



Nataša Jagdhuhn, *Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums: Reframing Second World War Heritage in Postconflict Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 259 pp.

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Abstract

The article is a review of *Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums: Reframing Second World War Heritage in Postconflict Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia* by Nataša Jagdhuhn, published as part of the series *Palgrave Studies in Cultural Heritage and Conflict*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 259 pp. ISBN 978-3-031-10227-1.

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The book *Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums: Reframing Second World War Heritage in Post-conflict Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia* is Nataša Jagdhuhn's first monograph;

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it was published in 2022 as part of the series *Palgrave Studies in Cultural Heritage and Conflict*. The study deals with the Second World War heritage in general, and the exhibitions devoted to the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle (NOB) in particular, in the three aforementioned states, both during socialist Yugoslavia and in the aftermath of its violent dissolution. Drawing upon her extensive fieldwork in the region, interviews with curators and museum workers, and archival materials, Jagdhuhn argues that despite a joint and solidified interpretation of World War II shared in the Second Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav dissolution was a rift that made the successor states pursue alternative musealizations of the wartime experiences. However, she demonstrates that although the museums started communicating predominantly ethnonational historical narratives in the post-Yugoslav period, in all three cases they followed corresponding curatorial patterns aiming to obtain those new goals. Jagdhuhn's book is among the rare attempts to look at the making and unmaking of the museal discourse about the Second World War from a cross-national perspective. It is very rich in references and offers several engaging concepts and catch-phrases; it is also neatly illustrated with original photos and maps (which the author created herself). This review briefly outlines the main arguments of all the chapters, without discussing the case studies in more detail.

Jagdhuhn begins by sketching the dominant discourse about World War II in postwar Yugoslavia, that is, a narrative based upon a binary division between the supranational peoples' struggle, which eventually resulted in the foundation of socialist Yugoslavia, and the wartime enemies and their crimes, with a single stress on those referred to by the emic label of "domestic traitors". She argues that it was the newly established museums of the Revolution or NOB – "museums of recent history" – that assumed the role of centers disseminating this narrative, but also the role of institutions which helped shape the official history and memory of the wartime antifascist struggle. The urgency of the first aspect is best seen when looking at the mass-scale social and political operation that facilitated the establishment of an entire network of such museums in every corner of the state.

In the second chapter, Jagdhuhn maps the legal and political mechanisms which made this operation possible and notes the agency of veteran organizations and local communities in the development of different types of, be it more or less centralized, museums of this kind. As for the latter aspect, the author points out several strategies used to gather knowledge about wartime experiences (and collect wartime artifacts), mostly related to the Partisan resistance. She argues, however, that this was done to legitimize the new constellation of power in the state and help the ideological project of building the new socialist man. Hence, the outcome of this process was a narrative centered on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which, despite the minor challenges of mostly logistical nature, prevailed as the main museal model until the Yugoslav dissolution.

Chapter 3 outlines in more detail the "core of the idea" (Bal, 2005, p. 148) of the Yugoslav museums of recent history, and attempts to theorize it in diachronic terms by looking at how they developed during the Second Yugoslavia. Jagdhuhn convincingly links

the concept of the ideological project behind those museums with the idiosyncratic nature of the Yugoslav revolution (which was multiethnic and politically heterogeneous, and occurred “without help from the Soviets” (*“bez pomocy Sowietów”*), as the Polish singer Kazik Staszewski notes in one of his songs). Thus, from the very beginnings, the museal production aimed at promoting the idea of revolution as a historical process, with a view to affecting patriotic feelings and thus making it the backbone of the new political community. Against this background, the museums primarily focused on the contribution of Tito, the Party, and its wartime slogan – and afterwards the state-founding myth – of “brotherhood and unity”, being largely informed, too, by the history and the natural features of the areas where they were located. Moreover, Jagdhuhn argues that despite the tendency to centralize the functioning of the museum network, it largely remained “a decentralized, irregular, and unfinished state project” (Jagdhuhn, 2022, p. 51), which continuously strove to develop its language, infrastructure, and exhibiting techniques. The author also highlights the change in curatorial methods, such as the stress on museal atmosphere in the 1970s as opposed to the paper documentation exhibitions of the 1950s. However, although the Yugoslav memorial architecture broke with the Soviet aesthetics in the early 1950s, Soviet museology remained quite influential for the Yugoslav model of NOB museums.

The fourth chapter deals with the “abrupt ideological turn” (Jagdhuhn, 2022, p. 79) and the emergence of competitive narratives of World War II, which facilitated the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. Even prior to the wars of the 1990s, the alternative narratives of the wartime experiences started to be used as tools for mobilizing nationalistic sentiments in the three states under consideration. In this very context, Jagdhuhn invokes one of her key concepts of museality, traced back, in the previous chapter, to the museologists Antun Bauer and Ivo Maroević, and socialist museology, postulating heritage as a link between the identity and the values of a community. Namely, the museality of the Yugoslav museums of recent history got broken or uprooted from its federal platform in the early 1990s, being left to different fates in the novel sociopolitical contexts and during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. At this point, Jagdhuhn maps some of the more obvious aspects of this process, such as the physical destruction of museal objects and exhibitions, but also some of the less obvious developments, such as the lack of financing, their transformation into military facilities and, especially, the shifts in the politics of representing World War II and managing the Yugoslav heritage in the three states.

Although Jagdhuhn points at the 1980s as a period when those competing narratives were incubated, she discusses the 1990s as the formative decade for the divergent set of ethnonationalizing projects and historical revisionism. In brief, the Croat political project of national reconciliation eventually blurred the ideological differences between the left and the right in the state’s history. This, in turn, led to the development of two contrasting memory cultures by the end of the 1990s. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation was more complicated predominantly due to its population structure and history of the wars

of the 1990s. Unlike in Croatia, where many traces of the Yugoslav memorials were erased (one-third of the total number), many NOB exhibitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina were rebuilt after the 1990s as replicas of the Yugoslav exhibitions. On the contrary, during the 1990s in Serbia, the rule of Milošević meant a radical shift from socialist politics, which opened up room for the rehabilitation of the anticommunist Chetnik Movement in the public sphere. In this section, Jagdhuhn also lists a number of Yugoslav Second World War museums which found themselves on the front lines of the 1990s wars, most notably the Jasenovac Memorial Museum and the Memorial Complex "Battle of Batina".

The turn of the millennium is argued to be yet another juncture. In 2001, the Yugoslav successor states signed an agreement which, among other things, meant that the Yugoslav museums became an asset of the respective successor states on whose territory they are located. It was the final development that concluded the process of stripping away the museums' initial epistemic base and frames of references: they became a "reluctant heritage" – "metamuseums" – and were left on the shoulders of local municipalities, at the mercy of politicians, various nationally reimagined and, in certain cases, competing antifascist veteran organizations, and museum professionals. In this very context, several curatorial strategies of dealing with this heritage emerged. Chapter 5 outlines three such strategies, referred to as "deideologization", "ethnonationalization", and "decontextualization". The first of them, for instance, involves removing explicit communist symbols and slogans, rebranding and commercializing the museum space, and renationalizing the historical narrative. The second one refers to the attempts to ethnicize the antifascist and supranational Yugoslav movement, often via references to the 1990s wars. The third strategy resonates with leaving the exhibitions from the Yugoslav period as they are, hence creating a sort of museum "time capsules". The function of those "time capsules" can vary, though. Jagdhuhn argues that they can serve as counter-memorials or illustrations for the discourse critical of the Yugoslav period, which views them as an example of communist indoctrination.

Chapter 6 offers an analysis of four museums: the Jasenovac Memorial Museum in Croatia, the Museum of the Second Session of AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Museum of Old Herzegovina in Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the Museum "21 October" in Serbia. Jagdhuhn systematically maps three different trajectories unfolding in the new post-Yugoslav sociopolitical entities, and draws comparative conclusions indicating some parallels between them, such as the opening of new archival units, the novel usage of museum documents, and "interventions" (Jagdhuhn, 2022, p. 177) in the museum setting. She concludes by framing her case study within the notion of "transitional museology", developed to discuss the Eastern European museums in the post-socialist period. Finally, Jagdhuhn opts for the concept of "transitional metamuseology" with reference to the museal turn in the three national contexts, a derivative concept related to the experiences of regime changes and transition, and performative museology. As such, it refers to the museums, their legacy, and treatment, but also their affective and count-

er-memorial potential. Although Jagdhuhn focuses on only three post-Yugoslav national contexts, her theoretical proposals, precise discourse, and vast empirical evidence make her book an important contribution to the study of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cultural, memory, and history politics.

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Abstrakt

Artykuł jest recenzją książki *Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums: Reframing Second World War Heritage in Postconflict Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia* autorstwa Natały Jagdhuhn, wydanej w serii *Palgrave Studies in Cultural Heritage and Conflict* w wydawnictwie Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 259 ss. ISBN 978-3-031-10227-1.

Słowa kluczowe: Jugosławia; Chorwacja; Bośnia i Hercegowina; Serbia; druga wojna światowa; muzea; metamuzea

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