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A Captured Moment in Time Introduction

Adrienne Rubeli and Nina Vucenik

“It is interesting to see what is important to others,” a junior fellow recently remarked at one of our informal gatherings, where discussion meandered through an array of thought-provoking topics. This, at first glance innocent, sentence perfectly illustrates the essence of the fellows’ residence at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen. Active interest in and constructive dialogue with others who belong to different academic disciplines and national backgrounds, in varying stages of personal and intellectual development, form the basis of our understanding. Through such exchanges, others cease to be enigmas but become valuable individuals, unexpected teachers. Beyond the Institute walls, these characteristics translate into accepting differences, respecting others, and active listening. Collaborating with and learning from people belonging to different walks of life has become seminal for constructing civil society.

Just as photographs record moments in a person’s life, these essays capture a phase in our academic development. They introduce the work of seven junior fellows who resided at the Institute between January and June 2000. Although unique, in both topic and approach, the papers can be grouped into three sections:

woman, current problems in two post-Yugoslav states, and conflicts in Eastern Europe.

The first three papers discuss the changing role of women throughout literature, mythology and religion. The first paper is set in 17th century France, where Judith Boesch analyzes theoretical and historical aspects of authorship and gender. She focuses on gender-specific access to authorship and writing, and the construction of female and male author identities. Boesch first discusses different theoretical approaches to authorship, arguing that they are mostly gender blind. She explains that these approaches universalize a male, bourgeois author and do not see specific forms of female authorship. Boesch then focuses on the beginning of professionalization of the literary field in 17th century France, and deals with the process of canonization, access to writing, and orality.

While Boesch's paper points out the marginalization of female authors in literature, the next paper discusses a transposition and abuse of a myth in a different time and culture. Katarzyna Leszczynska deals with the Nazi abuse of a Greek mythological figure. The Greek goddess Pallas Athene, the allegedly motherless daughter of her father Zeus, was worshipped as a virginal mother and protectress of man and the patriarchal order. Centuries later, this goddess in Nazi Germany became the keynote figure in a gender discussion between Nazi philosopher Ernst Bergmann and female writer Sophie Rogge-Boerner. The vehement debate also provoked the poet Gottfried Benn to write an essay on the topic. Leszczynska contributes to this debate by showing how the construction of a new myth of community symbolically raises womanhood, but, at the same time, instrumentalizes the female body and makes the individual woman disappear.

In the third paper, Ilia Iliev focuses on a prominent but controversial female figure who manipulated religion and tradition to explain some basic changes in contemporary Bulgaria. Iliev investigates the rearrangement of female age roles in the Bulgarian society in the second half of the 20th century through the figure of Baba Vanga. Baba Vanga was a contemporary Bulgarian prophet who was also revered as a living saint. She offered important messages on how to reconcile traditional oppositions between women of different ages inside the family, especially mothers and daughters.

The remaining essays focus on developments in different Eastern European countries. These papers do not assess the progress societies achieved in their transition away from communism, but focus on issues that arose in the 1990s. The first two papers are country specific, and focus on the two least mentioned ex-Yugoslav states—Slovenia and Macedonia.

First, Natalija Vrecer discusses the circumstance and fate of ex-Yugoslav refugees in Slovenia. Most of the refugees from the former Yugoslavia were protected temporarily around the world. Vrecer claims that this type of protection inefficiently replaced long term, durable solutions and, thus, considerably lowered the refugees' quality of life. She analyzes negative consequences of temporary protection on refugees' everyday life in Slovenia. The author documents human suffering and provides an anthropological understanding of people in exile. Vrecer concludes the paper with some policy recommendations.

Audi Rubeli deals with the most southern country that emerged from Yugoslavia's breakup, Macedonia. There is an inherent ambiguity in Macedonia's history and its place in contemporary international relations. By examining the external and internal influences of the last ten years, it is interesting to see how the fledging democratic nation strives to maintain peace and stability in the region. The author gives particular attention to the 1999 war in Kosovo and its implication for Macedonia. Through the framework of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the author provides an understanding of the motives behind Macedonia's actions during the conflict.

The last three papers reflect transactions and conflicts that emerged in the 1990s in Eastern Europe. Nina Vucenik discusses the unintended positive implications of grant giving to non-governmental organizations. Through following USAID's pattern of the grant making process in Slovakia and Hungary, she examines the actual procedure of grant giving from inception to conclusion for grants given to local non-governmental organizations. While grant-making follows a standardized pattern of award giving, it is interesting because it occurs in a bicultural environment. The author claims that they import new bureaucratic patterns that, in and of themselves, effect change toward democracy.

Gallina Andronova analyzes financial sector development in Eastern Europe. She argues that while post-1989 reformers wanted to establish a competitive environment for efficient financial intermediation, their original market-driven blueprint ran into massive obstacles when its implementation started. The paper assesses the viability of neoliberal ideas based on their political, economic and institutional appeal. It concludes that the policy stance in the transformational scene of the region requires a credible institutional and regulatory environment to ensure the shift from socialist financial order to the capitalist one. Here the principles of market and private property enable the efficiency of financial intermediation. The success of these reform measures largely depends on different political interests involved in their actual execution.

Laurentiu Stefan-Scalat focuses on pacts and conflicts in post-communist transformations. He investigates the role of politics in fostering or hindering the emergence of a genuine and inclusive political community. The paper focuses on pacts forged between major political actors, that is, on explicit agreements seeking to settle existing conflicts or to prevent the emergence of new ones. Stefan-Scalat argues that, in appropriate conditions, these pacts could create a new social contract. The author also questions the emphasis given to ethnic conflicts at the expense of other types of conflicts. Further he points to other sensitive political areas and to the neglected significance of the lack of conflict.

While these essays document our work at the present stage of development, these pages cannot capture the atmosphere in which they were created. The papers were forged during six months of intensive exchange and learning in a constructive environment amidst contact with diverse individuals. These encounters have certainly shaped our scholarly evolution, which can only be glimpsed from the presented papers. Their influences, however, will surface in future meetings with strangers when discussion will turn to novel and unfamiliar topics.

In addition to representing our current academic interests, these essays reflect some of the quandaries present in today's world. Progress towards their resolutions will be achieved only through understanding and accepting origins of these differences. Thus, it is important to be genuinely interested in others.