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STUDYING AFFECT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE AGENCY OF ARCHIVISTS SINCE THE YUGOSLAV WARS

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Abstract

This essay grows out of the author’s ongoing research examining issues of affect and agency as these relate to archives and recordkeeping during the post-conflict recovery and political and economic transitions occurring in countries that emerged since 1991 out of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Specifically, since archivists in the countries play a key role in securing and providing access to records that are essential to individual, community, and national recovery and transition, it contemplates possible relationships between affect and individual agency relevant to understanding their personal and professional situations. The essay also provides a synopsis of selective disciplinary literature addressing aspects of affect associated with individual experiences, memory, and actions in war and post-conflict contexts. In so doing, it identifies several potentially relevant strands for further qualitative investigation of affect and its relationship to agency in the context of the individual archivist: the role of narrative, the need to integrate the social and the cultural, listening for meaningful silences, the importance of social support, the affect of place, coping mechanisms, and disenchantment with the state. The essay concludes with a brief commentary on how identifying the dimensions of affect and its relationship to agency through research such as
this is an important component of understanding what professional actions, ethics and practices might be most appropriate and effective in post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, not only in these countries but also in other regions that have experienced similar extensive or recurring conflicts, especially when coupled with major political and economic transitions.

Yugoslavs experienced ethnic relations through two [cognitive] frames: a normal frame and a crisis frame. People possessed both frames in their minds: in peaceful times the crisis frame was dormant, and in crisis and war the normal frame was suppressed. Both frames were anchored in private and family experiences, in culture and in public life. In the normal frame, which prevailed in Tito’s Yugoslavia, ethnic relations were cooperative and neighborly. Colleagues and workers, schoolmates and teammates transacted routinely across nationality. Some did not even know or bother to know another’s nationality. Inter-marriage was accepted. Holidays were spent in each others’ Republics. Except in Kosovo, the normal frame prevailed for most Yugoslavs throughout the 1980s.

The crisis frame was grounded in the experiences and memories of the Balkan wars, the first and second world wars – and other wars before that. In these crises, civilians were not distinguished from combatants. Old people, children, women, priests were not spared. Atrocities, massacres, torture, ethnic cleansing, a scorched-earth policy were the rule. Everyone was held collectively responsible for their nationality and religion and became a target of revenge and reprisals. ...The emotion that poisons ethnic relations is fear (Lake and Rothchildre 1996): fear of extinction as a group, fear of assimilation, fear of domination by another group, fear for one’s life and property, fear of being a victim once more. After fear comes hate. The threatening others are demonized and dehumanized. The means of awakening and spreading such fears in Yugoslavia were through the news media, politics, education, popular culture, literature, history and the arts.1

Introduction

The complex geopolitics, layered history, and multiple brutal conflicts, particularly over the past century, of the variously constituted and named^2 region of southeastern Europe that between 1946 and 1991
comprised communist Yugoslavia, afford particularly acute exemplars for studying a diversity of aspects and types of affect within normal and crisis frames at work within the region today. Moreover, successive colonial and internal political administrations in the region imposed diverse, divergent, and non-contiguous recordkeeping and access infrastructures and policies that at best continue to cause confusion and frustration on the part of those who need to use or produce records, and at worst present compelling cases for studying not only the effects of political and economic transitions, but also the affect of bureaucratic or structural violence. Affect is the human capacity that encompasses, independently and in various combinations, emotions of all sorts: positive or negative, paralyzing and disaffecting or energizing and rallying. More than this, the concept of affect itself embodies innate tensions that influence both cognition (how knowledge is gained, processed, and understood through thought, experience, and the senses) and behavior (how one acts or reacts in response to a particular situation, in a given role, or in relation to others). Affect occurs and operates differently from individual to individual and moment to moment. While in some cases it may be triggered involuntarily, it is not necessarily irrational and may draw upon deep and often under-recognized aspects of individual experience and environment.

Many strands of contemporary research in the humanities and social sciences are engaged in exploring how affect interacts not only with personal psychology, but also with history, memory, and place. The preoccupations and findings of such projects would suggest that affect is likely at work across many if not all dimensions of archival concern, and yet little research has been conducted within archival studies that examines the manifestations, implications, role, or even presence of affect within those dimensions. Even the records continuum, the most complete explanatory model in archival studies regarding what happens in and over time with the nature and societal embedding of records and recordkeeping, and associated activities and agents, does not contemplate affect and the ways in which it is manifested within the folds of experience, memory, signs, and actions in and over time and space.
Addressing this absence, my ongoing research, based in the post-conflict and post-communist countries emerging out of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) since 1991, examines manifestations of, and relationships between, affect and agency as these relate to archives and recordkeeping in a number of different personal, professional, and community contexts. In this research I have employed ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches, including both opportunistic and purposive observations of how people undertook records-related activities, conversations, and reciprocal storytelling, interviews with key informants, photography, and personal journaling. I have also attended meetings of archivists and worked with archivists and faculty to develop new graduate degrees in archival studies at the University of Zadar in Croatia, as well as to organize regional multinational summer schools. These activities have been coupled with visits to archives and other records offices and repositories, as well as to cemeteries, memorials, and other sites of important events and places of memory; and with analysis of key types of records and recordkeeping metadata and practices implicated through the other aspects of the research. This research highlights how such interactive folds in experience, memory, and actions are constantly and dynamically exposed not only by archival acts, content, institutions, signs, practices, locations, and even absences, but also through wider individual and community (re)positioning, commemorative acts and symbols, semantics and imaginaries, and affective responses thereto. It suggests the existence of a temporal and spatial continuum, not simply of recordkeeping, but of what might be termed “archival,” or more inclusively, “recordkeeping” affect; and that such a continuum could be framed in terms of the agents involved, e.g., creators and producers, rescuers, describers, “needers,” providers, withholders, exhibitors, users, even destroyers of records; and of their affective impulses and responses. This potentially significant augmentation of contemporary recordkeeping continuum ideas in turn prompts many questions that might contribute back to the broader discourse on affect about those impulses and responses and how they forge or influence connections between affect, agency, and indeed, action. For example, one could also
ask questions that are directly situated in archival and recordkeeping contexts, such as: What is the affect of the relationships between these agents? What are the affective relationships between any of these agents and the records or the archives?

This essay, therefore, marks a starting point in trying to better understand the phenomena that might be involved in such a continuum of affect, especially in situations of ethnic and religious conflicts or major ideological or economic transitions. It is an initial exposition of one component of my research that focuses on a specific relevant but understudied population—archivists working in post-conflict and transitional contexts in Croatia, Bosnia, and other countries that were former SFRY republics—and the ways in which they think about and approach their work (i.e., the cognitive and behavioral aspects) and in particular, their senses of individual agency in relation to that work. While it is certainly the case that individual agency always occurs within a temporally contingent network of actions, other actors, and connections between these, as well as events, viewpoints, and assessments, my focus consciously places the individual archivist and the archivist as an individual at the center and in apposition to the archival institution that is more commonly the object of study. I am interested in archivists because they are essential facilitative and mediating actors in, and producers of, the various interfaces—human, technological, and epistemological—between records creators, records, records surrogates, archives, and secondary users of records. Those mediating and production roles, however, while widely acknowledged in scholarship and archival practice, and to a lesser degree, in discourse regarding archival ethics, have not been problematized in terms of affect. Archivists are situated “in the middle” in other ways also—between the telescopic recorded legacy of the past (including the immediate past) and the immediate needs for records by states, institutions, and individuals in a present that continues to seek to transition, recover, and reconcile; they are also in the middle between the bureaucracies that create such records and the bureaucracies and legal structures that circumscribe much of what can actually be done by archival institutions and individual archivists.
Studying Affect and Agency among Archivists

Archivists do not fall into easy or often-applied binaries such as the state and communities, or public and private personas. They are not the institution, yet they are actors within and answerable to the institution. They play a professional role that is guided by an internationally endorsed professional code of ethics, yet they are simultaneously human beings with personal identities, experiences, beliefs, moral convictions, and emotions. Some of the archivists with whom I have been engaged worked within the archives system that administered the records of SFRY and its constituent republics. With the declarations and international recognition of the independence of those republics that began in 1991, the archives system was broken up into separate archival administrations for the new republics and colleagues were separated. The wars resulted in further separation, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina today there are separate administrations for the two entities created by the 1995 Dayton Accords, and separate State Archivist positions.

For the most part, archivists were not combatants in the series of conflicts that occurred between the time that Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and the June 1999 Kumanovo Treaty that officially ended the conflict in Kosovo. However, archives, libraries, museums, and other institutions identified as representative or symbolic of particular ethnic identities and cultures were deliberately targeted for destruction during the conflicts by military and militias hostile to those ethnic communities. Moreover, some archivists working or living within contested regions were themselves vulnerable to “ethnic cleansing.” Many archivists, as well as librarians and museum professionals, stepped up to safeguard the contents of at-risk repositories, even while the cellars and basements of some of those repositories were being used as civilian air raid shelters. Some performed heroic acts to rescue at-risk records, especially those of churches and other religious institutions that could be key supplements or substitutes to the often scanty state records. And some were likely involved in the “disappearance” or “securing” of records from their repositories when war broke out—records relating to their own heritage
or from another ethnic heritage—with the aim of safeguarding those records from targeted destruction and returning them after the end of the conflicts. Others were only children or teens during the wars, but their subsequent approaches to their work, their sense of the value of the records under their care, and often their resistance to the ongoing politicization of the archives today, have been influenced by deep personal memories and traumatic experiences, as well as by an increasing sense of professionalism.  

A focus on archivists as individuals helps to move us beyond uncomplicated demographic or statistical breakdowns according to categories such as ethnicity and religion, education, age and experience, and gender. Individual agency, as well as the individual affect of deeply personal and targeted ethnically-based conflict and its legacies, may thus be perceived, acknowledged, accounted for, and more broadly contextualized. In so doing, this research opens up a new space for archival contemplation. That space is located at the intersection of several different areas of discourse that I will combine here for ease of discussion. The first of these straddles postmodern and postcolonial disciplinary and professional debates about the power of the archive (and by extension, of archival institutions and processes) over the construction of national, official, and other sanctioned narratives and interpretations, the resulting marginalization or distortion of other narratives and experiences, and the role of professional activism, ethics, and values in addressing both. The second, on which the following review concentrates, is a growing literature generated from within social and sociocultural anthropology, psychology, philosophy, law, and affect studies, among others, that addresses the nature of affect, especially trauma, and how it is experienced by those who have lived through conflicts and major political change.

Recent Ideas on Affect in War and Post Conflict Contexts

There are extensive bodies of literature on different aspects of memory as well as identity, and the so-called “affective turn” in psychology is spawning yet another. I am interested in the intersections of
these literatures, and particularly with the literature relating to trauma.\textsuperscript{18} The following brief synthesis highlights some strands that I have found to be particularly relevant or evocative in respect to the questions in hand, namely, what are the nature, manifestations, role, and impact of affect in terms of individual archivists who grew up or worked through the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and experienced the ensuing wars and their aftermath? And how might these relate to their sense of personal and professional agency?

\textit{The Role of Narrative}

As already discussed, storytelling has been integral to my research—by archivists, by “ordinary people” who need to use or encounter records in the course of their daily lives either in these countries or in diaspora, and by writers. In my research in the former SFRY, I have found this approach to be a particularly compelling way to elicit and narrate personal experiences and affect,\textsuperscript{19} and indeed, the literature addressing the experiences of individuals has a strong leaning toward the narrative, whether that be ethnography, storytelling, oral history, life story development, or other forms of narrative. This emphasis on narrative is present in philosophical and psychological writings, as well as in anthropological, legal, and historical work. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur argued that narratives are the most faithful articulations of what he called “human time,” i.e., time that is the time of our life stories, a time that involves both human action and suffering; that individual narratives and the identities they construct are not freestanding, because they always intersect with those of others; and that they all have an ethical dimension. Through narratives it is possible to effect change (within certain constraints) in oneself and others.\textsuperscript{20} Narratives are a means for developing and articulating one’s personal identity and beliefs that may have been substantially challenged or altered because of conflict.\textsuperscript{21} As many scholars also point out, the evolution of personal narratives is integral to therapeutic reinterpretation of past events and life stories. For example, legal scholar Martha Minow, who served on the Independent
International Commission on Kosovo, asserts that when discussing the relationship between memory and forgetting, “What’s needed, paradoxically, is a process for reinterpreting what cannot be made sensible, for assembling what cannot be put together, and for separating what cannot be severed from both present and future… Therapy is the slow process of reinterpretation.”

Social psychologist Nigel Hunt discusses the narrative turn in psychology: “Accepting the need for a narrative understanding of memory, war and trauma means that we must draw on neuropsychological understanding, as well as on traditional cognitive and social theories…. The advent of narrative and other new methods within psychology will enable us to approach our research questions from a cultural as well as a brain science perspective.”

He goes on to justify this statement by noting that “psychological reality is more fluid, social and malleable than we usually think…. If we are to understand the nature of war, and the impact it has on people, then we must examine other approaches to understanding, through, for example, literature, history and the media…. We are studying behaviour, in all its shapes and forms, and good literature is part of that tapestry of understanding, along with historical accounts, sociology and politics.”

Social anthropologist Paul Connerton warns of the error in trying to divide narratives of mourning and narratives of legitimation into easily separable categories: “We would be alerted against any such misunderstanding if we remembered how often national groups have reinforced their internal cohesion by telling stories about the injustices done to their ancestors by other nations.” In writing about “coerced forgetting” such as “repressive erasure” by the state, Connerton asserts that the testimonies of authors such as Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Nadezhda Mandelstam were written “in defiance of that threat of forgetting” and were simultaneously political and therapeutic acts that turned injustices they had experienced into a motivation for living and working. Cultural studies scholar Sara Matthews contemplates the affect of narrative encounters at museums presenting difficult histories of social devastation, violence, and war. One aspect she considers is
“how museum exhibits affect us in ways that are profoundly personal. What is ‘taken in and taken home’ from these encounters penetrates from the outside in—into the privacy of thought, of domestic space, of interiority and of emotional life.”

The Need to Integrate the Social and the Cultural

The important role of the social and the cultural is widely recognized across these literatures, and it adds further support to the use of ethnographic methods in arriving at a contextualized understanding of the post-conflict affect of the archivists. Hunt, for example, asserts that: “Narratives do not develop in isolation. If we are to understand why people think as they do, we have to look around them at the world in which they live….The way we think, what we believe, how we express emotions, all depend on our culture. This has important implications for memory, war and trauma, as memories are constructions, and such constructions depend…on the society in which we live.”

His work focuses on the psychosocial aspects of war and how diverse societal and cultural factors come into play: “Mourning for historical catastrophes extends beyond the sphere of legal and literary texts. It is dispersed across a wide spectrum of genres: in newspapers, in cinema, in video, in painting, in photographs, in songs, in plays and festivals.” Hunt interviewed over 1000 British WWII and Korean War veterans and found that the most disturbing aspects of their experience were not only battle/combat experience and physical conditions, but also the effect on others (e.g., loved ones suffering air attacks or food shortages) and the government (e.g., bitterness, sense of unfairness with how present veterans’ problems and needs were handled). Hunt sees this as illustrating “the importance of accounting for the relevant socio-cultural factors.”

Listening for Meaningful Silences

In many ways, silences are the inverse of narratives. The silences of individuals can take on several meanings, depending upon context.
They may be a void in utterance where a gesture or facial expression, a sudden freezing in posture may still speak. They may be seen by the individual as a form of self-protection, or protection of others, but the non-telling can have consequences over time for that individual and for others. There can be silences in asking as well as in telling, and these can have implications for trust and for empathy. I have encountered and observed many such silences while talking with archivists and also attending archival events, especially as these involve recounting past events or discussing current political-professional dynamics within and between countries in the region.

Minow discusses the importance of both asking and telling in the context of truth commissions, in terms not only of establishing complicity but also of building new relationships between citizens and the state. But what, one wonders, might be the affective values of asking and telling between individuals? Discussing the destruction of German cities during World War II by bombing, Connerton tells of: “Members of the occupying powers report seeing millions of homeless and utterly lethargic people wandering amidst the ruins. From the war years there survive few accounts in which German citizens wrote of their stunned bewilderment on seeing for the first time the appearance of their ravaged cities…A colossal collective experience was followed by half a century of silence. How is this to be explained?”

Connerton also alludes to the silence or tacit taboo of humiliation and shame of the defeated. He continues, “some acts of silence may be an attempt to bury things beyond expression and the reach of memory; yet such silencings, while they are a type of repression, can at the same time be a form of survival, and the desire to forget may be an essential ingredient in that process of survival.” He mentions several other kinds of silences: tactful silences that help to avoid offense; traumatized silences that are “more painful and more profound because a crucial feature of traumatic experience is the element of delay….It takes time, sometimes a considerable amount of time, to digest;” and the closely related narrative silences that “originate in deeply shocking and painful experiences…[and] signify the refusal or inability to tell certain
narratives.”

Noting that cultural memory is based as much in bodily memory as it is in documents or other texts, Connerton cautions that oral historians, and presumably also ethnographers and psychologists, “must be able to listen to pauses and hesitations...[that] tell us what people wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did...But pauses of irregular length and position accentuate the emotional content of speech, and the precise length and position of the pause or hesitation play a crucial role in understanding the meaning of speech.”

**The Importance of Social Support**

Archivists work within institutional as well as professional communities. When the SFRY began to disintegrate, they first were professionally separated and socially and physically isolated from their comrades in other archives across Yugoslavia. As war broke out, some found themselves making difficult choices about sides and identity within their individual institutions. As one archivist noted, when the first meeting of archivists in the region occurred after the end of the wars, the event was highly emotional—filled with joy, tears, hostility, and anger. Such dynamics remain discernable even in meetings today, with certain colleagues maintaining very close personal bonds across national jurisdictions, while distrust and aspersions about continued politically-based actions along the lines of ethnic interests and divisions and a lack of professional collegiality are also vocalized regularly in public.

Pursuing the notion of embodied emotions, psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer points to the presence or absence of social support as a critical factor in “the neurological capacity to forge coherence, the psychological capacity to meliorate pain with self-soothing, and the social capacity to speak the unspeakable, to tell a story no one wants to hear.” He continues, “The social world fails to bear witness for many reasons. Even reparative accounts of the terrible things that happen to people (violations, traumas, losses) are warded off because of their capacity to create vicarious fear and pain and because they constitute a threat to
Likewise, Connerton’s study points to the continued importance of comradeship among veterans: “Comradeship is seen as deeper than ordinary friendship, the depth of the relationship arising because of the shared hardships, the shared personal lives, and the sense of dependency for one’s life on others.”

The Affect of Place

Many aspects can be placed under this rubric, including emotional connections, place, memory and experience, and resulting transformations; the location, intention, and affect of monuments; reactions to the continuing physical traces of conflict on a land- or cityscape; fears experienced when traveling through hostile or alien territory; concerns about spectatorship at sites of tragic or disputed events; and the sense of loss of places vanished and never to be recovered. Damaged and destroyed archives have been repaired and rebuilt but remain vulnerable to civil unrest, such as that in several cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina in February 2014 that resulted in the burning of records— including, in Sarajevo, key archival material from the Ottoman period and the 1914 assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand that precipitated the First World War. Moreover, particularly in Bosnian cities such as Sarajevo, the unavoidable continued physical evidence of the massive conflicts is immediately visible, literally outside the doors of the archives in the form of monuments, plaques, and destroyed buildings, as well as ubiquitous poignant headstones marking the graves of those who died and were buried under fire that are found, not only in vast cemeteries extending up the mountainsides around the city, but also in any available ground.

Historian Pierre Nora has said that “memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events.” Those sites, what Nora terms “lieux de mémoire,” can take on almost any form, but at their most “natural, concretely experienced,” they can be physical places such as cemeteries and museums, and events such as anniversaries. Kirmayer defines the landscape of memory as “the metaphoric terrain that shapes the distance and effort required to remember affectively charged and
socially defined events that initially may be vague, impressionistic, or simply absent from memory. Landscapes of memory are given shape by personal and social significance of specific memories but also draw from meta-memory—implicit models of memory that influence what can be recalled and cited as veridical. Narratives of trauma may be understood then as cultural construction of personal and historical memory.”

In discussing the affect of physical location, Volkan uses the term “hot place,” which he defines as a

physical location that individually and collectively induces (or reinduces) immediate and intense feelings among members of an ethnic or other large group. It typically is a place where people have been recently killed and/or humiliated by others. Some hot places have long-standing historical significance, some are actual monuments that intentionally recall a specific event, and some occur more spontaneously when a large group perceives a threat to its identity. But all hot places induce shared active or passive feelings of sadness, rage, and victimization, a desire for revenge, and other emotions associated with complicated grief or mourning.

Clarke and Eastgate cite the potential for developing attachment theory to explore the emotional connections between individuals and World War I battlegrounds, but also suggest looking at developments in cognitive psychology relating to place attachment theory. Arguing for a theory of place attachment that draws on developmental science to examine how the complex relationship between place, identity, affect, and cognition develops throughout childhood, Paul Morgan delineates three broad approaches to place theory: phenomenological and humanistic approaches that “explore the deeper significance of place to human existence and the subjective, emotional quality of people’s relationship to places”; psychometrics, which uses a quantitative approach to explore the relationship between the physical environment and the human psyche; and social constructivism, which views subjectivity as a socially constructed phenomenon.

The proliferation of monuments and memorials as ideological and nationalist symbols (many of them disputed as being biased or provocative) across the countries of the former Yugoslavia in recent years has
been the subject of many articles. Jukic et al., for example, discuss the simultaneous memorial ceremonies for those who died in the same clash in 1992, with the Bosnian Army’s Muslim Green Beret units on one side of the Dobrovoljaca Street in Sarajevo, and Bosnian Serb officials and families of Yugoslav Army soldiers on the other, each with a different opinion about what occurred.” Jukic et al. aver, “The problem is at its most acute where the ethnic divisions are at their most troubled, and where more memorials have been built than anywhere else, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” James E. Young argues, however, that in some cases, memorials are not impervious to the mutability of interpretation to which all cultural artifacts are subject, and may take on lives of their own that are not the same as the creators’ original intentions: “New generations visit memorials under new circumstances and invest them with new meanings.”

The emerging areas of battlefield (especially World War I battlefields) and “dark” tourism have been examining the role of icons, memorials, and cemeteries as contributors to cultural capital as well as their influences on individual life stories, where “cultural capital is a combination of tangible assets (locations, sites and artifacts) and intangible forms such as beliefs, emotions and tradition.” Heritage and tourism scholar Stephen Miles focuses on so-called “dark heritage” sites and “dark” or “morbid tourism,” arguing that individuals may attach a diversity of meanings to places, and visiting such sites may be a thanatopic experience. Sociocultural anthropologist Joy Sather-Wagstaff disagrees, stating that “to describe visiting such sites as thanatopic is to deny that we can ever learn anything from the consequences of human violence.”

In terms of vanished places, Hariz Halilovich, a sociocultural anthropologist, notes in relation to villages that were ethnically cleansed and destroyed during the Bosnian War, “the existence of ‘cyber villages’ demonstrates that, even when it is reduced down—or elevated—to the level of an idea, the place called home remains a ‘symbolic anchor,’ a metaphor around which narratives of belonging and memories of home are constructed and performed.”
Coping Mechanisms

Few people wish to be characterized over the long term as victims, and such characterizations can impede moving ahead and beyond, even as they are integral to important processes such as criminal tribunals, studies of the effects of trauma, and so forth. There is a difficult tension, therefore, between the needs to acknowledge and encourage resilience and the strength acquired through adversity and survival, and to investigate and address how physical and psychological affect and trauma manifest themselves pathologically over time. Medical anthropologist Allen Young, referring to the DSM-III, provides the formal definition of post-traumatic stress disorder: “the remembrance of an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and that would cause marked distress to nearly anyone.” He goes on to explain: “Traumatic memory is represented in a syndrome whose critical features include (A) intrusive memories and reexperiences of the traumatic event, (B) symptomatic efforts to avoid circumstances that might trigger memories and re-experiences, (C) emotional numbing (a means of dampening the emotional effects of feature (A), and (D) autonomic arousal, evidenced as irritability, a tendency to explosive violence, hypervigilance, etc.” He distinguishes between the mental memory (i.e., that of the mind), and the bodily memory as the first relates to A, B and C, while D signals the bodily memory. Connerton, by contrast, argues that memory is more cultural and collective than individual. He states that there are: “At least seven ways to forget, three of which are constructive and even necessary, while four of them are forced upon human beings against their will or interest…[there is] widespread resort to reticences in…many practices [of silence] and across many cultures.”

Hunt’s research with World War II and Korean War veterans provided indications on three main types of memory, as well as the veterans’ coping strategies:

(1) **Intrusive recollections.** These are implicit, uncontrolled and associated with strong emotion and/or perceptual elements, the memories usually associated with traumatic stress.
(2) **Consummate memories.** These are detailed, likely to be confabulated, and may in the past have been intrusive recollections. The veteran has learned to deal with the emotions attached to the memory and developed a narrative. He may still experience anger or sadness when recalling the event, but these emotions are under control. These are important memories when dealing with distant retrospective trauma, as they indicate which memories were problematic to the person.

(3) **Ordinary decayed memories.** These are memories that were never traumatic, which the individual remembers in the ordinary kind of way, and which are subject to the normal processes of decay. The individual is likely to remember aspects of an event, but not with emotion.  

Among the coping strategies was avoidance, used in situations when veterans could not express emotion or when they had been encouraged to forget their experiences after the war, but most effective when one has work or another form of structure in life and has also been trained to respond automatically. Other coping strategies included fatalism, “no choice,” war as a justifiable cause, comradeship, and something to live for. The memories of war experiences, however, can be as strong as ever or even stronger, as people age.

*Disenchantment with the State*

As already discussed, Hunt and others have pointed to the bitterness and unfairness with which veterans who have been studied may regard their treatment by the government. In the context of my research, while a considerable amount of work has focused on the events and legacies of the Yugoslav Wars, it is important to remember that the new countries that emerged out of the breakup of the SFRY were also post-industrial nations faced with making difficult transitions, not only from communism to democracy but also from a command to a market economy. With economies often crippled by war, as well as political and bureaucratic corruption and paralysis, there has been widespread disappointment, resentment, and disenchantment in the ongoing inability of many of these states to protect and provide. There has also been an individual unwillingness or inability to take initiative in the case that the state does not provide, and a concomitant lack of innovation and creativity. Many
of the new republics find themselves in extreme economic distress, with widespread unemployment and public sector salaries receiving cut after cut. Archives and other state and cultural institutions have been hard hit. One of the most notable examples is the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been closed since October 2012, ostensibly because of lack of funding, but also because of a lack of consensus over politics and culture between the elected representatives of the three ethnic communities (Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats) that are required under the Dayton Accord to agree on policy decisions. Although the heat was turned off in the museum in January 2012 and the electricity in September of the same year, the museum employees continued to come to work, unpaid, for over a year.

Scholars point to the phenomenon of *Yugonostalgia*—a yearning for the multicultural Yugoslavia of Tito, with its socialist ideology, ethnic tolerance, prosperity, ease of international travel, and social safety net. At the same time, conditioned by decades of secret police activity and the imprisonment of dissenters, there is a fear of speaking up publicly as well as of causing instability. Jansen observes, “There’s a huge longing for stability which has transformed into a fear of instability. Since people are so afraid of instability, they feel any stability is better, even if it consists of misery and insecurity.” Jansen, discussing Bosnia, also notes how a depression or resignation has set in as conditions seem to resist improvement over time:

Fifteen years ago it was still possible, and this is a very sad thing for me to say, but it was possible to hope that things would soon be getting a little bit better, that we were moving forward. People believed that the bad things in our lives were consequences of the war and that the country would slowly begin to recover. It’s very sad that now, twenty years after the war, it is so difficult to hope for this, and it is equally sad that everything that’s bad is being explained away with the war. Of course that still plays a big part, but it cannot serve as an excuse for everything.”

At an international conference of archivists, held in Sarajevo in June 2014 to commemorate one hundred years since the 1914 assassination, they expressed their frustration. The concluding event of the conference,
presided over by the National Archivist of Croatia, was an open forum about the problems facing archivists in the region. The young Bosnian archivists were the most vocal: “we complain about the state not listening to us but we aren’t even listening to each other. What about our education? What are we learning? We are losing our archival material in Bosnia each year – this fire, our depots – even without a disaster. In 20 or 30 years it will all be gone. We are always waiting and nothing happens.” Another archivist shouted out, “the king is naked!”

In other works Jansen discusses the hope of citizens for autonomy from the state and to be in a position to imagine alternative structures and narratives. He asks, “How do different people struggle to imagine and make futures? What can anthropological studies tell us about those engagements with futures, both positively (e.g. expectation, planning, aspiration) and negatively (e.g. despair, worries, cynicism)?” He continues, “our discipline [i.e., anthropology] needs to try harder to understand people’s yearnings for possible futures and their relative capacity to create them….How do different people struggle to imagine and make futures?” Jansen suggests that anthropologists might focus on what he calls “the inbetween—on the interfaces between ‘the state’ and ‘its citizens,’” of which surely, archivists are one example.

**Conclusion**

This very brief exposition has only mentioned some of the most likely manifestations of affect to occur in the aftermath of the wars of the 1990s. It should also be recognized that the affective legacies of prior conflicts can have a particularly strong presence for those who work with associated records, those who continue to need to access them, and those who assist in that access process. Affect-inducing juxtapositions and cumulative effects of being exposed to the documentation of multiple conflicts over a single century also occur. For example, as became evident during the June 2014 archival conference in Sarajevo, archival photographs of the Eastern Front during World War I that had been digitized by various European archives as part of the current
commemoration of the war bear haunting similarities in their depictions of war and casualties to images, also in archival holdings, on exhibition or online, of more recent wartime events that are still very much in the memory and lived experiences of the archivists and their users.

What this brief review suggests is not that revolutionary but is nevertheless important and will be investigated through my ongoing research. First, this review reveals that the affect and agency of individual archivists are likely closely coupled in the context of the post-SFRY nations through constant and perhaps inevitable reverberations, invocations, and unintentional juxtapositions of the past in the present, through frustrations with the state in the present and, possibly also through a sense of what has been lost collegially, materially, socially, culturally, and ideologically in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Wars, and recovery period that followed. Secondly, such a coupling potentially has significant implications for archival institutions and individual archivists, regionally and globally. This is, in part, because the coupling can be exploited in ways that have repeatedly drawn archives and archivists into dangerous nationalist mythmaking and identity politics, and can support the promulgation of simplistic bifurcations in identity and blame that deny underlying complexities, and shifting political dynamics and social realities. It is also, in part, because it can result in a paralysis of will and action that is fed by a sense of hopelessness and inevitability as much as the infrastructural, political, and economic crises that often accompany the notion of intractable regions or “failed states.”

As has already been outlined, the role of affect across all aspects of archival activity, and in particular its effects on the outlook and agency of individual archivists, have been largely unaddressed and certainly under-theorized. It is easy to see why archival studies does not engage either readily or easily with affect—it is invisible, it is slippery, it is uncomfortable, it singles us out in terms of our institutional histories and stances—as professionals and also as individuals. In the practice of archives, the “science” of archival science in the past has provided archivists with a professional hazmat suit that can be donned so that archivists can assert with some confidence that the nasty stuff surrounding and
contained in the records—the nasty history, the nasty circumstances of acquisition or destruction, the nasty effects and affects of the contents—cannot contaminate them. But in this century, recovering as we all are from a previous hundred years of devastating conflicts, not only between empires and nations, but also at the much more personal level between communities of ethnicity and/or belief, the archival field cannot continue to act as if the nasty stuff is not there. We are all ourselves made of this history, we are employed in all sorts of ways in constructing the narratives associated with it, and thus we are, by definition, contaminated by it.

The affect of archivists, therefore, also has a direct connection to the ethics of archivists, and by implication to the degree of independent and highly individualized agency in their professional capacities that they might be prepared to exert (positively or negatively). Archival codes of ethics are written as if one size fits all. They may address motivation, but they do not address affect, which can consciously, or even more importantly, unconsciously, underlie motivation. They also do not make a distinction between the actions of those archivists who have themselves lived through or been victims of the events or the records in question—and those who have not had those experiences and often come to those pieces of history and their residue without that particular affective lens. In situations such as those referenced here, we probably need the engagement of both the archivists who have been in the trenches and those who have come in from outside, but we first need to understand: what is the affect of the archivist who is also a survivor, as well as what is the affect of the outsider archivist when confronted with these events, landscapes, and seemingly intractable situations?

All archivists potentially have agency, as limited as that might sometimes seem. They have agency through the stances they take and through how they thread those stances through the conceptualization and implementation of their professional practices and scholarship. While it might be easy, indeed facile, to say that the particular region of the world discussed here is overly dominated by affect, I would argue that it thus provides an exceptionally important focus of study, precisely because
here we cannot pretend that affect does not exist, nor that it does not have an effect on every aspect of recordkeeping—the creation, disposition, utilization, and archivalization of records; on the creators of those records; on the archivists; on the records clerks; on the public. And on the contact zones between any and all of these. If we dismiss affect professionally or methodologically as suspect because of the subjectivity, bias, or emotional involvement that it surfaces or the activism that it might inspire; if we pretend that we can do our work without experiencing or indeed employing any of these; if we even try to distinguish between which of these we might countenance and which not, we are not only not reflexive or rigorous, we are professionally and methodologically dishonest. We fail the records, we fail those who participated in their creation, we fail those who today depend upon them, and we fail ourselves as professionals. We also allow those who would invoke those records in nationalist or community mythmaking, hatemaking, or warmongering, to exploit the archives, because there are indeed others who understand very well how the archive can be used to foment emotions. To understand the politics of archives and the political use of archives, we must also understand the affect of archives.

Endnotes


2. It should be noted that the many names that have been and continue to be applied to this region tend to carry with them different temporal, geographic, political, cultural, and emotional associations, thus making it difficult to apply a single, non-controversial term. For example, the commonly used term “Balkans” has been used pejoratively as in “Balkanization,” and is also viewed by some Croatians as an imposed Serb perspective on the geography and demographics of the region. Similarly, the term “Yugoslav Wars” is ambiguous from the perspectives of some former SFRY countries who might view the
Studying Affect and its Relationship to Agency

wars as a series of distinct conflicts and employ their own terms for those; e.g., in Croatia, the war that occurred between 1991 and 1995 is variously referred to as the Croatian War of Independence, *Domovinski rat* (Homeland war), or the Greater-Serbian aggression (*Velikosrpska agresija*). I have chosen to use Yugoslav Wars in this essay because of the frequency with which it is referred to as such by external authorities and also simply for convenience, but in full awareness of the problems that such usage poses and the stance that it might imply.

3. Akhil Gupta writes that “Structural violence contrasts sharply with [other types] of violence. It is constant rather than episodic, and, far from disrupting actors’ understandings of their social worlds, it provides them with a particular kind of situated knowledge with its own epistemic certainties. One of these certainties is that there is very little ability to absorb risk at the same time that one is forced to undertake highly risky activities…what distinguishes such violence from destruction caused by acts of nature is that these unfortunate outcomes result from the deliberate actions of social agents” (Akhil Gupta, *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012], 20-21). Dean Spade’s work on trans identities and advocating for trans recognition similarly identifies bureaucratic violence as a key infrastructural aspect that needs to be addressed. Spade asserts, “that a different location within the law—the administrative realm—may be the place to look for how law structures and reproduces vulnerability for trans populations…Through this lens, we look more at impact than intent. We look more at what legal regimes do rather than what they say about what they do. We look at how vulnerability is distributed across populations, not just among individuals” (Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* [South End Press, 2011], 29-30).


10. Although it is the case that violence against ethnic and cultural sites, especially Orthodox Serbian churches and monasteries, continued for several more years.
11. The most infamous examples of this were the deliberate destruction in August 1992 by Serb forces of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also in May 1992 of the research library and entire manuscript collection of the Oriental Institute, both during the siege of Sarajevo.

12. For example, librarians assisted with packing up and relocating monastic and church holdings of rare books and manuscripts; and there are also examples of individual archivists and museum staff from neighboring countries who drove through Yugoslavia to conflict areas in order to deliver supplies or to retrieve and hold building plans for historically significant sites, including archives, libraries, and museums.


14. Almost all of the records and information professionals I interviewed in Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia began their narratives with a personal story from their past about records and the war, and talked about how these experiences were formative in shaping their professional attitudes and values. Equally, a common theme is the pressure that is exerted on archivists in many of these countries to become a member of a political party in order to secure a position or a promotion.

In this and in other ways, there may also be inter-generational dynamics at play. Tina Wasserman notes how “past events that produced personal memory for one generation may, in fact, affect the next generation in deep and personal ways.” Tina Wasserman, “Constructing the Image of Postmemory,” in *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, ed. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 160.
15. For example, from the literature in archival studies, see Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (March 2002): 1-19; Eric Ketelaar, “Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection,” *Archival Science* 2 (September 2002): 221-238; Randall C. Jimerson, Archives Power; Trudi Peterson, “The Nasty Truth About Nationalism and National Archives,” *Proceedings of the 5th General Conference of EASTICA*, (2001), http://trudypeterson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/downloads/Nasty%20Truth%20Korea2.pdf; Douglas Cox, “National Archives and International Conflicts: The Society of American Archivists and War,” *American Archivist* 74 (Fall/Winter 2011): 451-481. Christina Koulouri alludes to the dangers of the new nationalist narratives of emergent Balkan countries and the countervailing role that could be played by cultural and institutional heritage: “The consequent idea to promote a common history of the region was also launched in political and intellectual environments. However, this new history should not be a new construction which would replace the national histories. It would rather be a new interpretation of the national pasts based on a common Balkan cultural and institutional heritage” (Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education* [Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2002], 15). Koulouri also importantly notes that these nationalisms replaced prior official narratives: “The need to rewrite and re-teach European history sprang exactly from this new political juncture as a result of the collapsed East-West front within Europe. In fact, this front was historiographical as well as historical. The European histories of the west were clearly Western-oriented and sometimes anticommunist, meaning anti-Soviet. Similarly history in the eastern countries was heavily politicized and historiographically legitimized their regime, which was defined in contrast to the capitalist West” (Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans*, 22). Literature from other fields on these subjects is voluminous. Marlene Manoff provides a summary in “Theories of the Archive Across Disciplines,” *Libraries and the Academy* 4, no.1 (2004): 9-25, while Antoinette Burton’s edited volume of essays contains several relevant examples, Antoinette


18. Many definitions might be applied for this term. Psychiatry scholar Vamik Volkan offers the following: “Personal trauma occurs when an external event or an accumulation of a series of events crowd and burden an individual’s mind…During such trauma(s), the individual’s mind is either flooded with intense anxiety; or just the opposite occurs, and the person senses the mind as paralyzed. Either way the person, while he or she may continue to perform certain tasks, experiences helplessness.” Vamik Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts* (Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing, 2006), 49.

19. See Anne J. Gilliland, “Moving Past,” for further detail on this aspect.


21. Hunt, for example, notes that, “War experiences can fundamentally change one’s sense of self or identity….Witnessing and taking part in battle, being involved in killing, being captured and perhaps subjected to torture, taking part in, being a victim of or witnessing atrocities against other soldiers or against civilians, destroying artifacts—all of these can lead to a breakdown in one’s belief systems and have an impact on one’s identity.” Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

30. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, 143
44. Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 22.
45. Kirmayer, “Landscapes of Memory,” 175.


