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Introduction: Socialism and Sociality

SELF-MANAGEMENT

In *Perestroika Timeline*, the Saint Petersburg art collective Chto Delat? establishes a connection between the crisis that spelled the end of the Cold War and the one that shook world markets some twenty years later.¹ The installation consists of simple gray-scale images, with captions painted directly on a gallery wall, beginning with Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982 and proceeding with a series of political and cultural events that mark the decade that followed, such as the 1985 appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party; the 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant; the 1987 landing in Red Square of a small plane operated by the young German, Mathias Rust; the 1988 start of the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from Afghanistan; all the way to December 1991, when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus signed the Belavezha Accords, putting an end to the Soviet Union. This sequence concludes with a string of statements that show postcommunist Russia in a stark light: "The Soviet Union collapsed. The national economy has been stolen from the people through 'privatization' that leads to the rise of a class of oligarchs. The population has suffered massive impoverishment. Extreme forms of nationalism and religious obscurantism have become widely popular. Civil wars and terrorism have afflicted large parts of the former Soviet Union. Economic collapse has led to a severe decline in health care, education, scientific research, and culture. Neoliberalism has triumphed throughout the world. The interests of the majority have been sacrificed to the needs of speculative transnational capital." The section of the installation entitled "What Might Have Happened" presents an alternative vision of the recent past: "The Soviet Union is transformed into a federative state based on broad autonomy for republics, districts, and cities; Workers take full control of all factories and enterprises; All political authority is transferred to factory and local councils (soviets); The west undergoes its own version of perestroika. Inspired by the processes under-

way in a renewed Soviet Union, western societies carry out a series of radical social-democratic reforms; Governments fully disarm and unite to create a fund to ensure the future of the planet; Socialist culture enjoys a rebirth worldwide" (Chto Delat? 2009–10).² The second and third items on this "what if" list had already occurred in Yugoslavia during the 1950s and the 1960s with the establishment of workers' self-management as the official doctrine of its political economy. *Perestroika Timeline* concludes precisely with the year in which the wars of succession after the dissolution of Yugoslavia commenced, putting an end to any hope for the survival of this kind of self-management. By the time *Perestroika Timeline* reached museums in Europe and the United States, Yugoslav self-management was buried under two decades of war and transition to capitalist economy.

With the end of the Cold War, the discourse of Yugoslav self-management moved from international policymaking forums to alternative art exhibitions and publications. Self-management, in its multiple historical and contemporary forms, was the theme of Austrian artist Oliver Ressler's video installation *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies*. First exhibited in 2003 at ŠKUC gallery in Ljubljana, and subsequently in some twenty galleries and museums across Europe, *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* features videotaped statements by scholars, artists, and activists engaged in the study and practice of "alternative economics." In his rationale for the installation, the artist states that the main aim of the project is to address the gap that opened up with the "loss of a counter model for capitalism" after the collapse of "socialism in its real, existing form." According to Ressler, this "thematic installation . . . focuses on diverse concepts and models for alternative economies and societies, which all share a rejection of the capitalist system of rule."³ *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* started with five videos and grew over the years to sixteen videotaped accounts on subjects that range from current practices, such as "Inclusive Democracy" (by Takis Fotopoulos) and "Caring Labor" (by Nancy Folbre), to historical precedents, such as Alain Dalotel's report on the Paris Commune and Todor Kuljić's on workers' self-management in Yugoslavia.

One such alternative economic practice is the recuperated factory movement in Argentina, which emerged in the months and years after the breakdown of Argentine banking system in December 2001. Marina A. Sitrin, the chronicler of this movement, points to political and cultural sources of the Argentine workers' movement. The most significant of them is certainly HIJOS, Hijos y Hijos por Identidad y Justicia y contra el Olvido y Silencio (Daughters and Sons for Identification and Justice and against Silence and Forgetting), which during the 1990s staged a series of public actions that

came to be known as *estrache*. In these public demonstrations with strong elements of street theater, which attracted from a few dozen to a few hundred participants, HIJOS called for public indictment and prosecution of perpetrators of political crimes that took place during the “Dirty War” (1976–83). Collectivity and equality are the main organizing principles of *estrache*. Unlike Bread and Puppet Theater, which bases its activism on principles similar to that of HIJOS, but hinges its existence on the powerful personality of its founder and leader, Peter Schumann, *estraches* never had an individual leader or organizer. Instead, the members of HIJOS insist on collective decision-making, development, organization, and execution of its public actions. While organizing these events in order to bring to public light war criminals who went unpunished, HIJOS at the same time set up a pattern of self-organization that laid-off workers embraced during the process of recuperation of closed factories and establishment of workers’ collectives. As Sitrin points out, apart from autonomy and equality (“horizontalism”), *autogestion* became one of the main principles of the recuperated factory movement. Collaborative and symbiotic relationships between workers’ collectives and art groups became one of the staple characteristics of the recuperated factory movement.⁴

In one way or another, all of these art initiatives—*Perestroika Timeline*, *Alternative Economics*, *Alternative Societies*, and *HIJOS*—are indicative of a “social turn” in making and exhibiting art that has taken place in Europe and the United States since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This highly participatory and performance-based form of artistic practice conceives of art and its institutions as uniquely positioned to address social issues and generate solutions to local political and economic problems. The best-known recent example of this kind of art is probably Tania Bruguera’s *Immigrant Movement International*. In 2011, this Cuban American artist used funding from the New York art organization Creative Time and the Queens Museum of Art to set up her art project in a storefront office on Roosevelt Avenue in Corona, Queens, far from the hubs of the New York art world in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Bruguera’s “installation” consisted of the artist and her assistants offering undocumented immigrants a range of services that were unavailable to them elsewhere, such as legal advice, computer lessons, and health classes, to name a few. This work radically challenges the artist-audience relationship: here, the artist is a facilitator of a process in which there is no clear separation between producers and receivers of art. What qualifies this as an “art project” is not the production of tangible works or discrete events (performances), but a process that rejects all trappings of anything “aesthetic” in order to make room for art as a space for

activism and education. If, as Claire Doherty puts it, in socially engaged art the artist turns “from object-maker to service provider” (2004:9), then we should recognize that one of the key aspects of the “social turn” in art during the first decade of the twenty-first century consisted in artists’ reappropriation of art funding. In putting together *Immigrant Movement International*, Bruguera used grants she received to produce a “work” for an audience that would never have benefited from this money had it been used for art exhibited in a Manhattan art gallery. Pablo Helguera, one of the most prominent advocates of this new curatorial and educational practice, recognizes direct and actual, rather than symbolic, social engagement as one of the defining characteristics of what he calls “socially engaged art,” or SEA. “SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved. SEA depends on actual—not imagined or hypothetical—social action” (Helguera 2011:8). According to Helguera, the other defining characteristic of SEA is its anticapitalist stance: “Socially engaged art is specifically at odds with the capitalist market infrastructure of the art world: it does not fit well in the traditional collecting practices of contemporary art, and the prevailing cult of the individual artist is problematic for those whose goal is to work with others, generally in collaborative projects with democratic ideals” (4). Emphasis on communicative rather than representational action often lends these kinds of work overtones of educational and communal, rather than aesthetic, work.⁵

When it comes to historical sources of social practice in art, there is a general agreement that it hails from the politicized avant-garde between the world wars, reemerging in happenings in the 1950s and 1960s, in conceptual process art and institutional critique during the 1970s, and in relational art in the 1990s.⁶ While most critics and scholars who have written about recent social art practice tend to privilege its historical precedents in Western Europe and the United States, in her influential book *Artificial Hells* Claire Bishop offers a more inclusive and balanced account of participatory and socially engaged art in Western and Eastern Europe (and beyond). Milan Knížák’s actions during the 1960s and 1970s, and Moscow conceptualists’ performances in the late 1970s and 1980s, which Bishop discusses in a chapter entitled, significantly, “The Social under Socialism,” have their place in the history of conceptual, participatory, and performance art of the late twentieth century. Performance actions in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (and here we could add Hungary and Poland) were clandestine interventions within oppressive political regimes that actively proscribed this kind of art and withdrew from it any kind of institu-

tional support. The problem here is not in chronology or geography, but in a blanket understanding of politics in the so-called postsocialist era.

Alienation Effects disturbs this clear scheme of dissident art in the former East and critical art in the former West. Perched on the Cold War geopolitical, economic, and cultural fault lines, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–91) is an important focal point for understanding art practices of the late twentieth century, not only as an exception to the generalized divide between capitalist West and socialist East, but as a prism for discerning fine-grained structures of artists' engagement with the "social" that escape broad ideological divisions. In this book I am not concerned only with representational, or as Helguera has it "symbolic," art, but also with "actual" artistic practice (2011:8). In this analysis, art as a social product is inseparable from art as a social relation. This closeness of aesthetic practice and social organization is particularly important for the study of performance in Yugoslavia. For a brief moment in the aftermath of 1968, and within the confines of state-funded art institutions in Yugoslavia, the protagonists and supporters of conceptualism saw process art and self-management as inextricable, thus bringing in the closest possible proximity two poles of a broad semantic range of "performance": on one end, an artistic practice largely seen as "unproductive," and on the other, industrial production. However limited and short-lived, this idea of integral social art practice did not emerge in opposition to the art market or state censorship; instead, it claimed industrial democracy at home and conceptual art practices from abroad as its dual origin. In *Alienation Effects* I trace the main cultural, political, and economic currents that went into the making of this moment, and its subsequent unraveling. This arch is inseparable from the history of the second Yugoslavia.⁷

In his videotaped statement for Ressler's *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies*, sociologist Todor Kuljić correctly distinguishes between industrial and political democracy in Yugoslavia, a split that defined (and doomed) Yugoslav self-management: "The decisions in the production plants were made independently; the workers' councils were sovereign. But, on the other hand, they were under the auspices of the ruling party. One should differentiate several issues, those where the workers' councils were sovereign, and the others, where they were dependent on the decrees from above" (Kuljić 2003:n.p.). Yugoslavia was the first state ever to introduce self-management as an official form of industrial organization and an integral part of its economic and political system; at the same time, self-management remained historically tied to a whole spectrum of political ideas associated with labor movements. As a result, attempts to define, his-

toricize, and theorize self-management in Yugoslavia and abroad, primarily in France, have been tangled and often contradictory. Consider, for example, a definition of self-management from the *Encyclopedia of Self-Management* (*Enciklopedija samoupravljanja*):⁸

Self-management, as the main *principle* of social organization of Yugoslavia, is (a) a system of social relations based on social ownership of the means of production; (b) a mode of production in which the means of production and management are given back to the subjects of associated labor, that is, a social relation of production motivated by individual and common interests; (c) a social relation and a system based on man's sense of belonging to the basic values of the society, to qualified and responsible decision-making . . . ; the emergence of a new social organization in which, truth be told, not everyone can decide about everything, but which makes possible responsible decision-making under conditions of interdependency, mutual social responsibility, and solidarity, and which leads to the liberation of man. (1979:876)

This lengthy definition goes on to list the withering away of the state (item *e*), the rights of man (item *f*), and nonalignment (item *g*) as the main components and outcomes of self-management in Yugoslavia. Compare this definition of self-management to Henri Lefebvre's take on the same concept:

The principal contradiction that *autogestion* introduces and stimulates is its own contradiction with the State. In essence, *autogestion* calls the State into question as a constraining force erected above society as a whole, capturing and demanding the rationality that is inherent to social relations (to social practice). Once aimed at ground level, in a fissure, this humble plant comes to threaten the huge state edifice. It is well known to Men of State; *autogestion* tends to reorganize the State as a function of its development, which is to say it tends to engender the State's withering away. *Autogestion* revives all the contradictions at the heart of the State, and notably the supreme contradiction, which can be expressed only in general, philosophical terms, between the reason of the State and human reason, which is to say, liberty. ([1966] 2009:147)⁹

If self-management offers a mechanism for political and economic emancipation, Yugoslav ideologues were trying to legislate that emancipa-

tion while thinkers on the French left were calling for its implementation. While often opposed, both sides claimed the same historical legacy of self-management, which goes back to Marx and Engels's earliest considerations of workers' self-organization in their writings on the Paris Commune. Another rich vein of arguments for self-management within Marxist political and economic thought comes from the early twentieth-century revolutions in Russia and Central Europe, most prominently in the writings of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci. No less important were social thinkers who departed radically from the "classics" of Marxism, such as anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and utopian socialist Charles Fourier.¹⁰ Discrepancies between genealogies of self-management in Yugoslavia and France are as significant as their broad areas of overlap: whereas in Yugoslav histories of self-management various forms of self-organization among communist partisan guerillas during World War II play a prominent role, they are, of course, rarely mentioned in histories of self-management written outside of Yugoslavia; and conversely, while ideas of nonleftist forerunners of self-management such as Anton Pannekoek are regularly acknowledged in non-Yugoslav sources, they are completely omitted from Yugoslav histories of self-management.¹¹ However, historical circumstances are just as important as theoretical sources for the general turn toward self-management in the mid-twentieth century. Stalinization of the USSR in the 1930s transformed the landscape of the Left in the aftermath of World War II. While initially allied with the Soviet Union, in 1948 the Communist leaders of Yugoslavia came in conflict with their senior partner. Once it became clear that the schism was irrevocable, the Yugoslav party tried to put together an alternative model of socialism, taking Marx's idea of the free association of workers as its starting premise.¹² The Communist Party of Yugoslavia's top leadership took responsibility for introducing, developing, and maintaining a self-managing system of labor organization in Yugoslavia. At the same time, demands for self-management in France came from fringe political groups on the left that rejected the politics of the French Communist Party, which maintained close ties with the Soviet Union.

Significantly, both in France and in Yugoslavia, the idea of self-management was informed by experience of interwar avant-garde artistic associations, and carried forward either by former members of avant-garde groups or by their self-appointed heirs. The integration of artistic and social practice, characteristic of post-World War II continental Europe, emerged as the most viable alternative to the doctrinaire socialism that the Kremlin imposed on its acknowledged and unacknowledged zones of in-

fluence. In France, the legacy of surrealism was particularly influential among such groups as Situationist International, and for journals such as *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, as well as for individual thinkers, among them Lefebvre. Although not as easy to discern, this same legacy helped the establishment of self-management in Yugoslavia. During the 1920s and 1930s a robust surrealist group was active in Belgrade. Unlike the French surrealists who, to use André Thirion's phrase, remained "revolutionaries without revolution," many Belgrade surrealists joined the communist underground resistance, and some of them climbed to the very top of the Yugoslav communist guerilla army. After World War II, and especially in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union, most of the former surrealists rose to high positions within the Party, state, and cultural institutions. The highest ranking among them was Koča Popović, a wartime general in the partisan army, who served as the chief of the Yugoslav General Staff from 1948 to 1953 and as foreign minister from 1953 to 1965. During this period, he paved the way for the Yugoslav foreign policy of the "third way": self-management in domestic and nonalignment in international politics.¹³ In 1931, as a member of the surrealist group in Belgrade, Popović coauthored the book *An Outline for a Phenomenology of the Irrational* (*Nacrt za jednu fenomenologiju iracionalnog*) with Marko Ristić, one of the signatories of "The Second Manifesto of Surrealism," which states, famously, that "everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions" (in Breton [1930] 1969:123). Yugoslav doctrines of self-management and nonalignment seem to extend this principle to the positions held by the East and the West regarding the Cold War, to communism and capitalism, and to command and market economies.¹⁴

For a short period following World War II (1945–48), Yugoslavia went through a massive economic, political, and social transformation. By means of nationalization, expropriation, reorganization, and targeted investment, the entire economy was restructured from a market economy to a planned economy (that is, from a profit-based economy to a command economy). In the arts, this meant not only nationalizing museums, galleries, and schools, but also establishing artists' associations, launching guild publications, adopting new education models, and radically changing the modes of interface between art and the public. Visual art was no longer available only in galleries; public squares, buildings, factories, and all means of public transportation became the space in which to display art. The same was true for literature, which was no longer confined to books and literary journals;

the physical media for literature now included workers' papers, pamphlets, and public displays. Theater moved from the stage to factories, streets, village squares, and stadiums. This applied not only to the mode of reception, but also to art's mode of production. In order to celebrate industrialization, art was now produced in construction sites, factories, schools, and fields. In short, this redirection of the arts amounted to a wholesale importation of socialist realism. During the 1930s and 1940s, this art form evolved in the Soviet Union into an elaborate style that privileged naturalistic over formalist and abstract representation. Even more importantly, this art form was deeply integrated into an immense cultural apparatus that included art institutions, artists' associations, agencies for funding the arts, systems of material and symbolic rewards for individual artists, and routinized channels of interaction between culture and politics. This "style," then, is an intricate part of a vast segment of society integral to the functioning of its entire economy. Any consideration of socialist realism merely as a style and not as a vital part of a political economy is incomplete. Socialist realism, like opera in the baroque, was engineered from scratch with a precisely defined purpose and place within society: to supplement "intangible" segments of the economy that were lost with the transfer to a command economy, such as worker motivation, competition, and the sense of tangible results in a system of production in which (at least declaratively) personal gain was subordinated to societal well-being. In 1945, the political economy of socialist realism was implemented in Yugoslavia together with a single-party political doctrine and a command economy. Socialist realism as a "style" survived Yugoslavia's 1948 break with the USSR, but only for little more than a year. In his December 1949 address to the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences, Edvard Kardelj, a high Party official who eventually became the leading ideologue of Yugoslav self-management, signaled the departure from socialist realist style by criticizing the Soviet model and inviting Yugoslav scholars and artists "to be free in their creativity. Precisely because of the lack of conflicting opinions and scholarly discussion, there is a deprivation of progress in science, and there is no successful struggle against reactionary ideas and dogmatism in science" (1949:1). Although this was not a decree, the message was clear. As soon as the following year, in major art shows socialist realist paintings made room for works that experimented with abstraction.

The presence of former surrealists and other pre-World War II literary and artistic figures placed in high positions of culture, most notably Miroslav Krleža in Zagreb and Marko Ristić in Belgrade, established strong and sustained institutional support for an idea of art that was much broader

than the “official art” in the Soviet Union and countries under its influence. In Yugoslavia, this alternative idea of art never completely replaced socialist realism. Instead, the two perspectives were forced into an uneasy coexistence in which art practice was free of socialist realist aesthetic constraints, while art institutions remained organized according to principles established immediately after World War II. Beginning in the early 1950s, art in Yugoslavia followed two tracks that existed side by side: individualistic art and art that celebrated socialism, manifested, for example, in the simultaneous production of films exploring the dark side of Yugoslav society and World War II spectacles, of experimental literature and works celebrating the communist guerilla struggle, and of plays inspired by a heroic past and festivals of cutting-edge experimental theater from around the world. In the early 1960s, literary critic Sveta Lukić recognized the mechanisms of this regulated permissiveness, which he described as “socialist aestheticism.” According to Lukić, Yugoslav critics and writers were already engaged in an active critique of socialist realist literature in the early 1950s, years before their colleagues in Poland and leftist writers in France and other Western European countries. The rejection of vulgar politicization of art as one of the main tenets of socialist realism led to the negation of *any* political content in literary works. As Lukić observed, “Yugoslav literary critics stressed that art has no ulterior, nonartistic functions; it does not serve interior, momentary needs and interests.” As a result,

The very neutrality of many contemporary works led me to conclude that aestheticism created works which suit out bureaucracy even though they need not like them. If we were to develop a social analysis further we would find that such art in fact expresses the essence of this kind of bureaucracy. Socialist aestheticism has thus functioned negatively as a program for a politically loyal, neutral, aestheticizing, literature which lacks a larger public. Its positive justification lies in the fact that it has produced some works of merit. ([1968] 1972:175)

As with literature, so with visual arts. Art historian Lazar Trifunović, an early advocate of Art Informel, expanded Lukić’s analysis to painting, asserting that “aestheticism was ‘modern’ enough to appease the general complex of ‘openness toward the world,’ traditional enough . . . to appease the new bourgeois taste nurtured by social conformism, and inert enough to fit into the myth of the happy and unique community; it had everything that was necessary to blend into the politically projected image of society”

(1990:124). The positive justification, we may add, of this approach to visual arts was that Yugoslavia was the first socialist country after World War II to get a museum of modern art, the Museum of Contemporary Art (Muzej savremene umetnosti) in Belgrade, dedicated exclusively to collecting and exhibiting twentieth-century abstract and nonrealist art.¹⁵ While the formal properties of socialist realism disappeared from painting, literature, and other arts, socialist realism as a political economy was never completely eliminated or replaced by a different organizational and funding model. Because of that, the arts in Yugoslavia suffered from a split between their phenomenal appearance and their functional support in the same way in which Yugoslav self-management endured irreconcilable contradictions between industrial democracy and political autocracy.

Over the course of four decades, Yugoslavian leadership failed to establish a functioning political economy of self-management. In fact, Yugoslavia's entire history followed a path of incomplete, erratic, uneven, ambiguous, and ceaseless disintegration of the political economy of socialist realism. From its inception in the early 1950s, self-management was the main mechanism of Yugoslavia's transition from a "totalitarian" to a "liberal" society. One of the common methodological mistakes in scholarly works about the second Yugoslavia is to lump its economic history under the general designation of "self-management" without any regard for the changes this socioeconomic order underwent over the decades. So an outline of the main periods of Yugoslav self-management is in order, especially as this book takes its general structure from this periodization. For the sake of clarity, the history of Yugoslav self-management can be divided into three distinct periods.

The first phase (1949–63) began with the "Instructions for the Formation and Operation of Workers' Councils in State Industrial Enterprises" ("Uputstvo za osnivanje i rad radničkih saveta državnih privrednih preduzeća"), which the Yugoslav federal government issued in December 1949. By the next summer the government had already formed workers' councils in a select number of factories. In June 1950, the federal parliament adopted the Basic Law on the Management of State Economic Enterprises by Workers' Collectives (Osnovni zakon o upravljanju državnim privrednim preduzećima i višim privrednim udruženjima od strane radnih kolektiva). This initial phase of self-management, which was codified in the constitution of 1953, was marked by attempts to depart from a Soviet-model command economy, established during the period of Yugoslavia's close affiliation with the USSR (1945–48). While there were significant steps made toward decentralizing the economy, some important functions such

as investment decisions were still controlled by the federal government and its ministries. During this period Yugoslavia joined international economic markets and, beginning in 1953, enjoyed spectacular industrial growth: in 1953 the rate of industrial production went up by 111%; in 1954, by 126%; in 1955, 147%; and in 1956, 162% (Bilandžić and Tonković 1974:51). At this point, it was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

The second period (1963–74) was inaugurated with another new constitution, followed by massive economic reform two years later. This was preceded by a slump in growth in the second half of the 1950s, and it comes as no surprise that the authorities proclaimed the reinvigoration of the economy as the main goal of this reform. With the 1963 constitution, the last vestiges of centralized economic planning were rescinded, including the regulation of prices and income. This amounted to the introduction of market socialism, and both the good and the bad sides of a market economy were evident almost immediately. Industrial growth rose (aided, in part, by the country's reorientation from heavy to consumer industries), but so did spending and inflation. During this time Yugoslavia experienced a noticeable growth in its workforce; unemployment was remedied in the short term by further liberalization of travel and arrangements with Western European nations that regulated the export of laborers. Two important outcomes of the 1963 constitution and the subsequent 1965 economic reforms were the expansion of self-management to all spheres of work, including service industries, and the limitation of the League of Communists' influence on decision-making in factories and other business enterprises. In short, it was a period of liberalization in all spheres of economic and social life in Yugoslavia. This was particularly evident in open discussions of economic and political inequality, which had their most public expression in workers' strikes, in the student rebellion of June 1968, and in the mass national movement in Croatia in 1971–72.

The third period was 1974–89. The last sweeping organizational overhaul of Yugoslav society started with the constitutional amendments of 1971, which initiated an increase of federalism in Yugoslavia by giving more sovereign rights to the constitutive republics. It became a common point of nationalist historiography (especially in Serbia) to blame this new structure of federalism, the most important feature of which was the near-sovereign status of the autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina, for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Ethnic strife during the 1990s occluded the fact that the constitution of 1974 introduced much deeper changes to the concept of self-management than it did to federalism. On the most basic level, the constitution changed the very status of labor by replacing self-

management with a new legal term: “associated labor” (*udruženi rad*).¹⁶ Following this fundamental change, the basic organizational unit of labor was no longer a factory or an enterprise, but a Basic Organization of Associated Labor (Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada, or OOUR). The aim was to transform the political economy of the country: for instance, accumulation was now renamed “past labor” (*minuli rad*), and all profit was termed “income” (*dohodak*). A new delegate system was introduced into the system of political representation, which was both territory and production based. Relationships between OOURs were regulated through a complex system of contracts, a permutation of self-management that was commonly referred to as a “contractual economy.” This system was codified in the Associated Labor Law (Zakon o udruženom radu), which was implemented soon after the constitution, in 1976. Even the drafters of the system of associated labor—its conceptual mastermind Edvard Kardelj among them—admitted that it had many glitches and was a work in progress. This awkward structure proved utterly incapable of withstanding the loss of Kardelj, its founder, and Josip Broz Tito, its charismatic leader (in 1979 and 1980, respectfully), a leadership vacuum that was compounded by the 1982 debt crisis. The undoing of Yugoslavia over the course of this decade was in great part tied to the implosion of the system of associated labor. In this book I argue that associated labor was a deeply conservative turn away from self-management, and that this devolution led to the bloody unraveling of the country. To put it in a more straightforward way, associated labor was a strategy for defeating integral self-management. In order to underline this ideological distinction, in the third chapter of the book I use “associated labor” to designate Yugoslav self-management in its last, decadent, phase. So while *autogestion*, self-management, and associated labor are related terms, they are by no means interchangeable.

At the center of *Alienation Effects* is the “planetary” event of 1968. In France, students and workers demanded *autogestion* as a viable alternative to capitalism; in Yugoslavia, students called for the consistent implementation of self-management, which an accumulation of hypocrisies threatened to turn into an ideological chimera. They called it *integral self-management*. In both cases, they found what they were asking for, if not in a revolutionary transformation of entire society, then in forms of collectivity that emerged spontaneously through their immanent political action. In the case of integral self-management, a collective effort is facilitated through solidarity and inspiration instead of through hierarchy and command. I found exemplary instances of integral self-management in situations I witnessed in antigovernment demonstrations that shook in Belgrade at the

outset of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s; I saw young students picking up brooms to sweep the Hall of Heroes (Sala heroja), the largest auditorium at the School of Philology, after mass teach-ins during a fifty-day strike at Belgrade University in May and June 1992, in which faculty and students demanded President Slobodan Milošević's resignation; at one point during the same marathon strike, hundreds of protest marchers who faced off with riot police in a narrow street in front of the president's villa, instantly and with no command or coordination removed their shirts, taking the police by surprise with this sudden exposure of their vulnerability and making them reluctant to use batons on naked flesh. When I spoke of this episode to an old *soixante-huitard*, he retorted that the same strategy emerged spontaneously among protesters *back in the day*: it worked well until "somewhere in Italy" the police came up with a counterstrategy of using red-colored liquid in their water cannons: the sight of bare skin covered with "blood" made students panic and disperse. This particular instance of subversion and appropriation epitomizes the afterlife of political movements that emerged from 1968 in Yugoslavia and elsewhere, which was marked as much by co-option as it was by repression. At the same time, it left the important legacy of integral self-management that survived attempts to outlaw or codify self-management. It is a tangible manifestation of an intuition for social justice that survives until the present.

ALIENATION

If periodization of self-management reads like a legal history of Yugoslavia, it is because it was precisely that.¹⁷ Not a single alteration to this ongoing experiment was initiated from "below," by organized workers. However, Yugoslavia's liberalization by executive order created room for vigorous ideological negotiations outside of political institutions, which were firmly in the hands of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In many of these debates, alienation emerged as a central issue.¹⁸ Why alienation and not, say, freedom of speech and of political association? A short answer could be that the foundational ideological premise of the second Yugoslavia was that, in general, socialism is a more advanced sociopolitical order than capitalism, and in particular, that a single-party system is a better solution for Yugoslavia than a multiparty parliamentary democracy, which failed miserably in the interwar period and which the new leadership routinely blamed for the country's bloody demise in World War II. Still, any answer to the question about the importance of the theory of

alienation for Yugoslav self-management is incomplete if we don't take into consideration its centrality for the emancipatory politics in socialist Yugoslavia: to begin with, it refers to the emancipation of the working classes, and then by extension, to emancipation of Yugoslavia from a doctrinarian and vulgar understanding of this emancipation, ossified in the Stalinist Marxist doctrines of "diamat" (dialectical materialism) and "histmat" (historical materialism).

The first scholarly works on alienation in Yugoslavia coincided with the publication of Croatian translation of Marx's *Early Writings* in 1953. In Yugoslavia as elsewhere, the publication of *Early Writings* not only provided scholars with an insight into Marx's intellectual development and range, but also opened a whole new dimension of Marx's thought. Unlike the first generation of Marxists, who based their theoretical writings and political doctrines on Marx's mature writings on the economy, primarily *Capital*, and on Friedrich Engels's late works (such as *Anti-Dühring*), the second generation of Marxists, such as Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, and Antonio Gramsci, to name some, was informed by Marx's more philosophical reflections from his early works, some of which were published between the 1910s and 1930s. His critique of Hegel's notion of alienation gave them the tools to depart from the dogmatic Marxism that dominated Communist parties in the USSR and across Europe, while still remaining close to Marx.

In "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" of 1844, Marx takes labor as the primary model of alienation:

The product of labour is labour embodied and made material in an object, it is the *objectification* of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labour appears as a *loss of reality* for the worker, objectification as *loss of and bondage to the object*, and appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation* [*Entäusserung*]. (Marx 1975:324)

As many commentators have pointed out, *Entäusserung* is the concept that Marx takes over from Hegel, who uses it to designate externalization or objectification of certain human qualities. Along with this Hegelian term, Marx also introduces *Entfremdung* to describe that which is foreign:

But estrangement [*Entfremdung*] manifests itself not only in the result, but also in the *act of production*, within the *activity of production* itself. How could the product of the worker's activity confront him as something alien if it were not for the fact that in the act of produc-

tion he was estranging himself from himself? After all, the product is simply the résumé of the activity, of the production. So if the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. The estrangement of the object of labour merely summarizes the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself. (326)

In other words, labor is a figure of alienation that becomes a hallmark of all production of life under industrial capitalism: "Man, who has realized that in law, politics, etc., he leads an alienated life, leads his true human life in this alienated life as such. Self-affirmation, self-confirmation in *contradiction* with itself and with the knowledge and the nature of the object is therefore true *knowledge* and true *life*" (393). This generalization of the concept of alienation enabled the second generation of Marxists to expand it from labor and private property to other spheres of life under capitalism, from law, to politics, to commerce, to art.

Here, of course, of special interest is the work of Bertolt Brecht because of the central importance that *Verfremdung*, a concept similar, but not identical, to Marx's *Entfremdung*, has in his theater. Brecht recognized the *Verfremdungseffekt* in Shakespeare as well as in traditional Chinese theater, and to him this indicated that the strategy of making strange was inherent to theater as a medium. In *Short Organon* he wrote that whereas "the old V-effects completely remove what is being represented from the spectator's intervention, turning it into something unalterable," "the new kinds of *Verfremdung*" he started exploring in the late 1920s "were supposed to remove only from those incidents that can be influenced socially the stamp of familiarity that protects them against intervention today" ([1949] 2015:242). In Walter Benjamin's interpretation of the term, performance "uncovers [social] conditions" by "*making them strange (verfremden)*" (Benjamin 1973:18). This was one of the first attempts at a linguistic clarification of Brecht's central theoretical term. In a short article, "Alienation According to Marx and According to Brecht," published almost three decades later, Yugoslav dramaturg and theater director Hugo Klajn focused on the prefixes that Marx and Brecht attach to the word *fremden*, pointing out that *ent-*commonly designates "separation and distancing," while the prefix *ver-*"indicates, among other things, a transformation." Therefore, Klajn suggests that in his discussions of *Entfremdung* Marx emphasizes "a condition or a quality that results from an action" such as "alienation of labor or commodity," and Brecht employs *Verfremdung* to designate "a process, or the very performance of an action" such as "actor's estrangement" (Klajn

1966:n.p.). Brecht became a major force in post-World War II theater in both Western and Eastern Europe through his work with the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin and their triumphant excursions to Paris and London. His impact on the cultural scene in Yugoslavia was indirect but no less significant. While a string of Brecht's plays were performed in theaters across Yugoslavia, starting with the 1947 production of *Señora Carrar's Rifles* (*Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*) in Zagreb, much less visible but certainly more influential was the adoption of Brechtian ideas through the work of his prewar associate Oto Bihalji-Merin, who in the aftermath of World War II exerted a quiet but significant influence on cultural politics in Yugoslavia. After Yugoslavia's breakup with the Soviet Union, which resulted, among other things, in the dethroning of socialist realist "style," especially in painting, in the late 1940s, Bihalji-Merin was one of the backers of socialist aestheticism. On the one hand, Brecht's expansive notion of realism, with which Bihalji-Merin became acquainted in the early 1930s in Berlin, offered a valid alternative to socialist realism. On the other hand, it opened avenues of exchange between aesthetics and politics that went beyond theater proper to inform a wide range of artistic activities. This displacement of alienation from the proletarian class to culture in general was characteristic of the third generation of Marxists that in the aftermath of World War II mounted a critique of production relations that had advanced beyond the conditions of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism.

Herbert Marcuse was certainly one of the most influential theoreticians of alienation from this generation. In his writings from the 1950s he used Freudian concepts such as repression and the superego to provide a psychological underpinning for his Marxian analysis of alienation: "The reality principle asserts itself through a shrinking of the conscious ego in a significant direction: the autonomous development of the instincts is frozen, and their pattern is fixed at the childhood level" (Marcuse 1955:33). He claimed that this automatization of somatic behaviors comes directly from autorepression. The most common form of this repressive system is labor, which in the industrialized world becomes inseparable from productivity and efficiency. If, as Marcuse says, the "reality principle sustains the organism in the external world," then the "performance principle [is] the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*" within the structure of industrial capitalism (35). The performance principle is an extension of the Marxian analysis of alienation beyond the crude labor relations of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. In advanced industrial societies, the subject of intense commodification is no longer what Marx called "actual labor" but the "capacity to work," or in other words, the totality of a "laborer's

life" (Marx 1971, 36). Capitalism latches onto a wide and diverse range of "work" available to each individual. It extends beyond labor time to include periods of rest and enjoyment. The reality principle structures not only "labor power," but also libidinal energies, which it "represses" into normative forms of sexuality. In this way, Marcuse extends the notion of alienation from labor relations to all social relations an individual establishes within a capitalist society. Consequently, he argued that the path toward disalienation passes through an enlightened regression of sorts. "With the emergence of a non-repressive reality principle, with the abolition of the surplus-repression necessitated by the performance principle," the processes of the "division of labor" in "societal relations" and "the taboo on the reification of the body" in "libidinal relations" would be reoriented and loosened (1955:201). Western readers might find it surprising that in the 1960s Marcuse sought practical affirmation of his critique of industrial capitalism not in Californian counterculture but in Yugoslav self-management.

In Yugoslavia, the theory of alienation enabled nondoctrinaire philosophers to offer a Marxist critique of a society that embraced Marxism as its main ideological principle. This local variant of "humanist Marxism" close to critical theory offered the most viable critique of diamat in Yugoslavia. Veselin Golubović writes in his book *With Marx against Stalin: Yugoslav Philosophical Critique of Stalinism, 1950–1960* (*S Marxom protiv Staljina: Jugoslovenska filozofska kritika staljinizma 1950–1960*) that there were two distinct lines of critique of Stalinist Marxism that emerged in Yugoslavia in the aftermath of 1948: one line was "dogmatic and declarative," while the other was creative, humanistic, and inherently Marxist. The first never departed from the schematics of diamat, while the other found its inspiration and source of legitimization in Marx's early writings. The point of distinction between these two currents of philosophical Marxism in Yugoslavia is best reflected in their attitudes toward alienation: whereas the first denied the importance and even existence of theory of alienation in Marx's mature works (in this, it was strikingly similar to Soviet Marxists whom it formally rejected), the other used alienation as one of the foundational moments in the establishment of an elaborate and diverse brand of critical theory. Moreover, the "humanist Marxists" used the notion of alienation in their critique of Stalinism in philosophy, which they denounced as "self-alienated Marxism" (Golubović 1985:44). Throughout the 1950s, the vast majority of theoretical statements on the subject of alienation came from the circle of young philosophers and sociologists from Zagreb, who were joined by their colleagues from Belgrade and Sarajevo. They dislodged dia-

mat as the dominant form of Marxism in Yugoslavia at Bled Congress in 1960, and a few years later they established the Korčula Summer School on an island off the Croatian coast and the journal *Praxis*, published by the Society of Philosophers of Croatia and edited by a group of philosophers from Zagreb University. Very quickly, the summer school and the journal gained prominence in professional circles both in Yugoslavia and abroad. Marcuse and Lefebvre participated in the first summer school session in 1964; Marcuse and many other foreign guests kept coming back and published regularly in *Praxis*, which quickly became one of the most prestigious Marxist scholarly journals in Europe. Respect for the so-called Praxis group, a loosely organized group of mostly like-minded philosophers from across Yugoslavia, quickly spread beyond European philosophical circles. As soon as 1964, Erich Fromm organized in New York a symposium on socialist humanism, and a year later he published with Doubleday an edited volume featuring papers from the symposium (Fromm 1965). Alongside other prominent philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse, Lucien Goldmann, and Bertrand Russell, the symposium and the volume featured a strong lineup of Yugoslav Praxis philosophers: Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek, Predrag Vranicki, Veljko Korać, Mihailo Marković, and Danilo Pejović. Another confirmation of the esteem that Yugoslav philosophers marshaled among their Western colleagues came only a couple of years later, when Paul Edwards invited Gajo Petrović to contribute an entry on alienation to the eight-volume *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.¹⁹

Since the *Praxis* group was philosophically closest to the Frankfurt School, this approach was the most prominent among Yugoslav philosophers. However, this interpretation of alienation was by no means exclusive and without alternatives. During the 1960s, there were several competing concepts of alienation vying for dominance on the left. Apart from the Frankfurt School's historical interpretation of alienation, equally influential was Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist formulation of this concept. The reception of Sartre in Yugoslavia was in great part determined by vicissitudes of his political itinerary in the early years of the Cold War: for example, while in his 1950 book *Existentialism and Decadence* (*Egzistencijalizam i dekadencija*) Rudi Supek criticizes him for his adherence to the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, only a few years later Boris Zihlerl in a similarly titled *On Existentialism and Other Contemporary Phenomena of Ideological Decadence* (*O egzistencijalizmu i drugim savremenim pojavama idejne dekadencije*, 1955) admonishes him for his support for the USSR in the early 1950s.²⁰ As both Sartre's and Yugoslavia's positions with respect to the USSR changed during the course of the decade, the French

philosopher's books were translated and his plays performed.²¹ In what later became recognizable as a well-established practice of policing its own theoretical terrain, in its first issue *Praxis* published a long article on Sartre. In the beginning of his article Danilo Pejović, one of the journal's founders, offered a defense of Sartre from his orthodox Marxist critics in Yugoslavia, only to conclude with a scathing critique from the position of critical theory: "For now, he is an existentialist who wants to be a Marxist, too. Is that impossible? Isn't there Marxism and 'Marxism': the Marxism of the early Lukács, Adorno, and Marcuse, and the 'Marxism' of Stalinist and post-Stalinist sycophants across the world who don't know much, so that the less they have to say, the noisier they get." Therefore, "Sartre's philosophy of existentialism is a typically French variant of radical nihilism, in which everything appears as a self-obliteration of Nothing: I am nothing, the other is nothing" (Pejović 1964:80). In the end, what Heidegger called "nihilation" emerges as a uniquely existentialist form of alienation, which Sartre memorably captured in his play *No Exit* (*Huis Clos*): Hell is other people.

This strong reaction to Sartre on the pages of *Praxis* speaks to the increasing presence of Sartrean existentialism in Yugoslav culture, from literature to theater to visual arts. Nor is it accidental that in his condemnation of distortions of Marxism, Pejović rushed to invoke Stalinist politicians and their poltroons among scholars. While from the very beginning it was clear that the intellectual edge was on the side of "Marxist humanists" gathered around *Praxis*, that did not mean that orthodox Marxism was swept from the philosophical and political scene in Yugoslavia. In fact, even in the heyday of the *Praxis* group in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their brand of revisionist Marxism was prevented from spreading through philosophy departments and from entering the League of Communists' ideological interpretation of Marxism. Even as the theory of alienation entered high school textbooks, the mainstream of ideologized Marxism in Yugoslavia remained rigid in its espousal of some orthodox Leninist views, such as that of the role of the Party in the struggle against alienation. Croatian philosopher Mislav Kukoč points out that the Party and *Praxis* Marxism coexisted, in part, because they both espoused the program of disalienation. While it is out of question that they approached the problem of alienation from different perspectives, they shared what Kukoč called the "utopian character" of disalienation (1988:619). According to him, traces of the religious background of the idea of alienation survives in all variants of Marxism, which casts the overcoming of alienation as its historical horizon, or translated into religious terms, as the *eschaton* (1985:652). Another common thread between

the official and revisionist Marxism in Yugoslavia was the belief that Yugoslav self-management offers proof that the process of disalienation can be initiated even within historical conditions of deep alienation.²²

Far from being unique for Yugoslavia, the dissipation of the theory of alienation started in the United States and Europe even as critical theory was reaching its peak in the 1960s. In the United States, this process was taking place through expansion of the idea of alienation and its transfer from philosophy to psychology and its gradual pathologization. In France, the theory of alienation was subjected to vigorous critique in philosophical debates on the left during the late 1960s and 1970s. The critics of alienation often pointed out the not only religious but plainly theological origins of this concept.

Paul wrote of the incarnation that Christ “was utterly crushed by taking on a servile image” (Philippians 2:6–7); *ékénôsen*, says the Greek, rendered by the Vulgate as *exinanivit*, “drained away, worn out.” It is through Luther, who translated: “*hat sich selbst geussert*” (“Jesus was taken outside himself”) that Hegel receives this nihilist tradition, and will transmit it to Marx and the politicians under the name of alienation. ([1974] 1993:71)

This is Jean-François Lyotard in *Libidinal Economy*, having already attacked Louis Althusser for his critique of alienation only to radically change his position in the years leading up to *Postmodern Condition*.²³ Lefebvre was much more consistent, and his charge against Althusser in the immediate aftermath of 1968 was based, among other things, on Althusser’s dismissal of alienation. To Lefebvre, this was especially “paradoxical” because in the May events this concept fulfilled its “critical” role of “debunking” neocapitalism and exposing its exploitative and rigidly hierarchical nature (Lefebvre 1971:379). It is not surprising that the Praxis group leveled these very charges against Althusser, and it kept him sidelined in Yugoslavia throughout the 1960s. His work entered Yugoslav Marxism in the aftermath of 1968 and became an important source for “Ljubljana school” of psychoanalytic Marxism in the late 1970s. An important first step in this return of the repressed was Slavoj Žižek’s critique of critical theory and, by extension, of Praxis philosophers, which was the first Marxist critique of their work that didn’t come from the positions of doctrinaire diamat. While moving in step with the development in leftist thought in the West, this exhaustion of “Marxist humanism” in Yugoslavia was inseparable from the era of “post-1968” and the emergence of the discourse of postmodernity.²⁴

Continuing with the critique of the theory of alienation he started in *Libidinal Economy*, in *Postmodern Condition* Lyotard uses the very same examples as Lefebvre, this time not to attack or defend Althusser on the subject of alienation, but to depart from the concept altogether. In his discussion of the “nature of the social bond,” Lyotard comes up with the idea of a universal balance of “etatism,” according to which in both the capitalist West and the socialist East the state emerged as a ultimate victor out of the turmoil of the 1960s. It succeeded not by using the force that was at its disposal, but through the system of co-optation of the same critical discourse (of alienation) that Lefebvre lauded a few years earlier: “Everywhere, the Critique of political economy (the subtitle of Marx’s *Capital*) and its correlate, the critique of alienated society, are used in one way or another as aids in programming the system” ([1979] 2003:13).²⁵ The “system” Lyotard invokes comes from Talcott Parsons’s idea of society as a self-regulating system, which had, according to the French philosopher, won out against the Marxist conception of a society divided in a perpetual class struggle. “The true goal of the system,” writes Lyotard, “the reason why it programs itself like a computer, is the optimization of the global relationship between input and output—in other words, performativity” (11). That is to say, if the “grand narrative” of revolution has lost its “credibility” through the disappearance of the revolutionary subject, this loss can be traced in the emergence of the new grand narrative of performativity. Taking into consideration Lyotard’s argument about postmodernism as a historical limit of the critique of alienation, we can say that *Alienation Effects* is an investigation of the theoretical no-man’s land between performance principle and performativity.

To sum up, the general reevaluation of alienation in the French theory of the 1970s, especially in its encounters with psychoanalysis, resulted first in the removal of the negative value judgment that Marx assigned to it in his *Early Writings*. This changed view of alienation is perhaps best exemplified in one of Lyotard’s last statements, his interview for the French television show *La Cinquième*, which was aired only a few days after his death in April 1998. The transcript was subsequently published in the journal *Chimères* and entitled, simply, “L’aliénation.” In this braided discussion of philosophical, linguistic, and psychological aspects of alienation, Lyotard questions the narrowing of this phenomenon offered by traditional Marxism:

This alienation, is it good? Is it bad? It can be detestable. It can drive us crazy, make us rightly alienated, broken down. How do we say it in French? “Timbré.” The English say cracked: “fêlé.” It can also make us passionate. We could, for example, start to write or to paint

or to direct movies, for the sole reason of trying to voice this thing that inhabits us from the beginning and that alienates us, hoping to empower (to disalienate) ourselves, all the while knowing that we will not succeed, that, in this case, this thing knows more about us than we know about ourselves. (136)

Alienation is not an affliction; not even a condition. It is constitutive of the subject, and because of that we, the modern subjects, are responsible to that which is the other and the alien:

This other lives in us . . . it is not something that exists outside of us. Maybe this other is good, maybe it is mean—we will figure this out, but nobody wants to find out. This other is very difficult to manage, maybe even impossible, but it makes us custodians of the alienated [*aliénés*]. It turns out that they are not alienated pure and simple, as if a different species, but that we can access the madness they are suffering from, because we suffer from the same craziness. This anomaly is not something reserved to this mean other. (137)²⁶

Lyotard's choice of words—*aliéné*, the insane—points to a particular practitioner of alienation whose experience became fundamental to artistic investigations of the late twentieth century. But this is not mere pathologization of a Marxist term and its depoliticization. The case in point is Antonin Artaud, and his deployment of this term is more complex than Lyotard indicates. We find it in the phrase *aliéné authentique* of his late writings:

And what is an *aliéné authentique*?²⁷

It is a man who preferred to become mad, in the socially accepted sense of the word, rather than to forfeit a certain superior idea of human honor. . . .

For a madman is also a man whom society did not want to hear and whom it wanted to prevent from uttering certain intolerable truths. (Artaud 1976:485)

While in Artaud's assaults on the psychiatric establishment *aliéné* is commonly understood in its conventional sense of "insane" or "mad," it is important to keep in mind the Marxian sense of alienation as inauthenticity. Artaud's *aliéné authentique* disrupts the easy logic of the orthodox readings of Marx, according to which alienation eliminates authenticity and, conversely, authenticity does away with alienation. In this passage between

languages, Artaud's phrase captures the insight that performance revealed in the late twentieth century, after the romance about art as an inherently disalienating force has been dispelled: the foreign and the strange (the alien) as authentic only insofar as it is inassimilable into social mechanisms of appropriation.

PERFORMANCE

Considering the wide dissemination and diversity of alienation discourses in the aftermath of World War II, it comes as a surprise to see how little attention—save for overlaps with Brecht scholarship—this idea has received in performance studies. It may seem self-evident that the ways in which a society conceptualizes labor are inseparable from representational uses of human bodies. However, it is far less obvious if we recall that performance studies as an academic field formulated most of its basic premises at the historical juncture of capitalism's passage from the industrial to the so-called postindustrial stage. This shift was marked by the massive reorganization of bodily behaviors, from their social arrangements, to employment and labor, to public perceptions of sexuality. If a work of art carries an ideological stamp of the society within which it was produced, so does a scholarly discipline. Whereas initially the span of the performance studies "broad spectrum" approach covered a fairly narrow distance from theater to anthropology, in the new millennium it has expanded ever so slightly to include nonaesthetic performances, primarily through Jon McKenzie's recovery of Herbert Marcuse as one of the unacknowledged predecessors of the field. As McKenzie correctly recognized, "performance" had to be a good guy in the story of late capitalism, a transformative and emancipatory force opposed to industrial society: in short, a principle of disalienation directly opposed to the repressive and numbing "reality principle" of industrial capitalism. Marcuse posits that if for Freud, Thanatos is that which lurks beyond the pleasure principle, then beyond the performance principle is a "resexualized body," which he names Eros.

If Marcuse's theorization of performance was strikingly absent from the discourse of performance studies in its formative years, that may be because this discourse took as an unspoken and uninterrogated starting point Marcuse's premise of the affective labor of Eros as a recuperative force opposed to the oppressive reality principle. Consider Richard Schechner's texts from the late 1960s, such as *"In Warm Blood: 'The Bacchae,'"* which he concludes by asserting that "the state cannot recover its youthful virility,"

while “the young, blond, effeminate god offers nothing but his politics of ecstasy” (1969:107); and, following up in an essay named after the political program of this divinity: “Underneath whatever repressive machinery civilization constructs to keep itself intact, a counterforce of great unifying, celebratory, sexual, and life-giving power continues to exert its overwhelming and joyful influence” (217).²⁸ *Alienation Effects* does not follow the “young god’s” trajectory into a promised land of an extraideological “life force”: precisely the opposite—it points to this assumed *outside* as a zone under most intense ideological pressure.

Following up on the “performance turn” in post–World War II art (from happenings to body art and beyond), theories of management, and technological revolution, McKenzie argues that the paradigm of performance goes beyond the limits of art and the humanistic sciences. He asserts that in the second half of the twentieth century the term “performance” was “radically reinscribed, reinstalled, and redeployed in uncanny and powerful ways.” This period saw a “rapid extension of performance concepts into formalized systems of discourses and practices,” which McKenzie groups into aesthetic, managerial, and technological (2001:13). He claims that this is not just a semantic issue: in this dispersal across discourses, performance departs from human behaviors to include a whole range of phenomena related to efficiency. Categories and measurements of productivity no longer pertain to individuals and groups, but to systems, technologies, and social apparatuses. A coercive relation to labor is an inherent part of the scientific management of Frederick Winslow Taylor and his followers, while “inspired” labor belongs to what McKenzie calls “performance management.” The latter displaces “the rational control of workers by empowering them to improve efficiency using their own intuition, creativity, and diversity” (2001:63).²⁹ By shifting the status of performance from a “principle” to a “paradigm” McKenzie strips from it the negative valence that undergirds Marcuse’s critique of alienation and turns it into a value-neutral category at the very center of postindustrial societies: “Performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge” (18). This transfer of performance from a “principle,” as a law discerned through analysis, to a “paradigm,” as a foundational design, presupposes, counterintuitively, a shift from general political theories to the specificity of embodied behavior as a basis of any collectivity. In other words, it spells out the end of ideology.

Managerial production of “inspired” labor is also at the center of Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello’s influential *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, in

which these French sociologists argue that in the 1970s, capitalism reinvented itself by adopting elements from critiques leveled against it during previous decades, including demands for *autogestion*. They assign these critiques to two broad categories: social critique, which comes from labor movements, and which focused on “the egoism of private interests in bourgeois society and the growing poverty of the popular classes in a society of unprecedented wealth”; and artistic critique, originating from that broad and ambiguous swath of capitalist society usually described as “bohemia,” which “foregrounds the loss of meaning and, in particular, the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and valuable, which derives from standardization and general commodification, affecting not only everyday objects but also artworks . . . and human beings” ([1999] 2005:38). Here, as in many other analyses of late capitalism, 1968 figures as a watershed year in Western societies’ relationship to their accumulated internal contradictions. Boltanski and Chiapello offer that, responding to massive workers’ movements of the 1960s in France, the “employer class” used the bait-and-switch technique of experienced salesmen. In response to demands for equality and autonomy, it offered the ideals of informality, creativity, networking, and flexibility; in other words, it used experience-centered solutions offered by “artistic critiques” to answer demands posed by “social critiques.” The emergence of a system of post-Taylorist business enterprise in industrialized societies coincides with the rise of service industries and the specific forms of labor prevalent among them. This comes down to the very organization of the workplace: “Given that what matters most is *intangible, impalpable, informal*—a term that characterizes both *relations* and the *rules of the game*, which are invented as one goes along—the most appropriate organizational mechanisms are thus likewise interpersonal,” observe Boltanski and Chiapello (118). As a result, the “third spirit of capitalism” sees itself as a kingdom of disalienation, in which there is an individual answer to every systemic problem.³⁰

If in the late 1960s performance had a double valence vis-à-vis alienation as both its cause (performance principle) and its cure (politics of ecstasy, informality), it seems that over the ensuing three decades this bipolarity withered away. When it reemerged in the 1990s, performance was a gallery practice that offered, as Nicolas Bourriaud writes, “more or less tangible models of sociability” ([1998] 2002:25). What he calls “relational aesthetics” is situated precisely in the fundamental difference between society and sociability: whereas the first requires systematic, the second is satisfied with partial solutions; the former is oriented toward development, the latter toward growth. And the oppositions mount: in place of regula-

tion the second places informality, and in place of politics, relationships and so on. Speaking about differences between art of the 1960s and 1990s, Bourriaud sketches an image of joyful capitulation: "Social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, [and] any stance that is 'directly' critical of the society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible, not to say regressive" (31).³¹ It seems as if, over the arc of the twentieth century, the hope for the performance of disalienation has undergone an infinite fragmentation: from the general defeat of capitalist exploitation, to the possibility of disalienated individuals in a society of alienation, to isolated instants of disalienation in an otherwise alienated life. This brings us back to socially engaged art from the beginning of this introduction.

In Yugoslavia, the social and conceptual frame of performance was constituted in a historical, cultural, political, and ideological context that differed in many ways from those in the United States and Western Europe, and had its own complex, layered, and ever-changing structure. That does not mean that it was an endemic model with no applicability beyond its own narrow historical and geographical boundaries. Although in many ways alternative art in 1970s Yugoslavia resembles the social turn of the 2000s (and its predecessors), it significantly differs from them precisely because the latter is an exception to the general climate of the society and its attitudes toward art in the post-1989 era (especially in the United States, but also in the UK and continental Europe). Self-management as the main principle of performance in the broad sense in Yugoslavia becomes an irreplaceable methodological tool for discerning the distinction between works in different social contexts. Formal properties of artwork offer no guarantee of their ideological content: on the contrary, they can be directly opposed to it. In *Alienation Effects* I tried to attend to these distinctions, which are not always discernible at first sight.

The first survey exhibit of conceptual and performance art in Yugoslavia, *New Art Practice, 1966–1978* (*Nova umjetnička praksa 1966–1978*), which art historian Marijan Susovski organized in the Contemporary Art Gallery (Galerija suvremene umjetnosti) in Zagreb, recognized this engagement with social environment as a common thread of young artists and groups across the country. In his introduction to the exhibition catalog (which at the same time served as the first exhaustive anthology of survey articles and artists' statements of this kind in Yugoslavia) Susovski insisted that it was not just the engagement with new media, but precisely the leftist orientation and "critical art production" that distinguished the work of this "generation of artists who were . . . born, raised, and began their artistic practice under

new social conditions" of socialist self-management (Susovski 1978:3). Following this exhibit, "new art practice" became a common denominator for the alternative art that started emerging in youth cultural centers in the late 1960s, and, catalyzed by the youth movement of 1968, adopted more radical and socially engaged form in the early 1970s. Unlike other instances of "global conceptualism" that gained prominence in the wake of 1968, in the case of Yugoslavia "new art practice" represented not only a new approach to art making, but also a new form of organization within state-supported art institutions. I am here referring specifically to conceptual art produced in Belgrade's Student Cultural Center (Studenski kulturni centar, or SKC) and at their annual art festivals, April Meeting (Aprilski Susreti) and October (Oktobar), as well as at other similar institutions throughout Yugoslavia, such as the Student Center (Studentski centar, SC) in Zagreb, Student Cultural Center (Študentski kulturni centar, ŠKUC) in Ljubljana, and Youth Tribune (Tribina mladih) in Novi Sad. In Belgrade, conceptual art practice reached its most radical form in *Oktobar 75*, an artistic "action" that directly addressed the status of labor and art in Yugoslavia by renouncing the conventional practice of exhibiting "artworks" (even if they are conceptual and/or ephemeral) and replacing them with highly politicized discourse: a series of artists' statements on the politics of artistic practice in Yugoslavia. As it were, the phrase that became prominent some three decades later appears in comments that the curator of this art event, Dunja Blažević, made in the aftermath of *Oktobar 75*. According to her, the goal of this action was to "establish a more objective standard in relation to the valorization of art as a sphere of *social work*" (1976:n.p.; emphasis added). Conceptual artists, art critics, and curators did not conjure up the idea of "social work" (*društveni rad*) out of thin air, but borrowed it directly from the theoretical arsenal of socialist self-management.

In *Alienation Effects* I engage performance that occurred under a specific form of political economy that proclaimed an ambition to overcome the division between productive and unproductive, industrial and aesthetic labor. This political economy is inseparable from a performance culture that is contemporaneous with the one all too familiar in the West, but at the same time significantly different from it. Unlike scientific and performance management, self-management was not only a concrete set of organizational principles of industrial and nonindustrial labor, but also a vehicle for the political, ideological, and even aesthetic representation of labor. Under self-management, performance is not a free-floating paradigm, but a practice that ties together a variety of human actions that are always specific and never free of ideology. In this book I am arguing for a multiplicity of performance

histories and the specificity that comes with it. Since the end of the Cold War, the “opening” of Eastern Europe has brought a wholesale approach to its recent past, especially when it comes to avant-garde and experimental art. These revisionist histories have pushed Yugoslav post–World War II art into the Eastern European “camp” without giving any consideration to its position vis-à-vis its own social, political, and cultural setting.³² I am not saying that performance and other art forms are overdetermined by their political and social context; however, abstracting them from this milieu brings a certain leveling of the field that only serves art industries and their profits. This equalization is based on formalist analysis and its obsession with periodization and lines of influence. Performance is particularly vulnerable to the shortcomings of this kind of approach. In a work that is primarily concerned with performance, specificity means, first and foremost, the emancipation of performance from its status as an aesthetic object or aesthetic “fact.” What “fact” does to conventional history, form does to performance history: it brings self-evidence to historical analysis, which then proceeds through analogies. In order to be seen and described, performance needs to break free from this imperative of form and similarity.³³

This is by no means an attempt to reanimate performance and restore it to its original condition, which is to say, to “liberate” it from the ossification by the art industry. In short, the goal of *Alienation Effects* is not to disalienate performance. This brings me back to the initial statement in this section about the status of alienation in performance studies and Brecht scholarship. Even at the points of intersection between them, for all the talk about *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-effect, A-effect), scholars’ attention remains fixed on *verfremden*, while the effect remains a self-explanatory add-on. That leaves utterly unclear the role of effects in relation to performance. It seems that *Verfremdung* and *effect* speak differently about performance. One can “make strange” an object or an action consisting of things and bodies, while “effects” are detached from them and belong to a different species. This is, in fact, how Gilles Deleuze speaks of effects: if bodies with their physical properties (actions, passions, etc.) are engaged in causal relationships, they cause an entirely different species of things. “These *effects* are not bodies, but, properly speaking, ‘incorporeal’ events. They are not physical qualities and properties, but rather logical or dialectical attributes. They are not things or facts, but events” ([1969] 1990:4). Both sense and nonsense belong to the order of these incorporeal entities:

Sense is always an *effect*. It is not an effect merely in the causal sense; it is also an effect in the sense of the “optical effect” or a “sound ef-

fect," or, even better, a surface effect, a position effect, and a language effect. Such an effect is not at all an appearance or an illusion. It is a product that spreads out over, or extends itself the length of the surface; it is strictly co-present to, and coextensive with, its own cause, and determines this cause as an imminent cause, inseparable from its effects, pure *nihil* or *x*, outside of the effects themselves. (70)

Deleuze adds that these kinds of effects "have usually been designated by a proper or a singular name" such as "Kelvin effect" and "Seebeck effect" in science, or in medicine diseases named after doctors who first described the set of symptoms (70). The proper name Brecht designates singles out one effect of alienation and certainly doesn't encompass a great variety of *effects* that emerged in performance practices in the course of the late twentieth century. It seems that we have to settle for alienation effects without the proper name attached to it, while keeping in mind that we are talking about a range of effects that are, to use Deleuze's locution, "copresent" and "coextensive" with their own causes. Insofar as they "determine them as imminent," they know these causes in a way that is inherent and unique to the process of causation. In that sense, self-management knows alienation in a way that no other social order does. Starting from Marxist alienation, it reveals its multiplicity; in its encounter with psychoanalysis, it shows its constitutive nature for subject formation and removes subject formation from value judgment. In short, taking effects into account does not lead to restoration of performances or their interpretation, but to their eventalization.

This book is not a survey of performance in Yugoslavia, but an evental analysis of several significant intersections of different kinds of performances. While it is my basic assumption that the second Yugoslavia was a common cultural space, I am focusing on several urban centers that became fertile ground for experimental art and performance, primarily Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. And even here, my goal is not an exhaustive inventory of performance and the conceptual art scenes from which it emerged. For example, while I talk about the great Art Informel artist from Zagreb Ivo Gattin, I don't follow his line of influence in Belgrade (Mića Popović and his circle) or that of the equally great sculptor Olga Jevrić; similarly, I dwell on the very beginning of alternative theater in Yugoslavia by looking at the first production of *Waiting for Godot* in Belgrade, but I don't look at other independent theater groups such as KPGT in Belgrade or Kugla glumište in Zagreb.³⁴ I investigate festivals of new art organized in Belgrade in the 1970s such as April Meeting and Oktobar but not other festivals in Belgrade (BITEF) and elsewhere (Eurokaz in Zagreb, Yugoslav

Documenta in Sarajevo). Nor do I want to present the artists I am talking about as previously unknown and “repressed” artists from the socialist East: there is a solid bibliography in English on virtually all performance and conceptual artists I am talking about. The practice of publishing catalogs bilingually (local language and English) started in Yugoslavia as early as the catalog for *New Art Practice* and continued with monographs on artists I am discussing in this book, such as Raša Todosijević, Era Milivojević, Marina Abramović, Mladen Stilinović, and Irwin. In addition, artists and art historians from Yugoslavia collaborated regularly with their peers from the West and published regularly abroad; some of them, such as Jasna Tijardović, Zoran Popović, and Goran Đorđević, are in this book. Others, such as Braco Dimitrijević, Nena Dimitrijević, Vlasta Delimar, Sanja Iveković, Bálint Szombathy, Gergelj Urkom, Neša Paripović, Tomaž Šalamun, David Nez, Janez Janša, and many others I do not discuss in detail (or not at all) simply in order to avoid listing and enumeration at the expense of analysis.

In its general design, this book follows a decade-by-decade periodization of self-management in Yugoslavia: here the 1950s are marked by departures from the Soviet model of the economy and of art, which resulted in a push toward a socialist market economy and integral self-management in the 1960s. The 1970s were marked by a definitive breach between ideological discourse and labor performance, and in the 1980s macroeconomic performance marginalized and “deregulated” labor, which eventually led to obliteration of the worker as a political subject. What is important here is not to identify exact historical boundaries between periods and in doing so reinforce them, but to recognize their *instability*: a period is defined not only by the calendar and objects that happen to be produced within a certain time segment, but also through institutions that come to support forms of artistic production for which they were not initially intended (socialist realism in providing institutional structure would support socialist aestheticism; socialist aestheticism would back conceptual art). This provisional periodization comes from an approach to the history of the second Yugoslavia that is geological, not chronological, which enables one to recognize the synchronization of different strata contained within each of its “periods.”³⁵

Even though live art is the main focus of *Alienation Effects*, because of the specific social organization of Yugoslavia, it plays an important part in the country’s political economy, and accordingly it is inseparable from other segments of society. So the first chapter, “Bodywriting” covers not only the period of a planned economy, but the difficult transition from command to market socialism, and the permutations of the planned economy that were

incorporated into self-management. Chapter 2, “Syntactical Performances,” focuses on the emergence of plural visions of self-management in the public sphere. The final chapter, “Disalienation Defects,” examines the predicament of Yugoslav self-management in the late 1970s and 1980s, which set up its long and bloody *dénouement* in the 1990s. While recognizing the need for a much broader critical reassessment of the legacy of the so-called postmodernisms of the 1980s, I use this opportunity to look at postmodernism’s role in the Yugoslav crisis. Each of these historical strata called for a different methodology. In the first chapter, in which I analyze relatively distant historical events, I have relied exclusively on archival material. In the second, concerned with more recent history, I combined archival research with interviews with participants and witnesses of performances I am discussing. And in the final chapter I often relied on memories of my own experiences. I organized each chapter around two kinds of performances, which can be described as small and large scale. In the first chapter, the microperformance is a clandestine 1954 performance of *Waiting for Godot*, which I take as a model of proto-performance art in the former Yugoslavia. It was staged only once, and for a small audience of not more than forty spectators. I juxtapose it with the mass celebrations of Youth Day that strove to mobilize the entire population. In the second chapter, the performance of large magnitude is the student revolt at Belgrade University in June 1968. This watershed moment of Yugoslav self-management in the late 1960s had many manifestations, and the uprising at Belgrade University was just one of them, perhaps the most visible. One of the outcomes of this crisis was a spate of performance art pieces that were staged in Belgrade’s Student Cultural Center in the aftermath of “June.”³⁶ In the third chapter, “microperformances” consist of gestures that, intentionally or not, often went unnoticed in the greater public sphere, which becomes increasingly dominated by a macroeconomics that left no space or time for reflection and critique. In the final analysis, all of these permutations of performance—on both grand and minute scales—chart the crisis of the political subject that marked all stages of Yugoslavia’s turbulent history.

I wrote this book in Silicon Valley, the new capital of abstract labor. It is my hope *Alienation Effects* will put at least a small *effet*, as French soccer players say when they kick the ball with a spin, on the enormous intellectual effort that is happening around me. It is also my hope that *this* story about the demise of Yugoslavia is not just a cautionary tale, and that it can invite reconsiderations of alienation, performance, and self-management even in the least likely of places.