute during her years in Paris. Despite the importance of this character for Arjeta, one only learns that Weisband survived internment in the Nazi concentration camp Maly Trostinez (KH 191). No

further details about his time there, how he survived, or how he ended up in Paris are provided. Just like *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*, Bodrožić's novel casts doubt on the effectiveness of a constant representation of the past. Arjeta, for example, observes that the people in the busy crowd on Wittenbergplatz are "allesamt mit etwas anderem als der reinen Betrachtung beschäftigt" when walking past the commemorative plaque with the names of WWII concentration camps erected there (190). The sign's enjoinder "Orte des Schreckens, die wir niemals vergessen dürfen"¹⁴ seems to have lost its effectiveness. The novel therefore also does not disclose the full story of the Croatian expatriate Silva. Hiding in a bush, Silva witnessed acts of genocide committed by Serb Tiger militia in a city on the Danube in the early 1990s, watching corpses being thrown in the river.¹⁵ How or why she survived after being discovered by the militia's leader is never narrated, and Arjeta states that she "hörte [Silva] nur zu, ohne die Lücken, die es in ihrer Geschichte gab, zum Thema zu machen" (78). Similarly asked to accept silence in favour of full representation, the reader also never learns how Arjeta's father dies in Sarajevo, his "unaussprechbare Tod" (104) remaining an open wound. While these silences are in part mirroring the rift in experience and the aporias introduced by trauma, they are also part of the novel's overall refusal to fix the past in one definitive representation.

This refusal also becomes apparent in the novel's many allusions to a vast mix of iconic as well as lesser known historical events, persons, and places drawn from across Europe. The novel's references include Karin Magnussen, Josef Mengele, Franco, and Maly Trostinez; Ante

14 The commemorative plaque was erected in 1967 and is also found on the Kaiser-Wilhelm Platz. The names "Trostenez" and "Flossenburg" were added in 1995 ("Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager").

15 As Bodrožić states in an interview, Silva's experience of witnessing a massacre and then being almost murdered herself at the river, is based on Danilo Kiš' account of the 1942 massacres of Jews and Serbs of the Vojvodina, which his father escaped because the hole in the ice used to dispose of the massacred became clogged with corpses (Krammer 63).

Pavelić, the Jasenovac and Sisak concentration camps, and Diana Budisavljević; the Battle of Neretva, Tito, Goli Otok, and Bogdan Bogdanović; the 1984 Olympics and Lepa Brena; and Sarajevo's Holiday Inn, Arkan and Ceca, and Vukovar.¹⁶ While Mengele and the bombing of the Holiday Inn have attained semi-iconic status for the average German-language reader, other references are arguably unknown to most, which is compounded by the fact that many of them are actually not clearly identified. For example, it is left to the reader to decipher that the Tiger militiaman Bomba discovering Silva refers to Arkan based on clues such as his pop-star wife, who can be identified as the popular Serbian turbo folk singer Svetlana Ražnatović, aka Ceca. Similarly, it is left to the reader to connect the mention of the rescue of thousands of children during WWII with the Austrian-Croatian Diana Budisavljević, who had organized the rescue of 12,000 mostly Serbian children from Ustaša concentration camps during WWII ("Rescuing the Children"). As these examples illustrate, the novel repeatedly refrains from building any kind of textual monument, be it to war criminals or resistance fighters, villains or heroes.

Instead, Bodrožić's novel puts the onus on the reader to find out details on his or her own in an effort to keep remembrance alive. In fact, one could argue that the stories of Weisband, Silva, and Arjeta's father are particularly interesting precisely because the details of their stories are unknown. Denied narrative closure, the reader has to activate his or her knowledge of other survivor stories and/or become actively involved in filling in the details, following the clues provided. Like Šenocak, Bodrožić here experiments with an approach to the past that allows for

16 According to the indictment by the *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*, on November 20th, 1991, two days after the fall of Vukovar, soldiers of the Belgrade-based Guards Brigade, a JNA unit, and Serb paramilitary troops took 261 non-Serb men from Vukovar hospital and transported them to a farm building in Ovčara, where they were beaten. Afterwards, they were brought to another site between the Ovčara farm and Grabovo, where they were shot and most likely buried in a mass grave ("Rule 61").

remembrance as a process and preserves what her character Arjeta calls the past's "lebendigen Sinn: die Bewegung, die nie aufhören darf" (218). Rather than solidifying her sense of self by a retrospectively imposed narrative that would contain the past into something "Vorzeigbares" with a "geordneten Abfolge" (KH 81), Arjeta eventually settles for being able to merely see a "leuchtender Faden, der alles verbindet"(81). She is content to see a "Leuchtspur" (81) that meaningfully connects various events and memories in her life, itself described as a "Netzwerk aus Sprache und Stille, aus Wissen und Erinnerung" (23).

These metaphors related to networks, threads, and movement are central to understanding Bodrožić's approach to the past and its futurity, and they strongly resonate with Michael Rothberg's notion of knotted and multi-directional memory. In his work, Rothberg suggests that:

'[K]notted' in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction. Performances of memory may well have territorializing or identity-forming effects, but those effects will always be contingent and open to re-signification. ("Introduction" 7)

Citing Richard Terdiman's notion that "memory is the past made present," Rothberg foregrounds the fact that memory is an anachronistic and active process, which is taking place in the present. Because they are a "contemporary phenomenon" (*Multidirectional Memory* 3–4), memories are inherently unstable, always already relational, constantly evolving and transforming based on exchange and interaction with other "present pasts," to use Andreas Huyssen's term ("Present Pasts" 24). Bodrožić's image of a glowing thread amongst many others, which may glow at

different moments and in different constellations, is similarly multidirectional. Visible amongst all the others, the glowing thread leaves the knot and all of its other possible threads and connection intact. In this way, the past stays open for further interpretation in conversation with both the present and future, thus ensuring the past's futurity.

Conclusion

As I argue above, Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* also allows for glimpses of futurity. However, it does so much less successfully, which is in large part due it being essentially a *Wenderoman* (Hofmann 53). Published in 1998, the novel's approach to the potentially enabling, future-oriented knots and entanglements between Berlin and the Armenian genocide is truncated in favour of providing an astute and timely critique of the memory and identity politics of the Berlin Republic. That is, the fact that "the here and now of *Perilous Kinship* delineate[s] or engage[s] a predominantly German context" (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 115) forecloses some of the work's futurity. For the same reasons, the novel also largely leaves the national framework of the invoked Turkish, Armenian, and German memories intact. As Karin Yesilada highlights, the novel repeatedly draws attention to the historical relationship between Germany and Turkey. This history dates back to at least the 17th-century presence of Turks in Berlin, and includes the German-Turkish alliance in WWI, the WWII Turkish exile of Berlin Jews and their significant contributions to the young Turkish Republic, and the impact of Turkish guest workers on rebuilding Berlin after WWII (Yesilada 312).¹⁷ While the novel therefore certainly points beyond German national history to highlight its Turkish connections, it

¹⁷ As Şenocak points out in an essay on Berlin, a further connection between Berlin and Turkey's history is Ernst Reuter, the first Berlin mayor after WWII who had been in exile in Turkey during the war ("Hauptstadt" 161).

does so in a more or less additive fashion. That is, while these archival traces are added to German history, it is not clear how they interact with and thus contribute to rewriting that history, or how these Turkish and Armenian histories are themselves shaped by this conversation. One might therefore speak of an inter-national rather than transnational history.

In contrast, Bodrožić's *Kirschholz und alte Gefühle*, published 14 years later, depicts a Berlin that has moved beyond a focus on questions surrounding the national past and identity, which affords the novel both futurity as well as a more transnational approach to the past. Like Şenocak's Sascha, Arjeta missed the *Wende*, but in contrast to Sascha, who did so unintentionally, Arjeta chose not to go to Berlin during the 1990s. Talking to her neighbour, she observes:

Er hat etwas über das Jahr des Mauerfalls gesagt, irgendetwas mit Fieber. 1989 war ein Fieber. So etwas hat er, glaube ich, gesagt. Alle wollten nach Berlin. Historische Verlockungen. Mich hat das nicht interessiert. Ich war Studentin an der Philosophischen Fakultät und wollte nach Paris. (8)

It is only after spending all of the 1990s in Paris that Arjeta eventually moves to Berlin. Unlike Şenocak's Berlin during the height of the Berlin Republic, described as preoccupied with questions of identity in relationship to the WWII past, Bodrožić Berlin is a city of the present. Arjeta views Berlin as a city in which she has "keine eigenen Toten" (KH 126), and which is thereby sharply distinguishable from Sarajevo, the city of her dead brothers and father. The contrast between 21st century Berlin and Sarajevo as a post-war city marked by the trauma of war becomes most apparent when considering the centrality of the tree as an image for the novel. In line with the above-detailed strategies to erase and rewrite the past in order to make it more

suitable to a nationalist present, Mateo and his friends also cut down the cherry tree of Arjeta's grandmother. Contemplating the fact that Sarajevo's tress fell victim to the need for firewood during the three year siege of the city from 1992-95, Arjeta repeatedly imagines trees as "gefällte Gedächtnisse" (26), referencing the larger impact that war has on memory. Here, Bodrožić's text alludes to the writings of the Serb architect and intellectual Bogdan Bogdanović, who built some of the striking antifascist monuments mentioned above, including the *Flower of Stone* (1966) monument at Jasenovac concentration camp. Bogdanović emphatically argues that the Yugoslav wars, which resulted in the wilful destruction of aspects of the rich cultural and architectural heritage of cities such as Vukovar, Mostar, Dubrovnik and Sarajevo, constituted an urbicide, that is, a war against the city as such. Pointing to the long-held Western tradition linking 'city' and 'civilization,' he therefore views the militarily often unjustifiable attacks on the cities' buildings and landmarks during the wars as an attack on civilization (Bogdanović). As Assmann points out, for Bogdanovic, urbicide here entails 'mnemozid' because it implies the destruction of the stores of memory represented by the cities architecture ("Kampf um die Stadt" 78).

In the novel, Sarajevo is depicted as a wounded city whose memory has been attacked and partially erased. Berlin, in contrast, emerges as a city that has recovered, moved past its post-war and immediate post-*Wende* preoccupations with the German past. Consequently, Berlin is a city filled with trees and birds. Whereas in Sarajevo there "fallen Granaten. Durchschnittlich 329 pro Tag. Das macht 486825 Granaten" (KH 48), the skies of Berlin are populated by birds, which the narrator counts on a regular basis (84). Describing the world outside her Berlin apartment, Arjeta repeatedly foregrounds the trees surrounding her. For example, she observes the night falling "in die Wipfel der Bäume. Silberpappeln, Birken. Sogar ein uralter Maulbeerbaum steht

im Hof. Mitten in Berlin” (24). Not coincidentally, it is Mischa Weisband who will show her other Mulberry as well as Paulownia trees strewn throughout Berlin (28). Weisband abandoned his first attempt to visit his home city Berlin after WWII “ein paar Jahre nach dem Mauerfall” (131), because he read the story of the Nazi scientist Karin Magnussen in the newspapers. When Magnussen moved to an old age home in 1990, it was discovered that Magnussen had kept the pairs of human eyes given to her by Mengele from Auschwitz in her department over all those years. Confronted with the story, Weisband unpacks his suitcase, unwilling to visit a country “in dem ein Mensch wie sie unbehelligt leben und an einer Schule unterrichten konnte ... mitten im Wirtschaftswunderland” (135). To him, post-*Wende* Berlin has not changed much from the *Wirtschaftswunder* Berlin of the 50s and 60s insofar as those responsible for the Holocaust were not all taken to justice but allowed to live out normal lives.

And yet, once Arjeta moves to Berlin in the aughts, he does visit her and thus return to Berlin. Berlin, now Arjeta’s self-proclaimed “zu Hause” (23), becomes accessible to Weisband because of Arjeta. It is no longer merely a cipher for the trauma of the Holocaust and the hypocrisy of post-war German society, no longer something better not spoken about (131) and left behind for good. Rather, Berlin is also a welcoming home and city of peace for other Europeans such as Nadeshda and Arjeta, who, like himself, had to leave their home. In light of Arjeta’s memories of Sarajevo, which she is determined to never visit again (52), Berlin emerges as a city far removed from war and its traumas. As such, Weisband is able to re-evaluate his take on visiting Germany. As a sign of tacit agreement with Arjeta’s intuition that “Mischa Weisband war kein Mensch, der die Straßen und die Sprache seiner Kindheit hassen konnte” (28), Weisband even speaks a sentence in German in front of Arjeta while visiting her in Berlin (102).

Informed by Weisband's example, the reader might expect that Arjeta in turn will re-evaluate her relationship to Sarajevo at some point in the future and return to her hometown.

In Bodrožić's novel, Berlin thus emerges as a site at which many stories of the past from all over Europe cross paths, and in so doing, shape each other. The text enters German memory discourses into mutually influencing conversation and exchange with the pasts of other European countries such as Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina. Berlin thus becomes a topos by means of which literature can engage in what Ann Rigney identifies as literature's distinctive ability to arouse "interest in the history of other groups and hence [create] new sorts of affiliations based on 'discontinuous' and cross-border memories" ("Portable Monuments" 389), or to put it differently, to imagine the past, present, and future beyond the nation.

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