

THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER – FRIEND, FOREIGNER, PATRIOT?*

Abstract: The paper explores the imagery and constructions of alterity in the contemporary world. The image of the other is at the same time the image of ourselves, mostly through the metaphor of the “stranger.” This “stranger” represents the unknown, so he/she occasionally provokes fear and resentment, if only for appearing physically different in the “mainstream” culture. This paper traces the genesis and development of certain modernist ideals (including the need to postulate the existence of others as strange and potentially threatening). The apparent lack of comprehension for (cultural, ethnic, racial) others is just a symptom of the much deeper disorder – in the quest for rationality, the meaning of simple human communication seems to be forgotten. Just like in a hall of mirrors, the images that people encounter are basically the images of themselves – only they have been distorted through nationalist or racist rhetoric. Using the examples from theory (anthropology, feminism, cultural studies) as well as from specific cultures (Brazil, South Africa, former Yugoslavia, France), and following on the works of scholars like Kristeva, Linke and Balibar, the author demonstrates the logic behind the need to exclude others, as well as the fact that all of these attempts will eventually backfire. For we cannot exclude others if we do not at the same time exclude ourselves.

Key words: alterity, anthropological aspects of the other, anthropology and identity, political anthropology.

Exergue: (Dis)Locations

I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust words, with no ground for their settling, no sky for their dispersing, coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them, all of those that merge, those that past, those that never meet, and nothing else, yes, something else, that I'm something quite different, a quite different thing.

(Beckett, 1958: 386)

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In selecting the topic for this seminar¹ I was considering both the place (location) where I was speaking, and the place (location) where I came from. Istanbul – where this paper was originally presented – is the metaphor for alterity within European alterities (including the perennial question: is Turkey – Istanbul included – part of “Europe” or not?), metaphor of the exotic and distant other, “Oriental” but yet understandable in the “Occidental” sense, and therefore somehow “acceptable”. Tourists should come to Istanbul. (I am quite happy to be a tourist for a couple of days as well.) EU has began (despite objections from France and The Netherlands) negotiations on accession with Turkey. Istanbul has made it to songs, all kinds of advertisements, and even a recent James Bond film. It is an “other” that is somehow close to “home” (a couple of hours flight from all the West European capital cities) – if not that easy to situate geographically (as it is on the very border of “Europe” and “Asia” – creating it, being this border at the same time).

On the other hand, the notion of flux, instability, constant change (involving total destruction), and uncertainty is something that comes “naturally” to me – but I am at the same time well aware how frightening these notions might appear to someone raised to think in specifically well-determined and well-defined categories. (I am not implying here that all change is the same – but I do feel relatively at ease with the notion of constant change.)

On the other hand, the hyperreality of the remnants of ex-Yugoslavia is really tragic-comical, as I wrote elsewhere (Bošković 1997b). Most recently, the name of the country has been changed into “The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro”, rendering any mention of “Yugoslavia” obsolete, so one can easily imagine how does one who identified himself as an ex-Yugoslav fit there. (It is interesting to note that the same people who were the first to light the flames of war in an attempt “to preserve the Yugoslavia” in 1991 were the same ones who initiated and celebrated the final demise of the very name “Yugoslavia”.)

¹ This is a version of the paper presented in the seminar in the Department of Sociology, Istanbul Bilgi University, Istanbul, 30 April 2002. I am very grateful to Dr. Ugur Kömeçoğlu and to Professor Arus Yumul for inviting me to Istanbul, which led me to consider again some important issues dealing with alterity and representations of the other.

This sense of alterity (dis)locates the spaces that I inhabit as well as the ones where I wish to go. There is a strange reality, of course, in which my passport identifies me without any ambiguity as a “non-European” in Western Europe, and as a “European” in South Africa or Brazil. I have to admit that I do not know what “Europe” is – in an interesting 1998 book (“*Europe between euphoria and euthanasia*”), Slovenian sociologist Tomaž Mastnak claims that the very idea arose only as the sense of closedness and the necessity of making barriers emerged – claiming that the whole idea of “Europe” as we know it today, is intrinsically connected to and associated with the (post-15th century) Western Europeans’ hatred of Muslims (cf. Mastnak, 2002). Another extremely interesting look at this issue is in Julia Kristeva’s book on the *Crisis of the European Subject*, where she questions the whole notion of “European” identity – from the perspective that there should be more general, universal humanist values that must take precedence over particular tribal or ethnic feelings. This is a type of “humanism” that I respect, despite feeling uneasy about its universalist pretensions.

Imagining the other

Modernity, by comparison, seems never to have entertained similar doubts as to the universal grounding of its status. The hierarchy of values imposed upon the world administered by the north-western tip of the European peninsula was so firm, and supported by powers so enormously overwhelming, that for a couple of centuries it remained the baseline of the world vision, rather than an overtly debated problem. Seldom brought to the level of consciousness, it remained the all-powerful ‘taken-for-granted’ of the era. It was evident to everybody except the blind and the ignorant that the West was superior to the East, white to black, civilized to crude, cultured to uneducated, sane to insane, healthy to sick, man to woman, normal to criminal, more to less, riches to austerity, high productivity to low productivity, high culture to low culture. All these ‘evidences’ are now gone. Not a single one remains unchallenged. What is more, we can see now that they did not hold in separation from each other; they made sense together, as manifesta-

tions of the same power complex, the same power structure of the world, which retained credibility as long as the structure remained intact, but were unlikely to survive its demise.

(Bauman, 1993: 135-136)

Hatred and fear usually go together. In a strange twist, they can also be programmed retroactively, as witnessed by some observers (and repeatedly and very successfully pointed out for over a decade by some philosophers/cultural critics like Slavoj Žižek) in the case of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, where journalists, diplomats and various people of good will went around asking people “Isn’t it true that you always hated your neighbors?”, and thus projecting their own fantasies of conflict and negotiation. Quite unsurprisingly, the members of the public allowed them to live out their fantasies in full, confirming that indeed “they always hated their neighbours” – even though they knew it was not true. Somehow, however, this made perfect sense – in a world divided between the well-defined and clearly outlined forces of Good and Evil, the Evil ones were a necessity. Furthermore, they could then justify the claims that the results of the horrendous war for territories and looting (aggression and genocide masked in far more respectable terms like “ethnic conflict” or “civil war”) should be accepted as *fait accompli* – no right of the return for millions of refugees, for example (as commented recently by Hayden, 2002). I do not believe that these kind of attempted justifications of “ancient Balkan hatreds” merit any response – they are logically incoherent, factually false, and theoretically untenable.

Some kind of a global rationalization of inequality among different peoples occurred from the late 16th and early 17th centuries CE onwards. The “discovery” of the New World in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, as well as the debates that followed on the issue of slavery permanently changed the Western world. This spectacular encounter with “the other” brought shock and amazement along with the large-scale ethnocide and at the same time ecocide, but it also broadened intellectual horizons.² It is interesting to compare the alternative ways of constructing the image(s) of the other – that is to say, to estab-

² I am not implying that this ethnocide and ecocide was a necessary or in any way justifiable price to be paid for this broadening of intellectual horizons – I am just stating this as a fact.

lish whether Indians or Spaniards had souls (for a contemporary perspective on these debates, see Latour, 2004: 451-453, 455). This is connected with the important shift in the whole system of the production and justification of knowledge, related to a new, modernist, rational, idea of science and what scientific discourse should be all about (for a very good exposition of this process, see Toulmin 1990).

These debates continued well into the continuing centuries, but it is extremely important that they be put in the specific context of when and where they took place (Bošković, 1997a; Latour 2004). When they are re-visited in the “modern” (or contemporary) times, they need to be considered as an integral part of the whole (primarily West European) project of modernity, with some of its unintended consequences.³ Therefore, many of the things present in the everyday politics of today, many of the reasons for lamenting by the left-wing parties and individuals (like the success of the extreme right-wing and neo-fascist political parties and projects throughout Europe)⁴ actually have a very long (and quite colourful!) history.

“European” rationality – the Modernist project

The basic presupposition, it seems to me, still stands: namely, that the question is not “*Fascism – yes or no?*”, but “*How much fascism?*”.

(Močnik, 1998: 10)

³ Foucault proposed looking at modernity “rather as an attitude than as a period of history (...) a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people (...) a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task” (1984: 39, *passim*). It is very interesting to compare this and other lucid observations with the general tone that Adorno and Horkheimer use in the *Dialectics of the Enlightenment*, published in 1944. According to them, Nazism (as well as the Holocaust!) was also a direct consequence of the European modernist project – it was not just science and great technological discoveries...

⁴ This could be easily related to the recent (May 2005) failure of the referendums on the EU constitution in France and The Netherlands. The failure of the leading political (“pro-European”) forces to explain their ideas to the general public is inseparable from the rise of extreme nationalism, racism, xenophobia and all the related phenomena. One leads to the other. European voters terrified of the other will not vote for any decision that will lead to the expansion of cultural and intellectual horizons (hence, it is quite telling that the perceived “threat” of Turkey’s accession to the EU played an important role in the “no” camp).

Two concepts are of special interest for me here – universality and rationality. They are both interconnected in the big project initiated five centuries ago: universality sweeps away all the potential differences between cultures in contact, as rationality tells “us” that even if “we” would recognize the differences, there is still the good and the evil, and it is clear where the good is. The dominant culture does not ever posit itself as just one of the many – it firmly positions itself as *the* model against which all the other cultures (peoples, customs, moral codes, individual behavior, etc...) will be measured and judged. The dominant culture of the era is *the culture* (or “civilization” – as Huntington would call it) – the other ones are merely exotic appendages, places where to spend a holiday, or sources of raw industrial materials. The *look* of the colonial or imperial masters is important here – others are observed or studied, photographs taken of exotic-looking people in their “ethnic” dress, others are examined like specimens to be dissected (as seen in the numerous textbooks dealing with “racial types” – see the examples mentioned in Boni, 2002 and Bloom, 1990, 1999). With benevolence of the imperial masters, some things and some individuals might be more acceptable than others.

In a relatively recent paper, and in his typically irreverent style, Žižek (2001) questioned the perceived limits of our tolerance for other cultures and points of view. He looked at the other extreme, at the paradoxes brought by completely equating different points of view and different perspectives (for example, a German Nazi film director complaining in 1950 how American Jews don’t understand him – Žižek, 2001: 340). I am a bit uneasy with the broad-sweeping consequences of Žižek’s critique, as much as I agree with it. I am afraid that what he postulates is a specific kind of imperial look – or simply refusal to deal with other cultures that are based on different cultural premises from the “Western” ones. Having said that, I wish to stress my agreement with him in the specific examples (and examples of the authors he criticizes, like Rorty and Singer – see Žižek, 2001: 340-341), but also the fact that cognitive relativism does not mean moral relativism. There are many people (myself included) who are cognitive relativists – *but not moral relativists*.

This has to do with the whole complex of alterity as something different and embodying different people – “strangers”. Julia

Kristeva (1991) (formerly a “stranger” herself!) in her study traced some of the reactions to others through history. However, she focused on the notion of the individual (even when she/he is “co-opted” into a larger whole by virtue of similarity or dissimilarity) – but in recent years we have been witnesses of some large scale violence directed against the whole ethnic groups (or nations): Bosnia and Herzegovina (around 200,000 dead), Rwanda (800,000 dead) and Congo (at least two million dead) stand as stark reminders of what the extreme consequences of alterity could be. Therefore, I think that we should turn our attention to perceptions of others as *part of groups* (or larger entities – “ethnic groups” or “nations”). For once others are perceived as obstacles – be it to progress, development, culture, good living, or even “civilization” – the rational choice is to get rid of them. Once their humanity is abstracted or even called into question (for “they” are so different from “us”!),⁵ their lives become expendable. Once racist policies are wrapped in the aura of self-righteousness and defensive behaviour (as with Zionism in Israel), anything goes.

However, it is not enough just that “the might is right” – the rationality calls for a *rational* and above all *moral* justification. Killing and destroying (expelling, if there is no other option) as many others as possible is “good” for “us” because that will enable safety and security (again, the state of Israel and its policies provides a good example here). This *safety and security* implies *loneliness and familiarity* – we want to be *alone* because we want to be in a *familiar context and familiar surroundings*. There are many forms of rationalization of such behavior – besides examples in the already mentioned Hayden’s article, Bielefeld (1998) in his collection of essays points to the dangers of ontologization of debates about others (foreigners), especially in the form of the post-1990 catchphrase of the “ethnic conflict” (Geertz, 1993). Perhaps unconsciously, some authors seek to explain mass murder, rape and pillaging in terms of scientific or scholarly theories. By doing so, they manage to elevate the

⁵ And ironically, of course, in all three cases referred to above, it was the very lack of difference that was taken to constitute the difference itself! It seems that the sameness of the people irritated them to such an extent that they had to invent and re-invent the perceived “inhumanity” of their neighbors. Eriksen (2004) argued very convincingly for also taking into account kinship when discussing nationalism and ethnicity.

criminals and actually give their actions some rationality. (It is worth noting that since the wars in the former Yugoslavia erupted, the so-called “international community” negotiated and dealt only with the people who had guns – all the alternative or anti-war and anti-nationalistic voices were completely marginalized... Hence, its surprise with the apparent inability of some of the newly formed states in the region to form some stable institutions of civil society, does seem surprising, to say the least.)

Bielefeld is one of the authors (along with Bauman) who trace all the animosity and vilification of foreigners at least to Fichte and the whole European modernist project. As mentioned above (and pointed out by authors like Toulmin and Bauman), modernity was one of the direct consequences of the great colonial expansion of the Western powers – it created powerful fantasies of Truth and Reason (many detailed observations of the post-18th century “March towards Reason” have been done by Foucault) and delusions about their power. According to Luhmann, “The history of European rationality can be described as the history of the dissolution of a rationality continuum that had connected the observer in the world with the world” (Luhmann, 1998: 23). Luhmann saw the [then] current trends in rationality as a step in the wrong direction, inviting us to re-consider the models of mutual understanding mentioned by the authors like Toulmin (without actually referring to him). On the one hand, it seems that ways of doing things and interpreting them might have a very long history – as Uli Linke traced in her book (1999). The ideology of “blood and soil” as we know it, however, is a much more recent invention, it depends on the “nation-states” (a 19th-century construction) and on what Balibar called “fictive ethnicity” (in Balibar and Wallerstein, 1997: 130-131).

(Mis)placing the other: gender and race

Tickets are expensive. So are the hotels.
Names range from Rita to Juanita.
In walks a policeman, and what he tells
you is “You are persona non grata in terra incognita.”

Joseph Brodsky (“Abroad”)

Ethnicity is just one form of identifying and establishing the border between “us” and potentially hostile “them”. Others include gender, class and race. I will not deal here with class in detail – a very good overview is in Balibar and Wallerstein, 1997 – but just mention some peculiarities about gender and race.

A few words about the discipline where I find myself working (and learned people from anthropology say that I should regard myself as one of “them” because of my training, my current institutional affiliation, research, and my degree) should help contextualize this discussion. Anthropologists are engaged in some form of a post-colonial discourse whenever they step (professionally, of course) into the world of a “strange” or “exotic” culture (the fact that it might be their own culture does not affect this). “Step into” might not be the correct expression, since one of the most important conditions for the understanding of another culture (and the whole different set of values, norms, representations, etc.) is being aware of the differences. Except in the cases where the anthropologist or ethnographer is himself/herself a member of a certain community (and sometimes even in those cases, but on a different plane), there is a fundamental difference. Two worlds meet. Or, alternatively, two (or more) cultures, worlds (sometimes literally centuries) apart.⁶ This “stepping into” should not be taken only in a literal sense, since it presupposes any form of communication about, or with, a culture or a society (or group, individual, etc.) that is being studied. Another thing that it assumes is that there will be elements which the anthropologist will find impossible to classify or explain, so she/he should not try to force her/his preconceptions on the culture, but to accept the potential unintelligibility of certain elements of the studied culture as a fact, culture as a specific set of values for each individual and distinctive community or group.

Of course, the question arises of the objective (if there is such thing) validity of doing *any* research. It was as far back as in 1881, that one of the founding fathers of anthropology, Adolf Bastian, remarked that

⁶ Of course, there are differences within specific cultures as well as differences between anthropologists/ethnographers and cultures they come from – I am just using these universal concepts here to illustrate my point.

For us, primitive societies (*Naturvölker*) are ephemeral, that is, as regards our knowledge of, and our relations with them, in fact, inasmuch as they exist for us at all. At the very instance they become known to us they are doomed.

(quoted in Fabian, 1991: 194)

Therefore, as Bastian somewhat cynically remarked so long ago, knowing others, getting in contact with them (“contact” in the 19th-century usually meant death sentence for many non-Western cultures) is the first step towards their destruction. In the contemporary world, this destruction need not be physical or brutal – it is enough to insert different cultural values, to make people *obedient to any authority* (one of the important aspects from the colonial past that facilitated Rwandan massacre – as noted in Zarembo, 1997), or to institute the policies such as *forced removals* (which effectively ripped apart the social fabric of many South African black communities). But there are very different types of others and different strategies employed to “deal” with them.

In a sense, women are the ultimate “others.” They are an integral part of the world and at the same time have been throughout history excluded (partially or completely) from full participation in it (Riley, 1988). Sometimes observed and studied in “primitive” societies, they have only recently become active participants in “mainstream” sciences and humanities, adding a specific (or should I say: gender specific) point of view. This opens numerous possibilities, as summed up by Toni Flores:

What is interesting, I think, is that because male culture is officially the valued and powerful one, women come with some determination to grasp what we have been denied – and from this realization come the various women’s movements. On the other hand, because female culture, along with the feminine possibilities it carries, is both devalued and disempowered, it is hard for men to recognize or accept that they lack something, much less attempt actively to grasp what they hardly know they want.

(Flores, 1991: 143)

Of course, I cannot agree with phrases such as “male culture” or “female culture” – they both seem to be too general and too universalizing and totalizing, trying to subsume a great variety of different discourses under a common denominator. However, it seems to me that in everyday life there exists a sense of polarity and ambivalence when it comes to the issues dealing with gender. Anthropology and social sciences in general are no exception to this. The picture has been distorted, people realize that and begin to wonder what the “real” image looks like.

The extent to which anthropology can (or even should) reshape this distorted picture remains unclear, but anthropology as something standing outside the contemporary world, in the realm of the “pure” science is a fiction.⁷ It is my belief that anthropologists (as well as social scientists) have a duty and an obligation (both as human beings and as critical intellectuals) to at least try to present “others” in an acceptable way (acceptable for the others in the first place!). Since they depend on their existence (that is to say, the very existence of others is a prerequisite for their profession), it is in their (existential) interest to assure that the others are represented in an acceptable way and that the “natives” are able both to represent and to express themselves in a ways that they find most appropriate.⁸

I do not intend to fully adopt here Asad’s (1979) thesis that what really matters in terms of social change today is the movement of world capital and the globalization of world economic processes (although I do believe that terms like “market economy” in contemporary usage are nonsense invented by the people in power in order to retain and globalize this power⁹), but this thesis reflects a part of the problem. On another note, as I pointed out in an earlier paper on Macedonia, economic power is quite important in gender relations:

⁷ At least as much as the very concept that any science can be “pure,” “objective,” “disinterested,” or politically “neutral – cf. Feyerabend, 1987, 1993. This also goes for the arts – as Orwell rightly noted in his essay published in 1946 (2004: 5).

⁸ Obviously, the question then arises (and I do not claim to know the answer to it): who decides what is an adequate representation of the other in a specific context, and based on what criteria?

⁹ To claim that any Third World country can just step into the “world economy” and there successfully compete with developed countries (much of whose development and stability was achieved at the expense of the Third World) is simply perverse.

the more one has, the less likely that she will be marginalized (Bošković 2001). If anthropology is to incorporate such a thesis, then anthropologists should be actively involved in the processes of social change. The experience of the reality “lived” can be more helpful than the experience of the reality “theorized.” However, as academics, they usually claim (publicly, at least) no allegiance to a particular political system or ideology. As scientists, they are supposed to be “neutral.” Again, the idea that “neutrality” in a great post-romantic sense is simply impossible in any science (including anthropology) is nothing new or original. While most authors will claim that their interpretation of the data (and their field notes, statistics, etc.) are reasonably (if not absolutely) “objective,” they are well aware that others are not quite that “neutral” or “objective.” Anthropologists need others, both in ethnography and in theory, and even when others are actually their fellow anthropologists.

An interesting situation occurs when feminist authors (as “others”) write on women (as “others” as well): are they “feminist” or even radical enough? (For example, as noted by Henrietta Moore in her book *Passion for Difference*.) Where does feminism end and “pure” or “disengaged” research start? Is it possible to be a feminist and at the same time do this kind of research on feminist discourses or practices? Since others are “there” (and we are “here”) – and there is no way to find out whether they have always been, or were just constructed by ourselves – then, the main question for me is how to approach this fact. What to do with the others?

The answer is not as obvious as it seems. Obviously, one does not ignore others, although it is relatively easy to pretend that they do not exist (since this is only pretending, one is still aware of them and just makes a conscious effort to avoid them). But this attempt at avoiding does not deny their existence! Even if we bypass *something*, we implicitly acknowledge the fact that there is *something* out there (to be avoided). Others can be studied, but then the question might arise from whose perspective and why. What gives the right (any right) to anthropologists (or social scientists in general) to go around and study various ethnic groups, and then subsequently publish the most intimate details of their lives? From another perspective, the dependence of anthropologists on their “informants” (the word has a slightly Orwellian sound for me) is almost complete, and

very rarely do anthropologists question the data that they have obtained in the field. Very rarely they assume that they might have been told something simply because the “natives” wanted to please them or to avoid probing into the more intimate aspects of their lives. Questions relating to the privacy and the actual wishes of the others (the “observed ones”) are increasingly becoming paramount in any serious research project. Although the situation seems to be most tricky with regard to the fieldwork (positioning of oneself with his/her “objects of study,” questions regarding even ethics of disclosure of certain details, anthropologists’ personal life “in the field,” etc.), it is even worse when one actually studies texts.

The relationship between different social-studies’ approaches and the study of gender is in no way simple or straightforward, as noted by Marilyn Strathern:

[T]he constant rediscovery that women are the Other in men’s accounts reminds women that they must see men as the Other in relation to themselves. Creating a space for women becomes creating a space for the self, an experience becomes an instrument for knowing the self. Necessary to the construction of the feminist self, then, is a nonfeminist Other. The Other is most generally conceived as “patriarchy,” the institutions and persons who represent male domination, often simply concretized as “men.”[cf. Toni Flores, above.] Because the goal is to restore to subjectivity a self dominated by the Other, there can be no shared experience with persons who stand for the Other.

(Strathern, 1987: 288)

However, the questions relating to otherness and identity lead to the ones on difference(s). The other is recognized as other because it is different. Although, as noted above, these differences are often constructed or simply invented retroactively in order to justify actions.

Another good example is provided by the race. Most social scientists reject the very existence of it. Genetically, it makes no sense. However, the fact of the matter is that people do look different to some people – and this has serious social, political, or economic implications. I again refer to Linke (1999) on the (Western)

“European” construction of “race” – what is interesting to me, coming here from South Africa (and after Brazil), is the way that South Africans and Brazilians are burdened and frequently overwhelmed with this concept and its implications.

While the official Brazilian discourses in the last 70 years (following right-wing writer and intellectual Gilberto Freyre) or so speak of the “racial democracy” (*democracia racial*), South Africans had their “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC) to help them deal with the horrific legacy of the *apartheid* regime. For the outside world and for the politicians, the TRC has been a huge success. For the less privileged people, however, the story is much different, as it is perceived as the mechanism that enabled some mass-scale murderers to get away with their crimes. (And, as Judy Grant pointed out,¹⁰ the women remained victimized during the proceedings as well!) There was some talk of reparations for the victims, but the reparations are not on the agenda of the current South African government.

Race is the determining factor of South African politics – black people (majority of the population) will always vote for the ANC – regardless of the ANC government’s actual policies. On the other hand, the “official opposition”, DA, seems totally incapable of addressing the non-white population, they appear to be permanently locked into the South African whites’ (especially when it comes to the English-speaking whites, who believe that they are actually in England and, for example, usually *refuse* to learn any Black African language) isolation – as they have lived for decades separate and sheltered lives, their points of reference also tend to be in complete isolation from the non-whites’ problems or perceptions. The problems are made worse by the perception (see for example the reports of the International Working and Advisory Group 2000) that only whites can be racist. This masks the obvious racism that exists in the

¹⁰ At the “Hidden Genders” conference at the University of Natal, Durban, on 15, September 2001. In her study (based on interviews with six women who gave testimonies at the TRC), Grant showed how the suffering of these women (battered, raped, abused) was simply ignored (no one even asked them about it) in the justification of the “struggle” of the ANC against the oppressive regime. Some influential commentators interpreted their apparent silence as the fact that they found “the struggle” much more important than their own lives, but Grant showed that this was not the case – simply, no one was interested in their suffering.

majority of the black and coloured populations as well – directed not only against whites, but even more against (black poor) immigrants from other African countries (like Angola or Mozambique), who are frequently attacked, abused, or even killed. However, as South Africans today officially subscribe to the policies of “non-racialism,” it is politically incorrect to mention this, so the problems of dealing with the burden of race just get postponed for the indefinite future.

The situation in Brazil is very much different in everyday life. As most Brazilians are clearly “mixed” (that is to say, they would definitely not pass as looking “European” – in Istanbul or elsewhere), there is no overt racism among the ordinary people (and that is one of the reasons why, for example, Spike Lee’s films always fail to attract big audiences in Brazil). The problem of identification gets into play here: even though in the official census Brazilians can choose only one of the four offered categories (white, black, “brown,” or Indian), in reality of their everyday lives they use more than 130 categories for the racial identification! Where one puts herself/himself can be quite different from the official census – so one gets to the official percentage that Brazil has only 6 per cent blacks (International Working and Advisory Group 2000) – or to the unofficial that the number is around 40 per cent (cf. Bošković 2005). The Brazilian racism becomes more visible when one gets to universities, where there are comparatively few non-white students, and both students and staff begin to look surprisingly “European”. Finally, when one gets into the political arena (the Congress and the Senate), the percentage of non-whites is so miniscule (in 2002, there were only four blacks in the 81-seat Senate), that it becomes negligible. When the [then] president Fernando Henrique Cardoso decreed in 2001 that universities must observe quotas (that is to say, include a certain proportion of non-white staff and students), it created an outcry in the academic community that it will lead to the “lowering of standards” of teaching and research. Very few people in the academic community (almost exclusively white!) have attempted to understand why the quotas were necessary in the first place.

“It wasn’t me!” is quite a common excuse of the privileged minorities in both countries. “It has nothing to do with me – the others were doing it!” As one had nothing to do with the previous oppressive policies, the collective amnesia takes place and the world

begins in the year zero (a moment chosen by the privileged community and sanctified by the mechanisms such as the TRC in South Africa), without any effort to understand what has happened in the past and what are the consequences for the future. By perpetuating a certain type of discourse (in South Africa, directed to English-speaking whites and affluent blacks), excluding the less privileged ones, societies create boundaries of “us” and “them”, boundaries that cannot be transgressed, as people are (in both South Africa and Brazil) simply “born into” defined racial categories. Similarly to the Hegel’s famous analogy of the Master and Slave, the oppressed ones in South Africa rose to power, but only to adopt the language of the former Masters – without actually achieving economic or social freedom for the majority of the population.

Concluding remarks: Deconstructing the other

We National Socialists have found a very specific definition for the state... it has only a purpose if its final task is the preservation of the living folkdom. It must not only be the life preserver of a people, but thereby primarily the preserver of the inner essence, the maintainer of a nation’s blood. Other than this, the state has no purpose in the long run.

Adolf Hitler speaking in 1937
(quoted in Linke, 1999: 209)

Locating others in space and time helps create boundaries (cf. Barth in Cohen, 2000; Balibar, 1997: 381-395) that in effect help us establish our identity (either by constructing it, or by choosing an appropriate one for an occasion). Others are important markers of where does the familiar end. Problems arise when people start to seriously believe in the unity and immutability of their ethnic group or race (or any other similar category), when the assumption is that the purity is almost there, just a little effort away. Of course, historically speaking, there are no (and, as far as we can tell from the available archaeological data, there were never any) ethnically “pure” populations. Striving for one looks like a misplaced ideal, attempt to achieve something that its creators know (or at least should know) is impossible.

However, racism sells. Nationalism remains popular – from the buses adorned with Milošević’s portraits in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, to the frantic flag-waving in the USA today. Mass identity, we are told, should take primacy over the individual one. This, of course, stands in sharp contrast with the proclaimed (Western) liberal goals of individual rights and responsibilities (cf. Billig, 1995, Eriksen, 2002). Ideally, individuals are supposed to surrender parts of their sovereignty to governments or other higher entities. Practically, some individuals are not too happy about this (there is a long list of organizations who oppose censorship of the Net – too long to be mentioned here, but shows that resistance is certainly possible).

Some of this is seen in all the debates about “multiculturalism” – perceived as a dangerous virus threatening to dilute the perceived heterogeneous fabric of societies (frequently identified as “blood” – Linke, 1999). This is what gives rise to extreme right-wing politicians throughout “Europe” – and very clear example is the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France.¹¹ What the commentators failed to see was that Le Pen was only a *symptom* – not the disease. His success only demonstrated the failure of the “new Europe” to come to terms with ambiguity of its own discourses about others (immigrants, foreigners, minorities). It is not possible to adopt the neo-liberal policies of closing off markets (and restricting the movement of individuals) and labeling everything different as “strange” and “dangerous” without the consequences that include re-vamping the extreme right-wing ideologies. The fear of the other was the fuel of ideologies like Nazism (Linke, 1999: 198 ff), and it is unclear why some politicians (who in 2002 seemed so horrified at the success of Le Pen, in 2001 were so surprised by Silvio Berlusconi, and a year before by Jörg Haider – it seems to me that the only surprising thing here is the surprise itself!) seem to believe that the same fear will not produce the same effects seventy years later. The “rhetorics of exclusion” (Stolcke, 1995), so cherished by the Western industrialized leaderships, is leading the way for new racist and neo-fascist ideologies. From the standpoint of long-term policies, this might not be too bad for the politicians in power – as more and more people get disenfranchised and disillusioned with what is going on in their societies,

¹¹ Again, the phenomenon is not that new – I presented something about it as far back as May, 1997 (Bošković, 1998: 127).

chances are that more and more will simply stay at home, not vote and leave everything to tightly connected cliques and “advisory boards” that will in effect govern societies far away from any mechanisms of control. In the short run, however, this is going to produce a series of clashes – and the immediate consequences are difficult to predict.

I wish I could end on a more positive note, but my point is that being aware of certain phenomena or processes (and making them visible in public and exposed for what they really are) could help one determine whether to take certain actions or not. *The choice* is important here – people can make a difference if they want to. (The French voters could have voted for candidates other than Le Pen in 2002, but many opted to stay at home... Taking a look at French politics, can one really blame them?) It seems quite obvious that the respect and recognition of the other are necessary if we want to be respected and recognized by anyone outside ourselves – for what are we all if not others for some other observers, in other situations, under other points of view, in other circumstances and other perspectives?

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SLIKA DRUGOG: PRIJATELJ, STRANAC, PATRIOTA?

Sažetak

U tekstu se razmatraju predstave i konstrukcije drugosti u savremenom svetu. Slike drugih su u isto vreme i predstave nas sâmh, pre svega kroz metaforu „stranca“. „Stranac“ ovde predstavlja nepoznato i, kao takav, ona/on može izazvati strah i odbojnost, makar i samo zbog toga što izgleda drugačije od pripadnika „osnovne“ ili „domaće“ kulture. U tekstu se razmatra razvoj određenih modernističkih ideala (uključujući tu i potrebu da se postojanje drugog postavi kao čudno i potencijalno preteće). Ono što izgleda kao nedostatak razumevanja za (kulturne, etničke, rasne) druge samo je simptom mnogo dubljeg poremećaja – u potrazi za racionalnošću izgleda da je zaboravljeno značenje jednostavne ljudske komunikacije. Baš kao u dvorani sa ogledalima, predstave na koje ljudi nailaze su slike njih samih – samo što su izmenjene nacionalističkom ili rasističkom retorikom. Koristeći primere iz teorije (antropologija, feminizam i kulturne studije), kao i iz različitih kultura (Brazil, Južna Afrika, bivša Jugoslavija, Francuska) i pozivajući se na radove autora poput Kristeve, Linke i Balibara, autor ukazuje na logiku izopštavanja drugih, kao i na činjenicu da mnogi ovakvi pokušaji izopštavanja prerastaju u sopstvenu suprotnost. Jer nemoguće je izbaciti druge a da u isto vreme ne izbacimo i sebe same.

Gljučne reči: predstave drugosti, antropološki aspekti proučavanja drugih, antropologija i identitet, politička antropologija.