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The Soldier's Death Sentence (1915–1918): Trauma, Archives, and Witness (A case study of N. Iliev's unpublished war plays and published war short stories)¹

Апстракт: Аутор настоји да, служећи се неким методама психоанализе, на примеру драмских и прозних текстова бугарског писца Ненча Илијева, примени мултидисциплинарни приступ истраживању историје. У питању је студија случаја, којом се испитује један екстремно трауматично поље прошлости и његов одраз у сећању на рат: извршење смртних казни над војницима на линији фронта током Првог светског рата.

Кључне речи: смртна казна, ратна траума, сећање на рат, књижевност

I. Research situation and theoretical approaches

“All the literary stories I read led me into some kind of exploration of history”
Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian*, 2005.

Sigmund Freud envies the poets because they grasp intuitively what it took him years to realize; Peter Gay claims the same credit for historians in the field of social sciences and humanities². I am trying neither to confirm nor to reject Gay's satisfac-

¹ This article is a part of collective research project “**National identity Crisis: Resources of Micro-history as scholarly, civic and ethical paradigm**”, funded by FNI, Bulgarian Ministry of Education. I would like to thank especially dr Svetlana Sabeva (Plovdiv University) for long-lasting seminars and discussions in which unique milieu this article could be encouraged to appear, Christine Fernandes (SSEES, UCL) for her wonderful work on amending my English, my colleague and friend professor Milan Ristic (Belgrade University) who invited me to participate in their journal and thus motivating to finish this somehow endless research.

² Gay, Peter, *Freud for Historians*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 8.

tion and Freud's frustrations. I would like – as if inspired by Freud's appreciation of the field of literature as a great archive of human experience³ – to wonder whether historians could borrow the research methods from psychoanalytical culture studies to find new archives of the stored past, to open access to the silenced dossier when they are faced with the case of repressed memory and oppressed history, in order to ask whether literature can bear witness to the traumatic experience of the Bulgarian Great War – “the soldier shot down by firing squad at the front line, 1914–1918” – to become the document for such a problematic case study. So I return to the helpful lending hand of sciences bordering on history when my own research project on the Great War seemed to reach its impasse: studying the soldier's death sentence at the front line, so that I encounter the traumatic experience – as if something obstructs access to soldier's own past: “sentenced to death, tied to a picket for execution by shooting down” as a part of a punitive policy of coping with the subversive soldier's actions, risking the war victory – whose symptoms appear at different contextual levels of war memoirs (alluded images of a sentenced soldier, as if being shot by the soldier's eye and expecting to be developed but never left to take shape, fragmentary figures of military prosecutors signing unfair death sentences, standing well against the narrative plot⁴). Thus, I was somehow “forced” to borrow the research position from psychoanalytical cultural studies when I came across such symptoms that map out the experience of some critically dug gap between the normative horizons of the “soldier's death sentence” – “performed crime and deserved punishment” – and a witness's perception of such a punitive institution and its ensuing effects as abnormal, when I was faced with a past that has resisted being remembered in the public space, a past, the access of which, seems to be obstructed. Thus this openness to methods, thought as unfamiliar to historical research, happened when I met the case – the soldier's death sentence, 1915–1918 – that never comes to light or, becomes the core of public debate, to form the resource that legitimizes the political elites' fights in current politics (even the communists' effort to appropriate this history – of soldiers shot for neglect of duty – by representing it as a conscious revolutionary fight against a capitalist war, the leader of which, the communist party, does not voice the silenced eyewitness to this spotted past: “seeing how ours have killed ours”). Or, a historical case – resisting the conventional historical approach – is to make me study how trauma works on war memory's construction and reconstruction in inter-

³ See all Freud's culture studies in culture, of Jensen Wilhelm's *Gradiva*, of Michelangelo's *Man Moses*, of Leonardo da Vinci's autobiographical writings; Certeau, Michel de, *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction*, Gallimard, Paris, 1987.

⁴ Dimitrova, Sn., “**Exécutions pour l'exemple dans l'armée bulgare (1915–1918)**”. In Rémy Cazals et al., eds., *La Grande Guerre pratiques et expérience*, Toulouse, Privat, 2005, pp. 227-237.

war Bulgarian current politics⁵. And, here, in this case, I might start appropriating the methods from the interdisciplinary fields (especially psychoanalytical literature studies), and I might work with trauma as a structure that obstructs the access to one's own past⁶, and ask what part it plays in opening and closing access to the places of “archived experience”, how it plays in keeping silenced the witness to “what happened then, in 1915–1918” – the sentence to death and the executed soldier at the front line. So to wonder whether trauma works to facilitate the master war discourse and continues articulating the official war memory, which accumulates the tropes of its representations (although aiming at normalizing the problematic place of traumatic national past, by “killing” the frustrating figures of “defeat and catastrophes”). I began to appropriate such methods because the psychoanalytical cultural studies reveal both: “in trauma, experience can be stored in the body without the mediation of consciousness, and return as a flashback, or keep insisting through a compulsion to repeat”⁷, and “mourn narrative for loss as a response to the past that does not want to go away because of its traumatic effects”⁸. I envisioned through this approach to the study, on the one hand, what experience the combatant's body stored when the “representatives of a different social class in a soldier's greatcoat” witness both “seeing soldiers shot by firing squad and hearing about such an execution”, and what traumatic effects of this past could stand behind its “own” unwillingness “to go away”. And, through both research positions – how different narratives on the First World War bear witness to “shooting soldiers by firing squad” by displaying common figures reminiscences that return as a flashback or neurotic repetitions of “what happened then” at different contextual narrative levels – and of approaching the war memoirs in their work (however hidden) as mourn narrative for their loss, I thought a historian could decode both. What experience the trauma has stored in the combatant's body to form a “new” witness (“a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant”)⁹ and to create its archive: the soldier's body, how does such an experience allow the war memoir's author to bear witness to the death sentence¹⁰

⁵ Dimitrova, Sn., “My war is not your war’: the Bulgarian debate on the Great War. ‘The Experienced War’ and Bulgarian modernization”, *Rethinking History*, 2002, 1, pp. 15–34.

⁶ Micale, Mark S. and Paul Lerner (eds), *Traumatic Past. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

⁷ Van Boheemen-Saaf, Ch., *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the trauma of history. Reading, narrative and postcolonialism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 19.

⁸ Santner, Eric, “History beyond the pleasure Principle: Some thoughts of the Representation of Trauma”, in “Friedlander, Saul (ed), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and “Final Solution”*, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 144–5.

⁹ For the process of witnessing and researcher's ethical paradigm of listening to the lacuna of witnesses' evidence see Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The witness and the Archive*, Zone book, New York, 2002, pp. 53–4, pp. 143 and after.

¹⁰ Dimitrova, Sn., “In-famy of infamous people’: Archive, Witness, Document (The case of Bulgarian military executions, 1915–1918)” (In Bulgarian), *Sociologicheski problem*, 1–2, 2009. Two

– the ethical subject, overcoming subject’s effacing through the murmurs of discourses and noises of statements¹¹. A study could question both the eyewitness’s effort to cope with the traumatic experience: being a witness to the shot “Bulgarian misfit soldier”, and the implication of such an effort of remembering and recollecting the past (bearing witness to “for what loss” the mourn narrative has been so long lasting, so what has obstructed the normalization of the traumatic past).

On the other hand, I wonder to what extent this traumatic experience impacts on the ex-combatant’s social positions in interwar Bulgarian current politics and in what specific political context does it help the work of trauma to keep the memories of the “eyewitness to those executions” silenced by hindering their outburst into current politics (obstructing access to one’s own past); it might question both the corroding effects of this experience on built networks of loyalties – on the horizontal: to my-Patria-my-king-my-nation, and on vertical: to my-family-my-kin-my-country – and the waving new visible and invisible tissues of social solidarity through the gesture of sympathy and empathy for misfit soldiers within the Bulgarian army, and to wonder whether from the affective positions (in Freud’s sense¹²) of soldiers-witnesses to the death sentence performed at the front line is to emerge a newly constructed normative horizon at which ideological contexts the official military policy of “shooting soldiers by firing squad” is to be negatively perceived and appreciated, a horizon that could start challenging the strictly drawn dividing lines between right and left and dangerously threatening the future of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. And, finally, I would question what cultural and social milieu lend a helpful hand to the combatant to cope with such a traumatic experience, and the complicity of trauma in the work of the master historical narrative (on the Great War) to suppress the memory of the soldier’s death sentence, 1914–1918, and to oppress the history produced.

But, why has such a research perspective been chosen to the so conventional – at first glance, at least – historical case: a punitive policy of the military establis-

chapters of this study have been based on Agamben’s theoretical approach to the Witness, Archive and Document.

¹¹ In Foucault’s understanding (*Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1972), so the statement is not discursive textuality but its taking place as pure exteriority, and the archives presuppose the author-function: “bracketing of the subject” because he is the speaking being, i.e. a human being occupying the vacant places of the subject”, so the subject enters in pure function, an empty position, a place of the subject’s defacing, effacing in noises of statements (See Agamben’s analysis on Foucault’s understanding of archives in: **Agamben, Giorgio, Remnants...** Cit.op., p. 137–146); and for Agamben the witness is the is the place when human being breaks in two: the ethical subject (particularly a speaking up human being overcoming the inhumanness: impossibility of speaking, and seeing), and leaving being (the inhuman: impossibility of speech and seeing), witness (ethical subject bearing witness to what cannot be witness the inhuman: leaving being) becoming visible through his decoding of the mythological Gorgon’s meaning (Agamben, Gi). See Agamben’s analytical work on Foucault’s understanding of archives. **Agamben, Giorgio, Remnants...** Cit. op., pp. 53–5).

¹² Certeau, Michel de, *Histoire...*, Cit.op.

hment to deal with rebellious gestures treated as a crime by the Army Act voted by the Bulgarian Parliament? Somehow this horizon reached is due to the discovery of unpublished works – drawings and plays that remain favorite fields of psychoanalytical culture studies (a problem I will return to in the chapters ahead) – that brought me to the conventional archives for the soldier's death sentence at the front line, still kept unopened, as well as to the non-conventional documents (about soldiers shot by firing squad, 1914–1918) telling a different story from the official history about it (the latter left only in the silenced dossier of 1915–1918). So any discovery is bound to pose the question about whether and where the outburst of the marginalized memory and suppressed history came about, how it is bound to witness that which cannot be witnessed (in the private and public space): what it means to be a witness to a soldier's death sentence at the front line. Or, in summary: this essay is designed as a study, in which, I wonder about the research tools of history and their limitation when it comes to penetrating individual experience, dealing with the conscious and the subconscious in order to dig up the layers of experience, and peeling back the cultural layers establishing the models of war and post war performances of the individual/group¹³.

All that said, I would underline that my paper is based on the archival studies of the documents of drumhead court-martials, regimental books, reservist officers' censorial reports on soldiers' moods, correspondence between the Bulgarian General Staff and the headquarters of different army and military prosecutors, to which I was taken by Nencho Iliev's books and his non-published plays on the First World War left in the department of Rare Books & Manuscripts in British Library (Manuscripts, Add 7088 A-E, 635E). That is why, it focuses on unpublished plays on the Great War by Nencho Iliev (military correspondent, journalist, writer, high level civil servant in inter-war Bulgaria, close to the royal family, killed by the communists without being sentenced in October 1944) by resurfacing the work of both the collective ideological/political unconsciousness, and the trauma in the recollection and remembrance of war.

II. Conventional study of drumhead court-martials' dossiers

Even the conventional study in the state military archives develops the untold history of the Bulgarian Great War: thousands of Bulgarian soldiers (650 000 were mobilized) are charged with disciplinary crimes and brought to the drumhead court-martials during the first year of the Great War (September 1915–November 1916), more than 2500 “illiterate, literate peasants, craftsmen, clerks, teachers, workers in

¹³ Of course, I am aware of the impossibility: of answering all those questions here, my research purpose remains to set up the lines of my approach to this particular case study of the Bulgarian war experience, 1915–1918, as a part of larger study of it, which cannot be developed here.

great coats” faced the death sentence, more than 800 were killed by firing squad¹⁴. But, cases of soldiers shot by their officers are rare¹⁵; a very tiny layer of officers exercise the “wider rights to cope with ultimate gestures of rebellious behavior in critical war situations at the front line”¹⁶, given by Army Act. War literature bears witness to the officers’ suicide because of the “absurdity of trench war” and its infernal experience: giving orders against retreat, even when the position could not be defended, and the soldier’s impossibility of obeying such absurd orders meant he faced a drumhead court-martial and the death sentence¹⁷; such an experience of war is lacking from the official reports while they speak, however of: “60 cases of madness and 33 of muteness and deafness” **only during one of the defeats of 1916 around Dojran**¹⁸, which was bound to end up in “soldier’s routs and desertions”.

More soldiers’ death sentences were pronounced according to the newly included articles (especially 231, 232, 235, 236, 238¹⁹) in the Military Code voted by the Bulgarian Parliament on the eve of the Bulgarian involvement in the First World War. Widening the specter of the soldier’s non-disciplinary acts to be treated as “severe military crimes” against which the death sentence (as adequate punishment) was pleaded, those clauses of the Military Act were defended by the military establishment as a preventive measure not to allow their war nightmare (once lived) to come true again: “the massive soldiers’ riots and desertions in the critical moments of the battles during the Balkan wars”, a situation that was perceived by military head quarters as responsible for the Bulgarian military defeat in the summer of 1913²⁰.

At the beginning of the war the soldiers’ executions are reported in the official military journal *Voenni izvestija* (favored reading of combatants at the front line) and they are announced to their regiments in order “to serve as an example to the combatants” (the message is clear: every single rebellious act is punished)²¹. During the first months of the war a small number of sentenced soldiers were shot “before the eyes of their comrades-in-arms”, so “killed for the sake of killing”²². Such an execution and its announcement within the army units sought explicitly to limit the “widespre-

¹⁴ CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F40, inv. 2, u.a. 26 et 34 ; inv.1, u.a. 107 ; inv. 3, u.a. 33 et 55.

¹⁵ CAM, F40, inv. 2, u.a. 25.

¹⁶ The medical statistics show 1 400 self-inflicted wounds until 2 November 1915. Cf’ CAM, F40, inv.2, u.a. 28-1. 101.

¹⁷ Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj Perister”, in: Iliev, Nencho, *Vremena i hora*, Hemus, Sofia 1934, c. 17–22.

¹⁸ CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F.347, inv.1, u.a. 45.

¹⁹ Ministry of War, Appendix to M.3. number 296/1941.

²⁰ CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F. 34, inv. 1, a.u. 38; *Ibid.* F. 40, inv. 2, a.u. 36. Cf. *Unpublished works of Oreshkov, Istorijata na duhŕt na armijata*, CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, inv. number 3416, as well as unpublished works of Joto Jotov, *Vojnishkite buntove prez Pŕrvata Svetovna vojna, 1914–1918*, CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, inv. number 8938.

²¹ CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F.40, inv. 2, a. u. 32, a.u. 28–1.77.

²² CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F.40, inv.1, a.u. 105–7.

ad rumor of general amnesties after the war which would follow the example of the Balkan wars” (all cases of soldiers’ crimes, overwhelming absence without leave and restricted riots, did not come before the court and were left unpunished). Such negative practice (the lack of the drumhead court-martials’ procedures) is thought to be one of the circumstances, which stimulated the “inclination of unconscious soldiers” to break military discipline, and the military establishment – as if naturally dealing with this situation – found its counterbalance in “shot dawn soldier by firing squad”²³.

Despite triply increased forensic cases (1916–1918) for prosecution of “the common soldiers’ and reservist officers’ disobedience to the superiors”, of “deserting in the interior, fleeing to enemy positions”, and of “absence without leave”, the high staff officers and the professional military prosecutors stood behind the death sentence and its “immediate carrying out” as a the “right way” to limit the “subversive influence” on the spirit of the Bulgarian army, and thus deal with both soldiers’ acts: “rebellious attitude” and “inclination to disobedience”²⁴. Because both critically overshadowed not only the victory but also sapped the ideological foundations of classical bourgeois patriarchal modernity (sustained by the figure – man’s power and self-control – displayed in powerful images of soldiers’ endurance and willingness to fight against the enemy in defense of his Fatherland and family”). On the contrary, the staff of drumhead court-martials recruited from reservist officers (civilian lawyers, long practicing solicitors) – put on “a great coat” without inhabiting the world of military values and its disciplinary logics – searched “for mitigating circumstances” and preferred to send the accused to prison rather than to the firing squad²⁵. The tendency of escalating death sentences remains relatively slow (in comparison with the number of cases brought to the drumhead court-martials), the fatigue of war is paralleled by unwillingness to sentence to death, by commuting sentences, from the death sentence to prison, numerous of soldiers were then punished with prison, but left within the army unity²⁶. Such an attitude to the non-disciplinary soldier’s acts (by the reservist officers performing the role of the military defense of the accused soldier) draws heavily on the “moral situation of given one more chance” to “the criminal” to “rectify his crime” – becoming “a conscious patriot fighting and dying in field of honour”²⁷. The newly opening horizon of expectations to the accused of “severe disciplinary crimes” has to meet the society’s horizon of expectation: “the Bulgarian

²³ CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, F.347, inv.1, u.a. 38 ; F40, inv.2, u.a. 36 ; Cf. unpublished memoirs of Oreshkov, *Istoriyata na duha na armiyata*, CAM, Veliko Tŕrnovo, inv. N3416.

²⁴ CAM, F58, inv.5, u.a. 103-1 et 277-90 ; F40, inv.2, a.e. 27, 32-1.61-3, 1. 118-119 ; 137 ; 200-3 ; F40, inv.3, u.a. 55 ; F40, inv.2, u.a. 726 1. 191.

²⁵ CAM, F40, inv.2, u.a. 36-1. 170-266, 32-1. 92 ; u.a. 29-1. 149-162, 305 ; F40, inv.3, u.a. 55-1. 308, 407-415 ; F40, inv.3, u.a. 8-1. 345 ; F.321, inv.1, u.a. 39 ; CAE, Sofia, F.1866, inv.2, u.a. 20-1.557-560.

²⁶ CAM, F40, inv.3, u.a. 27.

²⁷ CAM, F40, inv.2, u.a. 29, 34, 36, 55, 32-1. 92, 195.

soldier is defending his Patria and family against the enemy in war's raging flame". It complies with both the common military interest not to "lose soldiers and the strength of the army" in a critical war situation of "ultimate draining of human sources", and the "common eagerness of the sentenced soldier" to "come back to the front line and to die with dignity" (thus articulating the overwhelming number of cases of clemency appeals²⁸). Moreover, after 1917 some officers' reports from the front line fire lines emphasized the controversial effects of the "killing for the sake of killing", especially the massive shootings of mutinous soldiers within the army unit, and suggest negative impacts on the combatant's body: depression, apathy affecting his "will to fight" as well as a rising aggression and discontent²⁹. Nevertheless, military professional staff and high staff officers persist in perceiving "the severe and efficient measures" as the fastest way to overcome the critical situation of non-disciplinary actions risking the victory. Such largely used bureaucratic language in the General Staff correspondence denotes both the rigorous attitude to the court-martialed for neglect of duty according to article 231–250 (sentence to death, imprisonment, solitary confinement), and the rapid procedures of execution – as if rushing to perform the punishment in such a way as to leave no room for any corroding question about its deservedness³⁰ – and thus creating a euphemistic reality of crime and punishment that works to normalize and marginalize any anxious questioning (suppressed) about the justice obtained in the "sentence to death and shooting soldiers by firing squad". This discourse and its development³¹ produce (in this case study) all those murmurs of statements by which the subject is defaced. How the death sentence, the frustrating image of shooting soldiers by firing squad, has been perceived by other combatants and what has been the impact of such a reality of war –witnessing the "shooting of ours by ours" – on the combatants' mood, has neither been noted, nor reflected in the censor's reports from the front line (left totally unspoken rather than suppressed), nevertheless, the detailing information about the soldiers' perceptions, feelings and attitudes to circumstances of everyday trench life. Some "soldier's disapproval of soldier's death sentence" is explicit in isolated anonymous soldiers' letters addressed to those "responsible for this crime" – "hanging a poor combatant and killing for the sake of killing" –, so to the military establishment that "did all that to the miserable soldier, instead of taking care of soldiers' families and punishing the real culpable, the corrupted political class"³². The silhouette of "latent discontent, murmur of pain" filters implicitly through both acts of the Bulgarian General Staff,

²⁸ CAM, F.40, inv. 2, a. u. 29, 34, 36, 55, 32-L.92, L.195; CSA, Sofia, F. 3к, inv.5, a.u. 102-L.49, L. 81-82, L. 93

²⁹ CAM, F.40, inv. 3, u.a. 55, l. 314-5; F. 40, inv.2, u.a.368-1.1; F. 40, inv. 2, u.a. 726-l. 188-90.

³⁰ Ibid. Cf. Dimitrova, Sn., "In-famy of infamous...", (in Bulgarian), *Cit.op.*

³¹ The Chair in Military law was opened in April 1934 in Sofia University.

³² CAM, F.40, inv.2, u.a. 968-l. 237-9; F. 60, inv. 2, a.e. 145-l.54.

its order (1917) to report the influence of the death sentence on the soldiers' mood³³, and its new policy (1918): not to execute soldiers within their army units where the "politically dangerous comrades" of those executed are concentrated³⁴. Moreover, the shadow of the rebellious soldier against the death sentence is transparent in the new military politics—displacing the center of public announcement of the names of those sentenced to death during the regimental retreat – and searched for positive impacts on the soldiers' mood by announcing to their regiment (after September 1917) the cases of commuted and reprieved sentences and their ensuing effects on the soldiers' destiny³⁵. Here, a fear of the military establishment to open up "silenced disapproval" and "suppressed feelings" of witnesses to "shooting soldiers by firing squad" can be detected, a fear that bears witness to a new reality: creating spaces of creditable social solidarity that draws new visible lines of communities, undermining or stabilizing the values of classic bourgeois modernity. Thus the preoccupation of the military establishment about the death sentence's disciplinarian effects is revealed and is a valuable source for the stored experience by the combatants' body, an experience – appreciated by the military establishment – of the effect on the soldier's body, an effect which urges the high staff officer to trouble about the image: shooting down soldiers by firing squad, and its impact on the soldiers' mood; drawing on a new reality – instead of producing an army of utilitarian bodies to fight against the enemy, the "punitive institution: killing for the sake of killing" makes the soldier rebellious against his military superiors appear at the war horizon. The rising fear of the military establishment and its politics to tackle the issue, continues to bear testimony to both: "what" (passions—affects³⁶) has been deposited in the soldier's body when he witnesses such executions, and "what" (power of discourse and individual interiorization of social normativeness), works in normalizing the conflict between "internal agitation and exterior calmness of social performances" (in Freud's wording), so both bear witness to the conflicts through which the fighting soldier and the returning combatant enter in society: the "affects of pain, anger, contempt" a store of which remains in his body. This fear (comes to light behind the new military policy, although suppressed in murmurs of statements and stifled by the noises of military discourse) and continues bearing witness to both the experience stored in the soldier's body, and the biggest number of eyewitnesses to "what happened there and then, in 1915-1918" (the latter becoming visible through the growing soldier's rebellious force in their, however mute, resistance to the soldier's death sentence, the latter makes the historian wonder about such a reality – of the unsaid – and to do their best in

³³ CAM, F.40, inv.3, u.a. 55-l. 308.

³⁴ CAM, F.40, inv.2, u.a. 50- l. 87.

³⁵ CAM, F.321, inv.1, u.a. 34-l. 164.

³⁶ Z. Freud has returned passions to humanities as research subject of affects. Cf. Certeau, Mishel de., *Histoire....*, Cit.op.

accumulating the sources for negotiating identities). Evidence, however, left in the conventional dossier of the Military State Archives, allowed me to ask how those sources could bring the historian to both the places where the suppressed past (seeing and hearing about the soldier shot by firing squad) would have burst out, and the scenes through which the “killed past” (repressed past and suppressed memory of soldier’s death sentence) would have returned in the present of the survivor (the returned, survived soldier); they make me wonder how to find this important, for my case study, research figure: “a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant”³⁷?

Moreover, such a clash of positions and attitudes of “different social participants at the front line” to “killing for the sake of killing (soldier’s death sentence in principle)”, as it has been articulated by the above cited and analyzed documents, becomes an unarticulated reality in Bulgarian interwar current politics when they come to discuss “what happened then, in 1915–1918” – as if aiming at marginalizing and suppressing some war past in order to exclude it from the official tropes of war representations in the public space, and thereby cope with some traumatized past. What closed their “eye witnessing” to “what happened then”? Why are the war memoirs of reservist officers from the right of the political space, appraising the activity of the well-known “socialist solicitor in an overcoat”, enjoying his success in defending accused soldiers and reprieving death sentences, kept in his private archives, silenced for the public³⁸? Why does the “experience of seeing or hearing about an assassination of a Bulgarian misfit soldier” that constructs a new space of shared perceptions and appreciations of official military policy by cutting through the interacting visible/invisible horizontal and vertical layers of national identity – political and social – remain in unpublished memoirs throughout the “real boom” of edited war memoirs in interwar Bulgaria? Why do “The notes of one private on the mutiny in 28th regiment of infantry”, containing a very naturalistic description of “killed life, drooped body blinded and alone, tied on a picket for execution” and its effect on soldier’s mood, appear in 1949 from the printing house of the Bulgarian Communist party, but not in 1919–1920 when the “Law of judging culpable for national defeats” of the Agrarian government was discussed and voted? Why was not a public debate on this punitive policy provoked when the “story of a soldier shot, of killing ours by ours” was told during some meetings of the agrarian, and communists in 1919–1922³⁹. Why was a drawing showing a “shot misfit Bulgarian soldier” by a Bulgarian painter shown at a “Battle art exhibition” in the 1950s, and not before? Why did Nencho Iliev keep rewriting his plays on the death sentence at the front line,

³⁷ This research figure I borrowed from Lawrence Durrell’s *The Alexandrian Quartet*.

³⁸ CAE, Sofia, F. 1866, inv.2., u.a. 20-1.559-560

³⁹ Halachev, Hristo, *The notes of one private on the mutiny in the 28th regiment of infantry*, Communist party, Sofia, 1949. (in Bulgarian)

but not published them? Why did Georgi Georguiev, the Bulgarian E. M. Remarque, leave only one paragraph in his memoirs when he comes to mourn his unforgettable loss – his close friend, a lawyer who died in the field of honour, a lawyer who “went to the firing line and died as a hero instead of sentencing soldiers for being late back on their way to the front line by 24h and 1 minute when others were absent without leave for 24 000h and 136 800 minutes, and never sentenced”⁴⁰? Why did he never say anything more about this reality (apart from that quoted above), he died in 1972, so regardless of changing historical times – when Bulgarian First World War history was appropriated, used, misused for different ideological projects of the right and left political regimes – he remained silent? **The same attitude – of silence – to the reality of “the soldier shot by firing squad”** keeps appearing in the memoirs of one of the most popular supporters of the reprieved death sentence in 1915-1918, the Bulgarian lawyer in “a greatcoat”, Grigor Cheshmedzhiev⁴¹, a solicitor whose court-martial performances became a “place of joy”, articulating the positive war memory of his colleague in “a soldier’s greatcoat” from the right of the political specter⁴², so of his political opponent.

Experienced reality – of “soldier shot down, the soldier’s death sentence” – somehow seems to have existed in the fields of suppressed memory, as if “some structure” obstructs access to one’s own past. Moreover, re-reading the narrative recollection and remembrance of war (as articulated in Bulgarian public space) through the German theory of everyday life that conceptualizes the personal reminiscence as “...*un appel à prendre part à sa propre existence, mais aussi à celle des autres. Celui qui prend part ne veut pas transformer l’autre et les autres: il tente plutôt de le ou de les comprendre – mais aussi de se comprendre soi-même*”⁴³, I faced the problem of traumatic war memory. According to this German theory “any memory, any literature can never exist without such an engagement”; an engagement resulting from the turn of historical time that affects the lifetime horizons of people and changes their biographical routes. The war memoirs thought of as an engagement in understanding of “what happened then and there” confront me with both: the “non-articulated reality of the shot soldier” and the “differently appearing reality of the soldier’s death sentence” – as if some past has been suppressed through some resistance to it, and it seeks to return (“it does not want to go away because of its traumatic effects”) it finds another way to come back, but now it is disguised as another past⁴⁴ (the shadow of the killed transpires behind the figure of the reprieved, it stands behind the figure

⁴⁰ Georguiev, Georgi., *Edin ot Parva. Spomeni na uchastnik*, Sofia, 1935, p. 193.

⁴¹ Cf. Cheshmedzhiev, Gr., *Politicheski spomeni*, Otchestven Front, Sofia, 1988.

⁴² Cf. CSA, Sofia, F. 1866, inv. 2, a.u. 20-L.557-560. **The memoirs were edited in 2004 and Cf.** Karchev, Petar, *Prez prozoretza na edno polustoletie*, Iztok-Zapad, Sofia, 2004

⁴³ Lüdtké, Alfred (sous la direction de), *Histoire du quotidien*, Éditions de MSH, Paris, 1994, p.31.

⁴⁴ Cf. Certeau, Mishel de, *Histoire... Cit.op.*, pp. 85-7.

of the lawyer who does (not) sign death sentences and so on....). So such narrative reality allows me to rethink this experience as a trauma, i.e. as a structure that makes part of one's own experience inaccessible and, at the same time, it works as a mourn narrative ("a response to both the loss, and the past that does not want to go away because of its traumatic effects")⁴⁵. Hence both the appearance of such phrases in the contextual reality of war memoirs – as if nothing to do with the ongoing narrative and its plot – "Fires, some said they kill ours...", "They have been shot by ours...", "Executions, nobody wants to think and talk about...", "Trembling with fear the military prosecutor then appears...", and their repetitions in the memoirs of reservist officers, can be read as symptoms of a traumatic past, as a return of suppressed remembrance, exactly because "in trauma, experience may be stored in the body without the mediation of consciousness, and return as a flashback, or through a compulsion to repeat"⁴⁶. To rethink such a way of bearing witness to "this spotted story of killing ours" helps Stoyan Venev's military drawing: a soldier killed without arms, as if deprived of military insignias, lying on the snowy earth and nothing more, it leaves an illusion of total solitude and uselessness which filters through the color contrast between the dark grey spot of the soldier's greatcoat and the white color of the ground – as if seeking to emphasize the total lack of other actors, except death and earth; a lack, which resonates the unbearable reality of bare life, a life deprived from any value whatsoever, the bareness of inhuman: needlessness and abandonment of the human, the limit of de-valorization of life and deprivation of the soldier's death from any sense whatsoever. If this reading is a way of listening to the lacunas of the painter as a witness, then it could be a trace to the figure, I am looking for, "of a live eyewitness, victim, and survived participant". It is in the photo archives of the Ministry of Defense classified as a document on "Battle art': the soldier's anti-imperialist resistance against the First World War." This "precious discovery" happily meets with another one – N. Iliev's unpublished plays on the Great War – which made me think that, the historian, at least has to study "what experience" has been stored by this trauma: the "soldier's death sentence", in the combatant's body, by enlarging the "historical archive" through the ongoing debate on Witness, Document, Archive⁴⁷.

III. Discursive analysis of conventional archival documents

The punitive policy of the "soldier's death sentence" aimed at disciplining the soldier's body through the powerful images of both the "honourable and dishono-

⁴⁵ Micale, Mark S. and Paul Lerner (eds) *Traumatic Pasts*, Cit.op..

⁴⁶ Van Boheemen-Saaf, Ch., *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan...*, Cit.op., p. 19.

⁴⁷ Cf. Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of...*, Cit.op., pp. 137-156, Foucault, Michel, *Archeology...* Cit.op., pp. 130-134, Ginzburg, Carlo, "Just One Witness", in Friedlander, Saul, *Probing...*, Cit.op., 82-96.

urable dead”, and the “honourable and shameful mourning” and their social consequences, the latter embodied in the figures of “citizen dead” and “moral stigma”. The newly constructed agency of obedience – the “soldier’s death sentence” with its greed of discourses (on “dishonourable”) – identifies the sentenced soldier in the figure of “traitor” (of normative set of values: “honour, duty, masculinity, self-sacrifice” thought to lay the foundations of “individual and collective progress”)⁴⁸; its practice (depriving the killed from all political, citizen rights and privilege as well as military decoration and funeral honours)⁴⁹ is to sentence and kill the soldier twice – physically and morally. Incriminating the soldier as a “coward” whose “weakness” risks “collective progress” (as it is articulated in regimental books, in indictments of drumhead court-martials) the institution of the “soldier’s death sentence” somehow affects “his masculine identity” by increasing the gap between society’s expectations and the capacity of “man’s body”. Into the mirror of social expectations (required and expected gestures of boldness, spiritual and physical strength and heroism) the court-martialed soldier is faced with his physical and psychological betrayals (of his own body: weaknesses, fears, a run-a-way...) as disclosed by the extreme realities at the front line. Such a practice, however was bound to incriminate the soldier’s undisciplined body and to serve as an example for the others, and enlarge critically the gap between “expected (by society) and possible (capacity of a man’s body in the trench)”, “imagined (by those at the rear) and real (the front line’s everydayness)”. So conflicting images of the combatant’s war everydayness (places of “exciting patriotic gestures” as imagined and “inferno to bear” as experienced) create the space of broken communication (although responsible for producing social solitude) in fields where the unconscious confrontation of the sentenced soldier to “one society that seems to be deaf and non-understandable” about “what does it mean to be there” (solitude becoming visible through the unbearable feeling of unfairness, as it filters through the sub-textual reality of letters of relatives addressed to the Bulgarian king asking for pardon for the crime of their beloved, visibly bear witness to the situation of being concerned with all the ensuing impacts on man’s quest for himself)⁵⁰. Images of unbearable solitude (figuratively developed vision of human-non-usefulness and humiliated humanity-in-killed-human-life: “drooped, kneaded body, tied to a picket for execution by firing squad”, “blind and alone” as it keeps returning in St. Venev’s drawing of the partisan killed in 1942) is to set up the background of perceptions of both the painter’s sketches and the writer’s published war short stories and his unpublished war plays (N. Iliev’s case); images bear witness to the unsaid, to this playful game between the “said and unsaid” – because something insists on its repetition, the testimony to the impossibility of some war past to depart – that

⁴⁸ CAM, V. Tirmovo, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.27-l.98; F.58, inv.5, u.a. 103-l. 276-8.

⁴⁹ CAM, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.36-l.48-49.

⁵⁰ CSA, Sofia, F. 3 (k), inv. 5, u.a. 96-100.

traces the work of trauma (experience stored in the bodies of witnesses without meditation of consciousness and keeps returning as repetitive reminiscences); images that continue developing the author's trauma: the experience of inhumanness when he is faced with death where the worthlessness of the human has been laid bare – bare life (a life ended to be deprived of any value whatsoever), a humiliated life in “tied to a picket for execution by shooting down”, “blind and alone”, “a life shamed in its disgrace” (a soldier's body thrown out, deprived of any insignias, or any signs of social recognition, abandoned to oblivion, destitute of the past – “left in an unmarked grave without a cross”).

Moreover, the inculcating strategy of the “soldier's death sentence” affects the moral and material situation of the family of the shot soldier through the newly constructed institutions of “dishonourable mourning”, its goal is to waive the networks of social responsibility: to bring together the front line and the rear in common cause – “victory against the enemy” – but its traumatizing effects on the woman's body could be read in the letters of the soldiers' wives sent to the front line and asking their husbands to spare them “the shame of dishonourable mourning”⁵¹. “Dishonourable mourning” transforms them into “relatives of a criminal” through the practices of their social marginalization embodied in this stigmatizing institution of war mourning culture – as relatives of a “traitor” they are deprived of the honourable legacy (“died for his Fatherland”) to claim recognition for the soldier's death at different levels of society: such as the family's applications for a government pension and state help (given to both families of fighting soldiers and the “fallen in the battlefield of honour”)⁵². Those excluded from the records of “fallen for Patria” – the soldier sentenced to death as a “traitor of national ideals” – deprives his family of the symbolic capital of “Noble Mourning” and “Patriotic Heritage”, so the non-inclusion of the soldier's name in the list of “honourable dead” excludes the family of the “shot soldier” from the places of capital's (symbolic, institutional, financial) repartition, exclusion and deprivation that menaces the immediate future of the family concerned. So the body of the sentenced soldier and of his wife (relatives) continues to be covered by shame (of “his dereliction of duty and traitor's act: not to defend his family and Patria”) in the places where the symbolic capital of “Noble Mourning” and “Patriotic Heritage” has been accumulated: the glorification of the “honorable death for the Patria” on soldiers' monuments, and its social recognition in the record for compensation deserved for the loss (“fallen for the Patria”), places in which the “silhouette of the sentenced soldier's legacy” left to his family is to display: “deprivation, shame, humiliation”. Places-records where the *precondition of possibility for* is both created: the critically shattered networks of political loyalties on the vertical (soldier's family and Bulgarian monarchy) through the affects (“rage against” and “unbearable pain

⁵¹ CSA, Sofia, F. 3 (k), inv. 5, u.a. 96-l. 4-5.

⁵² Ibid. CAM, 40, inv. 2. u.a. 32.

for”), and the accumulated sources for de-legitimizing the political (the bourgeois); places where the *precondition of possibility* for destabilizing critically the negotiating micropositions of social agent (loyal patriot, good son-daughter, dignified father, brave soldier and so on) in relation to the macro-political-frame (set up horizons of identity: Bulgarian, Monarchic) is formed. And, it is clear: such a punitive institution becomes responsible for overshadowing one of most stable social structures: family, because it continues affecting family relationships through the hidden ideology of its practice: interweaving “the civil” and “the military” in their responsibility to accomplish „the national ideal” (Bulgarian national unification) brought about by the “heroic and victorious army”, by “supportive- acclaiming for and recognizing-thankful society to dignified fulfilled duty”, so the “national dreams happily came about” in the executed social contract. Hence its traumatizing effects on the woman’s body (her sorrow in place of shame, of continuous blame on the broken socially negotiated loyalties—to the Fatherland, family and country) increase critically the emotional gap between the sentenced soldier and his relatives (thus: if the family of the deserter is banished, they influence the soldier to return or personally report him to the police⁵³, if not, then the deserter stays within the village dressed as woman with the complicity of fellow-villagers⁵⁴, as it has been reported by censors in the rear).

Both structures of disciplinarian policy – of the “soldier’s death sentence” (“dishonourable death”, “dishonourable mourning”) – transform the “former honest and respectful citizen” (often “even yesterday heroes”) into a “criminal” threatening the future of his Patria, into a “coward traitor” risking the happiness and progress of his own family and his country. Such a drastic biographical rewriting concerns the social and human dignity of the shot soldier – by making his pre-war life senseless as the “head of the family, loved person, a peaceful living and working man” – remains unacceptable and frustrating for his identity, man’s identity crisis can be read in the sub-textual reality of his clemency appeals⁵⁵. Although “the eagerness” – as manifested in overwhelming cases of clemency appeals – of the accused soldier (including middle class intellectuals and worker communists)⁵⁶ to return to the front line and “meet a dignified death” seems to be a “very natural surviving strategy”⁵⁷. Nevertheless such an attitude can be thought as a coping mechanism to deal with the sharp identity crisis opened up by the “images of dishonourable death” in its terrorizing and traumatizing impact on the soldier’s body⁵⁸. Through the soldier’s “eagerness” to “fight against the enemy and die as a hero” transpires the silhouette of affects and

⁵³ CAM, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.32-l. 150.

⁵⁴ CAM, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.32-l. 133.

⁵⁵ CAM, F.40, inv. 3, u.a. 28-30.

⁵⁶ CAM, inv. 3, u.a. 28-30.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ CAM, F. 40, inv. 3, u.a. 28-l. 154-6; Ibid. F.40, inv. 3, u.a. 26- l. 275, 321; F. 40, inv.2, u.a. 49-l. 46, 129; CSA, Sofia, F. 3(k), inv. 5, u.a. 26-l. 6-12.

appears to normalize the internal agitation in order to transform it into the exterior calmness of a humiliated man's body (in the images of lack of masculinity, powerfulness, and self-sacrifice). The images of "Self-Sacrifice, Dignified Death" as they have been articulated in the soldiers' letters (clemency appeals) underline the uniqueness of their experience: "what" works in normalizing man's identity crisis remains the patriotic gesture, however, normalization, happens through the unconsciously grasped force of social normativeness: meeting the horizon of that society's expectation (the Bulgarian soldier has to die for the Fatherland, to defend his family against the enemy)⁵⁹. Further, the affects ("rage, anger, pain") emerging from the perception of "powerlessness against unfairness" (background's noises, unsaid, unfinished phrases...⁶⁰) – grow in the spaces of social solitude of those sentenced – and display the particular place of war experience: to be concerned by the soldier's death sentence, a concern however which bears witness to the conflicts through which the individual enters into society. Because its experience (to be faced with such a death) continues to shape it as a particular death-place – due to its way of being performed, to its practice of stigmatizing the life trajectory of those killed – of total annihilation of one's own social and physical being, of total de-valorization of the human: deprived of any dignity or value for human life that as if has been "killed for the sake of killing", a death, however punishing for "a moment of physical weakness, of mental breakdown, emotional crash" (the most critical place of the reservist officers' memoirs becomes their witness to see the death sentence on yesterday's heroes, to be buried in an unmarked grave, killed as a traitor, a soldier that has been decorated several times for his courage and heroism⁶¹).

Let me underline: such an experience (faced with a soldier's death sentence) in its unique way unfolds – to become a past that "does not want to go away" – it traces its own traumatic effects: the unbearable vision of a "helpless body, hung down to a picket in front of the smoking guns of firing squad"⁶², the "blind and alone" dead soldier⁶³. The vision continues to transpire behind the repetitive reminiscences of total social solitude and concern for human dignity either embodied in the sketches of the killed soldier (St. Venev's example) and shot partisan, or again displayed through the

⁵⁹ A good example of this terrorizing effect (of interiorized normativeness of Patriotism from those in the rear) on man's choice at the front line is one of most popular plays "Ne bil dostoen?" ("He was not been praiseworthy, was he?") of Stilyan Chilingirov, performed on the stage of Narodен Teatir "Ivan Vazov", 1918; to which my research brought me by way of Nencho Iliev's network of friends.

⁶⁰ CAM, F.40, inv.2, u.a. 968-l. 237-9; F. 60, inv. 2, a.e. 145-l.54.

⁶¹ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, "Kraj Perister"...Cit. op, p. 17; Cf. CSA, Sofia, F. 1866, inv. 2, a.u. 20-L.557-560 and Karchev, Petar, *Prez...*Cit.op., p. 500.

⁶² Cf. Iliev, Nencho, "Kraj Perister"...Cit. op, p. 21-2.

⁶³ The same image of war experience is embodied in Cfs: Van Emden, Richard, *Boy soldiers of the Great War*, Headline Book Publishing, London, 2005; Corns, Chatrin & John Hughes-Wilson, *Blind and alone*, Cassell, London, 2001.

images lacking social actors in war scenes other than death and earth (by narrating war): "...it starts raining, heaven pours its tears of desolation over the recent unmarked graves without crosses" (N. Iliev's case)⁶⁴. The vision comes back through the images of the happily reprieved soldier (behind his figure transpires the shadow of the misfit: killed, alone and blind), it persists in returning and remaining as the disguised figure of the "heaviness of the military cross of the survivor" (G. Georgiev's case) – its severe brilliance of social recognition becomes the unbearable burden for the survivor because behind its glory a silence grows and encumbers, a silence about another military cross left on the uniform of a killed soldier, a silence about the heroism of soldier executed and laid in an unmarked grave⁶⁵). The vision emerges masked in the figure through which the satirized war prosecutor – flat, trembling with fear during the bombardment whose hand has not trembled except when it signs the death sentence of the soldier that has to stand the everydayness of trench warfare" in Iliev's case – dealing with some unbearable reality of injustice done to the executed. So through some irresistible power – of the traumatic past insisting on its repetition and its return as repetitive reminiscences, – the silhouette of experience stored in the soldier's body (without meditations of consciousness) is to develop: the critical experience of unfairness and of social humiliation. Thus a traumatic memory – of concerned human dignity (stigmatized past and a life deprived of its legacy) – draws its silhouette in places of its articulation: images of the inhuman (the worthlessness of human), and of the unfair (to be sentenced because of breaking there in the inferno: positional war). Moreover, the soldier's death sentence wipes out (when it has to be "publicly" announced to the soldier's regiment and relatives) the difference between the "marauder-criminal", the "conscious deserter from its duty" and the "soldier's breakdown due to the trench war" (bearing witness to the untrained body for positional war). So the killingly equalizing sentence for such individual reasoning to "collapse-there-in-inferno" is bound to obliterate from the war memory the soldier's name and deeds (with all the ensuing social consequences for his legacy) and to become another place of "rage against some inhuman unfairness". So this "equalization" brings forth another need – that which stands critically against the non-occurred modernization – of a war psychiatrist that deals with the new phenomena: the shell-shocked soldier, who bears testimony to a disease whose symptoms (fatigue, neurosis, unwillingness to fight, apathy and so on) demand sending the soldier to the hospital and not to the picket for execution, the testimony of a medical expert is to accumulate sources for both reprieving sentences, and resolving man's identity crisis (manliness mirrored in

⁶⁴ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, "Kraj Perister"...Cit. op, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Cf. Karchev, Petar, *Prez...*Cit.op., p. 500-2; Georguiev, Georgi., *Edin ot Parva...*, Cit.op., p. 194-5; Iliev, Nencho, "Kraj Perister"...Cit. op, p. 17. For the studies of the work of mourn narrative in helping to emerge the undreamt "living eyewitness, victim, survived participant" see also Dimitrova, Sn., "In-famy of infamous people": Archive, Witness, Document..." (In Bulgarian), cit.op.

images of “cowardliness” and “betrayals”), lacking testimony makes it more difficult to bridge the gap between society (its social expectation, so imagined) and the sentenced soldier (his body’s capacity, so real), an impossibility that becomes responsible for shattering the social tissue (tacit contracts and spoken loyalties).

Such a traumatizing experience starts challenging the classical bourgeois ideal of “moral and physical force, psychic endurance” that demands from the man “to be strong and not to fail to accomplish his manly duty: to fight the enemy”, it starts sapping the ideological foundation of bourgeois patriarchal society (strong dividing lines between the strong and the fair sexes) – as if discrediting the images of man’s body: “powerful and self-controlled”. The sapping occurs in the effort to normalize the critically concerned man’s identity (images of the betrayal of man body’s: from the stress to the shell-shocked (although leaving, man’s neurosis disputable), normalization begins unconsciously as a re-evaluation of “crushes and weakness of man’s body and man’s undeniable power of spirit” and ends displaying unconsciously the functional dependence of the soldier’s acts on their place (war circumstances) and sense (what is at stake). Since such normalization is bound to deal unconsciously with traumatized images of “man’s weakness: the soldier’s bodily failure to endure the blaze of positional war”, then it works on their reconciliation and commensurability with a different manifestation of “force and endurance of sufferings” (embodied in the figure of the moral individual sustaining the values of the normative webs of conservative bourgeois order). Since such normalization is bound to cope with both traumatizing situations: facing a “new reality” and its images of “betrayals of man’s body” (not always capable of meeting the horizon of social expectations for man’s duty – “to die as a soldier for his Patria, land, and family”) kept raising voices of public blaming (continuously searching to produce a body shamed for neglecting its duty), and critically concerned with man’s identity (continuously humiliated as a “coward” and “traitor”) overshadowing his relationships with the surrounding world (shattered networks of loyalties), then it might have occurred only in the “places” of non-confrontation and possible compatibility of normative images of “masculinity” with their negatively mirrored effigies of “man’s fragility”. So such normalization (due to the ways it was produced) – comes about in the “places” where “socially contracted and urged on” perceptions (of “man’s power and fearlessness”) comply with “socially negotiated exclusion of destructive visions” (of “man’s weakness and betrayal”), and “man’s endurance” cohabits with “man’s breakdown” – is bound to eclipse the wholeness and resistance of the “bourgeois ideal of manliness” by displaying “what is at stake” when the critical war experience comes to be normalized: the ideological sources of war and its military values. Here (in this “place”: narrative occurrence of normalization of clemency appeals”), the soldier’s performances, his non-disciplinary acts have been thought as a function of common sense that is emerging (from the display of individual war experience, of “my-own-soldier’s-expe-

rience”), so here (in peeling back the layers of experience by explaining “what happened then”) the new silhouette of war experience is to appear – senselessness – and to develop in meaningful images blaming the military strategies and their everyday trench performances, however. Such critical images might have been the concern of the core of the national project of bourgeois conservative society (the utilitarian soldier’s body fighting for national unification, disciplined and obedient), so newly opening horizons for negotiating man’s identity – in which ideological context, the power’s stake (“control over the life and death”, “what one has to live and die for”) begins to be challenged – is to trace out “what context” lends a helpful hand to the work of trauma in obstructing the access to the war experience: sentencing to death. And, as if such normalization occurs in the narrative position of those concerned: the sentenced and his relatives (their clemency appeals seeking pardon⁶⁶), then its opposition is bound to come from a hardening discourse (the murmurs of statements on “masculinity, honor, duty, dignity”), from sustaining images of a heroic death for the Fatherland, of man’s self-sacrifice”, their confrontation might have become a *precondition of the possibility* for a memory that is helping the war past to put on a false mask.

So “to be weak for a moment, to fear one’s own death, to be afraid of seeing one’s own body injured, not to resist the call of the missing: love desires, family’s anxiety, the land’s eagerness to be cultivated”, all that becomes “something normal”, “human and understandable”, something that is to not undermine the “boldness of man’s nature”. So a kind of normative perception of “what is normal then when at stake was human life, its sense and value” starts forming and appearing in the subtextual reality of both the letters of relatives asking for pardon for their beloved ones, and the clemency appeals of soldiers waiting to be shot down or hung up. (Such a perception should be read as the non-coming about of Bulgarian modernity due to the lack of patriotic gestures and of interiorized values of nationalism, reading is to serve the function of transferring culpability from the political and military establishments – their uselessness: lacking efficiency for coping with critical situations at the front line and in the rear – to the soldier’s war performances, but the latter continues to reveal an untrained body, a body unfit for trench warfare that breaks down often, regardless of its patriotism, a revelation that is bound to form sources for the critical position towards military strategy and tactics). So the place of the display of the soldier’s war experience (especially peeling back the cultural layers of his acting) – aims at normalizing the “abnormal” (“to desert its duty”) through its transforming into something normal (“it is human to break...”) – plays a part in shattering the social webs of the contracted representations of “masculinity” (“strong, enduring and fearless Bulgarian soldier”). The overwhelming clemency appeals of

⁶⁶ CAM, F. 40, inv. 3, u.a. 30-l. 159; Ibid. F.40, inv. 2, u.a. 43- l. 154-156; F. 40, inv.2, u.a. 49-l. 34, 136-138; CSA, Sofia, F. 3(k), inv. 5, u.a. 98.

sentenced soldiers continue freely to explain “what makes them ‘break the discipline’”: “irresistible desire to follow voices coming from home and land”, “dread of death”, “treatment perceived as humiliation by superiors”, “command perceived as senseless”, “fatigue, unfairness”, such articulation due to its reasoning – a dignified defense of “why I break the normatively supposed unbreakable: military discipline” – is to draw the places where “fear and shame” (ones of more stable disciplinary structure of Bulgarian modern patriarchal society) have been overcome⁶⁷. And, in exactly such a narrative freedom (“to tell about”) emerges the fear of the military and political establishments to see the shadowed figures – of those “freed from fear and a shamed man’s body” – to threaten their conservative social order. A fear, that ends up in the inadequate logic of sentencing and killing for “a moment of weakness in the inferno”, a logic, that remains the only one possible (in the time of war, in the world of patriarchal bourgeois conservative values) for the military establishment to tackle the shadow of their nightmare: defeated armies, undisciplined bodies risking the social and political order; logically ends in a new disciplinary institution: the death sentence – the place of shame and dishonor – a institution that seeks to discipline the soldier’s body and produces the needed human potential (disciplined utilitarian man’s body) for trench warfare. This logic, contrary to its own expectations, affects the networks of loyalties which have been built in emphatic gestures, so it eclipses the niches of occurred Bulgarian modernity in living the everydayness of the trench (stabilized social distance between officer and soldier through the respect produced to the higher officers’ ranks: exactly because “he has understood, secured and protected the soldier’s life and honor”, the distance, because of its way of constructing, legitimizes the hierarchal structure of power, the recognized power-knowledge to whoever deals with it for common progress and the soldier’s survival becomes a niche of happened modernization, a kind of economy of progress brought about by social gift exchanges: done for any community and recognized by it).

Moreover, the reservist censors’ reports lack the information about the impact of “the soldier’s death sentence” on the “soldier’s soul and body”, they implicitly and explicitly – after 1916 and especially after 1917 – suggest to the General Staff to seek to stabilize the front line through measures dealing with the circumstances at the front line which are responsible for “feeding the critical soldier’s mood”⁶⁸. When reporting on the discipline they underline what makes the everydayness of the soldier’s trench unbearable: the lack of news from home because of irregular correspondence, the lack of food and clothes, senseless attacks, long marches, lack of furlough, often dislocation of army units, badly provided with munitions, the trenches, a government

⁶⁷ CAM, V. Tirmovo, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.26-l. 37-8, 147-150; F. 40, inv.2. u.a.49-l. 129.

⁶⁸ Ibid, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.32-l. 128-32, 165-9; F. 60, inv.2, u.a. 145-l. 54; F. 40, inv.2, u.a. 368-l. 118, 132, 164-7, 194-7; F. 48, inv.5, u.a. 455-l. 12, F. 40, inv.2, u.a. 764 l. 273-4; F. 40, inv. 1, u.a. 268-l. 293-8; F. 40, inv. 2, u.a. 726-l. 195-7; F.16, inv.2, u.a, 28.

careless of the soldier's families, all of that is perceived and appreciated by the soldiers as "difficult to bear", as "an unfair game not to be supported". That argument in such a form and content never, or very rarely, appears in the drumhead court-marshals' archived documents, however I can suppose that those perceptions could create a space of shared values that cross the dividing social and political lines in a way to form layers of ideological and political collective unconsciousness of the "man at war". Its manifestation could serve implicitly the function of exculpatory discourse that slides the culpability from "charged with crime" to "responsible he who does not prevent it because of steps not taken to cope with the pains of everyday trench life", so it could work on transforming, at different levels of the soldier's conscious and unconscious, the "soldier's crime" into an "action against the perceived unfairness". Moreover, the military psychologist shows "that in that war moral consciousness was enormously tense and it makes the combatant very sensitive to every injustice"⁶⁹. I could barely detect the influence of such an argument in an explicit rejection of the "soldier's sentence to death" but it might help an ideologically and politically unconsciousness of the combatants at war who are witnesses to this reality: the "body tied to a picket for execution by shooting down", "blind and alone", to form; an ideologically and politically unconsciousness of combatants at war, in which field, the blame on some unfairness happened then when "ours have killed ours" is to emerge (following the reminiscences through which the suppressed past of the soldier's death sentence persists in the life of the survivor, his drawing, his narrative). Here – where the "killed past: morbidly bites life, where the dead inhabit the living" (in Michel de Certeau's words) – is to accumulate the alternative sources for resolving man's identity crisis of both: who faced the death sentence and who witnessed its execution. So because of its ensuing social effects (embodied in "dishonorable death and shameful mourning") this punitive institution accumulates sources for destabilizing the ideological foundations of a classical bourgeois patriarchal order.

That is why the bourgeois value-normative-webs did not allow the normalization of the critical war experience of being sent before a drumhead court-martial, so the Bulgarian high officer staff continued to seek the disciplining effects of the death sentence: punishing "every single bodily act" that threatens the established order and hierarchies, that overshadows the victory of the Bulgarian ideal of national unification (legitimised as a "precondition for national happiness and progress"). **An institution sustains the classical bourgeois ideal embodied in the figure of the Bulgarian soldier's masculinity: "physical endurance, strong self-control, moral power, strong will to fight against enemy, to win in the blazes and life's storms"**⁷⁰, their discursive practices produce the statements whose noises and murmurs continuously suppress the unsaid

⁶⁹ Cf. Dimitrova, Sn. "My war is not your war': the Bulgarian debate on the Great War. 'The Experienced War' and Bulgarian modernization", *Rethinking History*, 2002, 1, pp. 15-34

⁷⁰ Ibid.

of experience (**what is, difficult to be spelt out or said**), so they fraudulently-helpfully assist the work of trauma: to obstruct the access to one's own past. At the same time, they fraudulently-helpfully participate in working out the coping mechanism for overcoming the common place of identity crisis of the soldier's masculinity: the "shame of betraying man's nature to fight against the enemy", articulated critical images of the "soldier's betrayal" (kept in accusatory discursive practice of death sentence), they might have been swollen by other images of "heroism of fallen for the Patria", traumatizing memory is to be normalized in the well-built figure of the "Bulgarian soldier's physical and moral force".

Such a powerful ideal – of social order and political stability of classical bourgeois modernity – embodied in the figure of the "Bulgarian soldier's moral and physical force" (articulating and sustaining the normative value webs of a patriarchal bourgeois modernity, webs which mirrors the politically legitimate and socially acceptable death sentence of the rebellious soldier's body) silences "the representatives of upper and lower middle class at war" about "what happened then" ("his emerging critical position to the soldier's death sentence at front line"), especially at the time experienced as the "third national catastrophe". For example, exactly this "solicitor in grey coat", who saved sentenced soldiers, came to disapprove totally the soldiers' defeat at *Dobro pole* (September 1918) as an unbearable reality of disorder: "soldiers without commanders", "non-disciplined bodies", fleeing fire lines in panic...⁷¹. Something has to be repressed and suppressed when he is faced with an unbearable reality of "social chaos", produced by those revolting, rebellious undisciplined soldiers' bodies, as if the military establishment's nightmare (defeated armed forces, social chaos) comes true, a nightmare, the silhouette of which, stands behind military policy to punish any gesture aimed at risking the military hierarchy and discipline. Then the image of social chaos marginalizes and silences another one: the soldier's death sentence at the front line, so the unbearable view of defeated armies is to suppress the unbearable reality of the soldier sentenced to death.

The power of normative official discourses of conservative bourgeois modernity continues to marginalize and suppress the war experience of the "soldier's death sentence and killing for the sake of killing", the ideology of a "heroic death and soldier's masculinity" – bridges the critical gap of experience (opened between the rear's expectations (imagined) and the opportunity for the front lines (performed) in the trench war – works in wiping up the frustrating figures of defeat (behind which the shadow of soldier's undisciplined body comes to light). Or, here: the articulating images of "heroism, honour, dignity, and masculinity" (normalizing the traumatic war experience) – kept in the only possible figure: the "soldier fallen for Patria on the battlefield of honour" – are bound to produce the image of the "soldier sentenced

⁷¹ Cf. Cheshmedzhiev, Gr., *Politicheski...Cit.op.*, 1988, p. 99, 108, 109.

for neglect of duty” in order to be identified in the only possible figure of “betrayal, dishonour, and fear that risk national happiness and progress”.

Both images work in shattering the networks of political loyalties and accumulating the sources for negotiating identities of social actors in the public and private space because the suppressed past (of the “soldier’s death sentence”) morbidly bites the present of the living survivor, because resistance to the past war has to be killed (silenced into oblivion through the work of memory and murmurs of discourses) ending up in nothing, but its repetitive returns and detours (often disguised as another⁷², so the experience of the death sentence as a place of unfairness and inhumanness develops the survivor’s “war negatives” – shot as an eye witness – to exhibit his war recollection: reprieved soldier, lawyer who did (not) sign the soldiers’ sentences, and so on, through which a cry for sentencing and killing is to echo⁷³). So the war memoir in its function to serve the mourn narrative (a response to their loss and to a past that does not want to go away because of its traumatic impacts) surely undermines the ideological foundations of a classical patriarchal bourgeois modernity (in the ideological context of its political horizons the traumatized war past continues not to normalize in an appropriate way the public mourning – a place of public recognition to overcome the “dishonourable death and shameful mourn” (responsible for traumatic impacts of a past that cannot depart). And, the “dead” continues inhabiting the “alive”, this reality has been unconsciously grasped by the survivor – the returning soldier, however, mourns in private for his loss (the “killed soldier” and the “happiest times before...”) – in his frustrating self-identity images when he comes to seek for himself: “I cannot recognize my-self, the others are unrecognisable, or did I change so much...”⁷⁴. Then the ruse of history (in Freud’s wording) continues to play its game: the spirit of Hamlet’s assassinated father emerges in another scene to become a law that the son acts upon⁷⁵, or **the spirit of the dead past (the soldier sentenced to death)** is to appear in another scene where it becomes the law to follow (behind the figuratively developing war narrative and its plotting the shadow of the shot soldier remains⁷⁶).

All of that happens, somehow, because “the soldier’s sentence for neglect of duty” becomes a trauma, in which, the experience of some possible “death-place” of concerned humanness is stored in the soldier’s body without the meditation of

⁷² Cf. Certeau, Mishel de., *Histoire...* Cit.op., pp. 85-7.

⁷³ Cf. Georgiev, G. *Edin ot parva...* Cit.op., Karchev, Petar, *Prez prozoretza...*, Cit.op., Iliev, Nencho, *Kraj Persiter...* Cit.op.

⁷⁴ Dimitrova, Snezhana, “Possible, impossible retour chez soi des prisonniers de guerre de 14-18: le cas bulgare entre les deux guerres”. In Rémy Cazals and Pascal Payen, eds., *Les prisonniers de guerre à travers l’histoire. Contacts entre peuples et cultures*, Toulouse, Privat, 2003, pp. 257-279.

⁷⁵ Cf. Certeau, Mishel de., *Histoire...* Cit.op., p. 85.

⁷⁶ Cf. Georgiev, G. *Edin ot parva...* Cit.op., Karchev, Petar, *Prez prozoretza...*, Cit.op., Iliev, Nencho, *Kraj Persiter...* Cit.op.

consciousness. Then it bursts out at different places bearing witness to a particular place of the soldier's war experience – an unbearable scene to be faced with – the “death-place” of some injustice, of the double killing (moral and physical), of humiliated humanity, of total deprivation: bare human being deprived of the past, leaving traces, a legacy, stripped of the layers of social identity (citizen, patriot) and its ensuing rights, the “death-place” with the masks of the political removed, showing the hypocrisy of the social. So the soldier might have met with something unbearable, his Gorgon – his view of her transforms the human into inhuman and thus unavoidably addresses the humanness in the human, calling for a humanness which cannot be avoided⁷⁷ – so “her killing-gaze” (seeing *Gorgon*), transforms the human into inhuman and then inevitably calls **the humanness, a gaze leaving the human in the border between human and inhuman**, so this “unbearable scene of seeing” becomes a *precondition of possibility for* witness to speak out of different places: drawings, sketches, why not (through the ballot box) when he has to vote in the dark room of the polling booth. And, the soldiers' witness to the moment of – “to be concerned by the death sentence” – that cuts through strictly dividing lines between “right” and “left”, and takes the “death sentence” – to a place of contingency – hardly articulating sources for overcoming the identity crisis (opened by the flow of changing historical times), because of “what has been the core of witness” – its impossibility to be commissioned – how to ask somebody in the public space to bear testimony to the “view-scene that transforms human into inhuman”, to something that cannot be witnessed⁷⁸. Then “such a death sentence” traces the access to its own documents (words, parole in Agamben's wording) by mapping out the “places of its lacunas”, so it is to listen to the lacunas on the witness to the soldier shot down, on the lacunas of death sentence's witness, so unfolding the war experience is to embark on this adventure: to search to understand the core of such experience by following the zigzags, detours of bearing witness to “what cannot be witnessed” – the view that converts human into inhuman: “tied to a picket to be shot down, drooped, kneaded body, blind and alone dead”, “a killed life shamed by its disgrace”, so it is to trace out the inseparability of such a scene and its witness (nevertheless they are separated in the time and space) through the places he is particularly speaking out about, so to decode the witnessing – the play between potentiality of speech and its taking place (to follow Agamben's understanding of witnessing to...).

Probably, that is why the soldier's death sentence becomes a place where the reservist officers' positions (although acclaiming the practice of reprieve) from the right and left of the political spectre might have met tacitly at the front line – a “time-place” in “where-when” unavoidably called humanness – but their witness to “what happened then and there” remain separated and found in current politics (due

⁷⁷ Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of...* Cit.op., pp. 54-5.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.92, 150-1.

to both the different ideological and normative horizons of their social status, and the testimony's core – not to be commissioned). So N. Iliev's and Venev's witness to the soldier's death sentence met in their perception of some unfairness, of unbearable social solitude when they faced their *Gorgont* – he total annihilation of humanness: the soldier shot by firing squad, the drooped, kneaded body, blind and alone on a picket for execution, the threshold between human and inhuman – but their way of bearing witness to (the speech, its taking place, the relation between the possibility and impossibility of language⁷⁹) is separated by the communist classification of what they taught as a witness's documents: one left in the communist party's archive, another left in the special files of the National Library to be silenced as a fascist writer's legacy (procedures help us understand how the ideology works on silencing the witness in current politics and becomes a complicit in trauma's work to hinder the access to the traumatic past). Hr. Halachev's (quoted above) communist witness to the "soldier's death sentence" remembers Nencho Iliev's rebellious gesture against the "senselessness of the soldier's death sentence" in the Bulgarian public space (his 1934 war short story, "Kraj Perister" ("By the side of Perister") was the only one I succeeded in finding), a meeting may have never happened because by then N. Iliev was missing (killed five years before by communists as a fascist writer whose name entered the long record of those missing, a record aimed at dooming his life's deeds: to vanish without a trace, to immerse into nothingness, to be silenced to oblivion). So both witnesses to the "soldier's death sentence" that meet by bearing testimony to the "shooting of soldiers by firing squad" never met in the public space because they witness "the place of experience" remain inapt of producing sources for resolving the identity crisis (brought about by the changing flow of the historical-political times), because N. Iliev's long lasting mourn for his loss – the soldier shot by firing squad – was to challenge the identity in which he was recognized (a "fascist writer") in order to be killed without being sentenced⁸⁰ in 1944, so he was condemned to such a death whose absurdity called his own humanness, "an apostrophe" that cannot be avoided, the scene of a misfit soldier shot at dawn whose traumatic effect made the eyewitness emerge, to bear witness to the unbearable – the worthlessness of the human, the threshold between the human and inhuman – in the interwar public space of 1934. Paradoxically, in this case, the Agamben's witness in its core (cannot be

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 144-5.

⁸⁰ Nencho Iliev was subjected as hundreds of his political class to the communist practice of "death without trial" by the Ministry of Interior in the first months of communist rule when the toppled political bourgeois class was exposed to "the revolutionary justice of the victorious people", so that "yesterday's powerful of the day" were identified with "reactionary forces and the fascist remains" to fight against. He disappeared in the grimy caves of a communist prison to be announced as missing and added to a long list of those who "vanished without leaving a trace" when the empowered communists were mapping out the communist project: the new light future, a future, the foundations of which might lay bare the life of the political opponent of communism: the bourgeois life deprived of any worth.

assigned and the possibility and impossibility of speech) covers with fame the body of infamous (shot soldier by firing squad for missed duty), and the actuality of archives (in Foucault's words): unfolding all "that" we were not and cannot say anymore, discovering that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history – the difference of times, ourselves – the difference of masks⁸¹, keeps the infamy of infamous people: sentenced to death misfit soldier⁸².

So I would never have thought of this experience – facing the death sentence and the soldier shot at the front line – in such a way as I did in the previous pages, if I have not come upon the unpublished war plays of N. Iliev where the suppressed reality of the "soldier's death" burst out, I would never have found those conventional archives and non-conventional documents I worked with, if I had not come upon his mourn narrative for his loss (the soldier killed by firing squad and the happiest pre-war times of the well-established networks of loyalties: to my family, to my King), so access to the archived past has been opened by one trace – his narrative, a narrative, which serves the function of his response to his loss, of his response to a past that does not want to go away because of its traumatic impact, the approach helps to find the places of stored experience of the Bulgarian Great War, and to wonder what stands behind the representations through which the Bulgarian Official War Memory was done.

***IV. The "Spirit of the killed past and its scenes":
War literature and "soldier's death sentence"
(case study of N. Iliev's witness)***

My research on the First World War soldier's death sentence started when I encountered both family trauma: a present day's painful experience to face with a shamed past (1915 soldier's death sentence of the grand-father of one Bulgarian family⁸³), and the long-lasting daughter's mourning for her loss (beloved father and his delightful upper-middle class bourgeois world whose legacy was stigmatised by their death sentences "as fascist criminals and people's enemies", a legacy to be publicly shamed through a "disgraceful death" and a "dishonourable mourn"); both helped me in finding a new witness and its document for the Great War. I found a happy meeting and undreamt of discovery when I read Nencho Iliev's non-published plays

⁸¹ Foucault, Michel, *Archeology of...*, Cit.op., pp. 130–1.

⁸² For more developed argumentation of this thesis see Dimitrova, Sn., "In-famy of infamous...", Cit.op.

⁸³ This happy discovery of Iliev's works coincides with another chance encounter with a family tragedy after 100 years: a Bulgarian family was searching to find out why the name of their grand-father was missing from the rebuilt First World War soldier's monument in the center of their town (*Stambolij-ski*) and seeing how their effort got nowhere, but the place of his shame: the soldier's death due to the Disciplinary Code. Cf. Dimitrova, Snezhana, „In-famy of infamous...", ...” Cit.op.

on the First World War, which bring me to question the rarely opened drumhead court-martial dossiers. Iliev's works were deposited in the department of Rare Books & Manuscripts (British Library)⁸⁴ by his daughter Dorina Ileva-Simpson (who sought to secure his father's legacy against the new inappropriate readings and rewritings, and thereby prevent N. Iliev's life and biography from new tortures and the violence to which they have been subjected by the communists in 1945 and afterwards⁸⁵). Written on the eve of the Second World War, rewritten several times under different titles, these plays reveal the work of trauma, and of the author's mourn narrative. Reading his works more and more, I started to ask about 1) whether the normative horizons with their webs of values and ideological contexts could play the role of collective ideological and political unconsciousness that gives a helpful hand to his trauma becoming normalized: being an "eye witness" to the death sentence, how such complicity worked on silencing the witness as the author of war writings, how this trauma worked – compulsion to repeat war reminiscences – to impact on unconsciously accumulating sources for his negotiating identities of everyday life: patriot, citizen, politician, diplomat, man, father, friend and so on; 2) whether their pressure could produce an identity crisis that impacted on one's own relationships with a spontaneous war experience and surrounding world, so what ideology bridged the gap between the real and imagined and how it affects the war memory of the First World War and 3) whether the "place" – of resolving one's own identity crisis – remains the narrative renderings surrounding the frustrating world in rewritten texts, and how the latter might have become the undreamt of document for historical studies on trauma and its way to build a new archive (the body) by leaving traces to its access (repetitive, compulsive scenes that cannot be killed, left to oblivion).

Three plays unfold one story – rewrote and rethought – under the following titles "In the Balkan's Womb" (June 1939), "Peasant's Honour" (July 1941), "The Prodigal Son" (1943). It is a story of one Bulgarian mountain village at war; the characters are seen through their attitudes to the destiny of a village teacher when he was faced with court-martial procedures after being absent without leave for a fortnight from his regiment. Saved by his comrades (fellow-villagers)⁸⁶ at the front line and his commander-in-chief (called as a witness to the court-martial, they reported his exemplary brave attitude by suggesting that ultimately the bad impact of his sentence on both the soldier's mood, and on the expected courageous, victorious march of the regiment)⁸⁷, so this "teacher in a greatcoat" is given the last chance to "fight against the enemy and defend his soldier's honour". Grasping the moment in a critical war

⁸⁴ Cf. Add 7088 A-E, 635E, British Library.

⁸⁵ Cf. Simpson's private archive deposited at SSEES, UCL.

⁸⁶ Compare: the same stories are kept in the ACM: CAM, V. Tîrnovo, F. 40. inv. 3, u.a.28-l. 157-158.

⁸⁷ Compare: CAM,, F.40, inv.2, u.a. 43-l. 377; F.40, inv.2, u.a. 29-l. 149-162.

situation by massive attacks from the enemy, he displays his “true soldier’s nature”, “he is decorated for his heroic gesture”, so he is spared the destiny of “dishonourable mourning” to his family (as if his war performance desperately searches to meet the social horizon of expectations of the Bulgarian soldier, a horizon, here, sustained by the desires of his wife: to be married to a hero, not to be doomed to the shame of a deserter’s wife). But his ultimate social performance comes at the end of the war when he becomes a “real winner”: taming the aggression of combatants who break the military discipline and threaten turning their arms against the bureaucrats in the rear (considered to be responsible for soldier’s personal and family miseries)⁸⁸. The ideology kept to the end of Iliev’s play makes me take it seriously, re-read and reflect on this text that, at first glance, seems to have been so conventional and simplistic as an ideological message: do not allow the challenge to the ideals of social happiness – citizen law, order, moral, political stability, all embodied in the masculine body that might control the emotions and an outburst of violence – and to sustain the (utopian) bourgeois horizon of social empathy and solidarity by praising the economy of national progress: gift exchanges (“a friendly lending helpful hand to others in a difficult situation in the name of collective happiness”), a narrative situation I will return to.

In the frenetic repetitions to follow the civic law the author mirrors the ideal of political order and social stability of classic bourgeois modernity but his feverish emphasis on “the civic” in its positive social performances translates a clash between the “values of civic law” and “sense of Army Act” at the front line, a clash as it has been perceived by the combatant and insists on its repetition – as if continually returning in his writings to some traumatically experienced unfairness of military disciplinary punishments, some past that cannot depart. Constructing this biographical itinerary of the “citizen in a soldier’s greatcoat” that survives the death sentence and war, and is involved in sustaining the project of “national happiness and progress” – his performed role of thoughtful leader preventing his compatriots from rebellious gestures bearing nothing, but destruction, pain and unhappiness – Iliev seeks to deal with the traumatic experience of “witnessing to what happened there”: images of a misfit killed soldier, of wasted lives and annihilated socially valuable biographical capital, frustrating images of badly stigmatized life trajectories by a death sentence, a man’s body condemned to social solitude.. The biography of his personage unfolds

⁸⁸ He reflects on the story of the Bulgarian soldiers’ mutiny after the military defeat at *Dobro pole* (September 1918) and continuously appraises the historical significance of the middle classes; representative of war (‘the teacher in a soldier’s greatcoat’) whose way of thinking and acting, on the one hand, saves the established social order by channeling social tension towards ballot boxes, on the other brings the Agrarian party to the power (1919–1923) that votes for law the seeks to identify the responsibility for the Bulgarian defeat and sends to the court part of the military and political establishment, blamed, among other things, for “killing for the sake of killing” and the death sentenced imposed on soldiers by the firing squad.

Iliev's social ideal of a meaningful bourgeois life: the son of a war veteran, a person highly estimated by his community, newly happy married to his great love on the day of outbreak of war, a disciplined soldier, treated as criminal by the Army Act because he cannot resist the voice of love and fleeing from the front line to embrace his wife, coming back to the front line⁸⁹ he becomes the "soul of his army unit"; his teleological itinerary of conscious individual logically ends in his last role – the "savior of his village". Thus, the constructed biographical itinerary, which mirrors the heroic action, serves the function of an implicit blame on "what happened then when a soldier was sentenced and shot" – social capital was wasted and a bourgeois future was threatened – by challenging the logic of the drumhead court-martial. The logic of a positively connoted image of the leader, exactly because it complies with its conventional bourgeois representations in the interwar Bulgarian public space – the loyal citizen that prevents the networks of loyalties (on the horizontal and the vertical) from being shattered by violent gestures against the hierarchal power structure – implicitly brings to the alternative reality of personal and collective unhappiness, a regress that results from the lack of loyal citizen and conscious social individual due to the death sentences at the front line; repetitive moments in his plays bear witness to his traumatic experience of the soldier's death sentence: a place of shattered networks of social loyalties, of dangerously overshadowing horizons of the Bulgarian bourgeois future. This author's nightmare is to be normalized through the carefully constructed biographical itinerary of his social actor – as if reaching its own telos: social effectiveness of individual biography, visible in efforts aimed at sustaining the national collective project; normalization continuously occurs in a place of joy: lives saved, reprieved death sentence at the front line, joy somehow reveals a place of positive economy to be appreciated: not to waste the social capital (the loyal citizen). Normalizing images somehow continue developing what transpires behind his positive war memory – the image of the reprieved – the figure of shot soldier, as if the spirit of the executed keeps plotting his narrative, as if some past returns disguised as another ("killed" as "saved"). So such a persistence of execution – does not want to go away – it emphasizes on the experience that the trauma has stored in the soldier's body when he witnessed "the killed human life, body dropped on a stake, blinded and alone": the death sentence as a place of the economy of regress and destruction, the place to produce the sources for critical gestures against the established bourgeois regime. The carefully thought out and rewritten happy ending of those plays wipes up the traumatizing reality of the unhappy endings of the soldier shot at dawn, of a destroyed individual life, of a stigmatized biographical time by a "dishonourable death", of a family ruined by "dishonourable mourning". This story carries some ideological messages of social solidarity, articulated by the images of

⁸⁹ The same story exists in the archives of drumhead court-martials within the First Army where Iliev was military correspondent, Cfs: CAM, F.40, inv.2, u.a. 968-I. 23.

a “given hand” – always thought to be the economy of progress: gift exchanges, even postponed in the time, that waive the social tissue – to the other in a critical situation (the role of savior exchanged, they help the comrade not to be killed, he restrains them from being involved in civic war with all its catastrophic impacts on the biographical itinerary of the “returned warrior” and his family), an economy, as if articulating through gestures of social empathy, thought to be able to create some imagined world of compatible collective happiness and individual sensitive life. Creating a space of “warmth, love and mutuality” Iliev’s short stories (in this book and novels in principle) carry a utopian ideology that tries to bridge the gap between imagined and real conditions of everyday life, and here, it wipes out the reality of non-saved soldiers (the place of critically sapped ideological foundation of his utopian horizon) and somehow tries to cope with the long-lasting mourning for his loss: the soldier shot at dawn by firing squad, a mourning, however which digs critical gaps between the author’s experience of war and the normative bourgeois culture, which is articulated in images of the “soldier’s stamina”.

Structured around two parallel worlds (“in the rear” and “at the front line”) with their different social times and everyday rhythm, Iliev’s plays keep developing at different textual levels key-representations of the combatant’s experience of war – as it is articulated in inter-war current politics and archives (1915–1918) – corrupted bureaucracy, a selfish political class, and “home front line” centred on its surviving; those images embody the war experience as “representative of different social groups at the front line”; pieces of those plays literary remind us of the censor’s reports from the fighting line. The dialogues between the run away soldier and his wife display a situation of total misunderstanding, it alludes to the dialogue between the deaf; her pressure on him to return to the fighting lines and to surrender to his military commanders bears witness to the terrorizing effects of “dishonourable mourning” on the woman’s body and its ensuing social renderings (the critically concerned relationship between yesterday’s lovely living man and woman to be reflected on continuously, here, 23 years after the war ended)⁹⁰. These scenes keep reflecting on the negative social impact of this newly constructed institution: “dishonourable death and shameful mourning”, they keep emphasizing its corroding effects on the social tissue: affected family relationships, destroyed emotional rapport between the sentenced soldier and his family, critically menaced loyalties of concerned relatives regarding the Bulgarian state and King (so these narratives continue to bear witness to Iliev’s critical experience: fearing to see the overshadowed loyalties on the horizontal: to my-Patria-my-king-my-nation, his ideological effort to wipe up the frustrating images

⁹⁰ He returns to the front line predominantly due to the desire of his beloved wife fearing both his death sentence by firing squad and dishonourable mourning as socially stigmatizing the family of the sentenced, her way to persuade him includes the threat to report him to the police if he stays within village. The whole story complies with documents in ACM, F. 40, inv.2. u.a.32-l. 150.

– of the sentenced soldier – underlines what was at stake here: the political rapport between the “king’s family and his people”, the bourgeois future); these narrative repetitions – as if some past does not want to go away because of its traumatic effects – surely bears witness to the author’s mourn narrative for his loss (“the soldier killed at front line”), for the happy time of social loyalties and well performed social contracts, the mourn narrative continues to reveal his ethical subject’s traumatic past: the unbearable view of seeing – the soldier shot at dawn by firing squad – that works on threatening the Bulgarian bourgeois monarchic future.

Here, I have to emphasize again the work of his mourn narrative (as a response to his loss) in sapping the ideological foundation of the bourgeois classical modernity’s ideal: “man’s boldness and endurance, strongest man resisting life’s storm and war’s blaze, and never breaking down”. His hero breaks down at the front line, he deserts because he follows the call of love, so he commits the “crime” deserving a death sentence according to the Army Act, his performances are represented as a human situation that merits respect and sympathy, so the author’s position continues to articulate “the core of what” is “my-own-experience of war”, it starts challenging what was at stake for modern power: the control over the life and death, and so his narrative continues to bear witness to what was formed and worked as an ideological and political unconsciousness of man at war. So his sorrow is unconsciously working on amassing alternative sources to weaken the fundamentals of the conservative bourgeois order, it makes uncomfortable his post-war life and he continues writing on that, so mourning in private; furthermore, the ideological and political context of interwar Bulgaria (First World War defeated country desperately in search of a way to cope with its own trauma: “unaccomplished national unification within historically-and-ethnically-justified-borders”) does not allow public mourning for the sentenced soldier because of the radicalism of this experience: the soldier’s death sentence at the front line (as I already discussed this situation in previous chapter). Thus room has been left for “morbid bits of the killed past” to do its work on accumulating sources for negotiating identities (patriot, human, citizen, politic, diplomat...) and on affecting the bourgeois normative webs. Thus the public mourning never happened and leaves room for the author to mourn in private that will allow the “dead to bite the living, the killed to inhabit the survivor” in a way to produce an identity crisis concerning the relationships with the surrounding world (if not, why cannot the author of these plays bid his farewell to them, his relationships with them witness his difficulties in coping with his traumatic experience, as if nobody, and nothing tries to lend a helping hand to him in his effort to depart from this past: the soldier shot by firing squad, and to put an end to his spirit ruling him instead of persisting in writing under its pressure (once remembrance of the past was resisted: the shot soldier, returns masked: reprieved sentenced).

Hence I might emphasize again his carefully thought out and rewritten happy endings three times in four years: the reprieved soldier (after facing the death sentence), and his happily developing individual biography – in its collective usefulness – of “dignity patriot and loyal citizen”, such a happy ending occurs three times in the same scene, performed by the same characters – as if lingering on only one possible image (found after 28 years of searching to find a mechanism for coping with his traumatic war past: “tied to a picket for shooting down, drooped, kneaded body, blind and alone dead”): of sentenced but reprieved. So his rewritings and rethinking track out the traumatic experience stored in the soldier’s body that keeps insisting on its frenetic reminiscences – the unbearable scene of “killed human life in a body dropped on a stake, blinded and alone”⁹¹, of “wasted, destroyed and detracted from any life value whatsoever.” Further, its own way to calm down his own affects (anger, pain, concerns) by the same author’s joy – to enjoy the scene of the non-performed death sentence due to gestures of social empathy and solidarity – unfolds the work of his ideological and political unconscious (of the Bulgarian citizen, patriot, supporter of the Bulgarian monarchy); a work through which “the spots of his identity crisis” is displayed – of the Bulgarian politic, patriot, citizen, monarchist, sharing Tolstoist life performances, belonging to the fast modernizing bourgeois Bulgaria as well as to “what” this modernisation has to deal with: patriarchal values and peasant idyllic world – the shadow of the sentenced and killed (often peasant, often obscured yesterday’s own heroism in an unmarked grave) shed on his bourgeois life and on his monarchic world. Then the author’s effort is somehow bound to end up in nothing, but reviving the positive war reminiscences (held always in the figure of the reprieved soldier), as if he is reaching nothing, but “the common place of positive war memory” – the soldier’s life saved – articulating and sustaining the horizon of national happiness and progress with their ideological contexts of social solidarity and empathic gestures, the place of occurring consolation in a lightening horizon of some promise for a Bulgarian bourgeois monarchic future, lightening as if searching to disperse the shadow of the sentenced soldier. So the spirit of the “killed soldier” continues plotting the war memoirs – as if transferring a law which the author obeys and thus surviving carries on hearing and acting upon a law whose spirit is to challenge the foundation of Iliev’s world by menacing its future.

But, probably, the same past – deceitfully returning by morbidly biting the survivor of the war, so the dead (shot soldier) inhabits the alive (survived participant) – might have actively participated in amassing sources for negotiating identities (of Bulgarian, citizen, patriot, loyal to...) of the rebellious social actors against the political horizon (bourgeois, monarchy), negotiating identities – as if making it possible “to go to sleep bourgeois and to wake up communist”. Then N. Iliev’s witness, behind

⁹¹ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj Perister”, Cit.op.. Cf. Dimitrova, Sn., „In-famy of infamous...” (In Bulgarian), Cit.op.

which transpires the silhouette of “a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant”, somehow takes one of possible resources for de-legitimising the monarchic institution – the political nightmare of his unpublished plays. And, then, when this nightmare came true, in September 1944 – when the “Bulgarian bourgeois government, Monarchy and their intellectual, political, economical supporters” were identified with “fascists, reactionaries, people’s enemy to be dealt with”⁹² by communist politics of violence that sought to stabilize their dominance in the ever shrinking public space of early transition to “people’s democratic government” – N. Iliev was unfairly sentenced to the same injustice: the core of his witness – his *Gorgon* – death drawing on the “bare life”. So N. Iliev was sentenced to such a death – the place of total annihilation of humanness, of total depersonalisation and deprivation – after his name is left in the long record of those missing in the “revolutionary communist autumn of 1944”.

Thus these plays – as if unfolding some theatrical acts aimed at swallowing “black and white” scenes of his morbid documentary on the soldier’s death sentence, “By the side of Perister” (to which I will return afterwards) – re-work the traumatic experience of their author and serve the function of a coping mechanism for his sorrow; his way of building a unique narrative coping strategy for normalizing the past (that does not want to go away) resurface the work of the author’s ideological and political collective unconsciousness. It is formed by conflicting normative horizons of a peasant patriarchal world and a classical bourgeois modernity, through the strange confluence of Tolstoy’s mystic philosophy of contemplation and lingering expectations on a classical bourgeois prosperous society (based however, on capitalist dynamic and economic power), in the course of a bizarre meeting between his biblical ethics of non-violence and the Bulgarian national ideal – although defensive-aggressive, keeping the horizons of a “just war for just cause” – for N. Iliev; conflicts and tensions that bear testimony to all the interruptions of his biographical trajectory. So his long-lasting mourn for his loss (plays that have been written and re-written 25 years after the end of the Great War) display the work of trauma on building a new archive of stored experience: the soldier’s body as witness, and its documents: rewritten words in unpublished plays; all that could be perceived throughout the work of his ideological and political unconsciousness, responsible however, for his long lasting sorrow.

Those plays pose the question about the experience of the Great War that starts to replace the imagination as a structure that plots the narratives; they pose the question about the literature on the First World War as important document for reconstructing the traumatic experience. They challenge the conventional history-making of the Great War by displaying the “places” where the suppressed memory might burst out and help to ask about the work of trauma and ideological unconsciousness

⁹² Quotation taken from the memoirs of Russi Hristozov, the second Director of the communist *Militia*.

in constructing and reconstructing the memory of the Bulgarian Great War, the latter urging us to ask about the sources for negotiating identity through the social actor's everydayness (patriot, citizen, father, Bulgarian) when he comes to settle up the relationships within the political frame (set up the horizon of political – bourgeois, monarchic, and national – Bulgarian). I might have wondered about nothing of that, if those plays had not taken me to N. Iliev's "By the side of Perister", a short story about "what happened then and there", published in 1934.

N. Iliev's "By the side of *Perister*" ("Kraj *Perister*") is published in a book (a collection of short stories) called "Times and People" ("*Vremena i Hora*"); it is something of an anachronism if one follows the book's content after looking at the titles. "By the side of *Perister*" refers to the First World War battles for *Pelister* (around Monastir) whose consciously mistaken name serves the same function as *Para praxis* does (in Freud's words): to give a clue to the field of the unconscious – his desire: tells a history as invented as the invented place, as if *Perister*, a creation of fantasy, brings another fabrication: the unfolding story there, developing scenes as unreal as the place, *Perister*, is. "By the side of *Perister*" remains the only narrative testimony on a soldier's death sentence in the Bulgarian interwar public space, that I can find, however. Its own stylistics bears witness to some outburst of a suppressed past – as if some flash blows up a *camera obscura* of his war memory to free and develop the locked negatives (of his experience) there: scenes shot by his eye – breathlessly developing scenes of long delayed reportage of a war journalist (as N. Iliev was in 1915-1918). White and black cadres' imbrications develop what has been left through the lens of his objective – wide open eyes when gazing at the unbearable: the soldier shot down – to invade his memory and store in the "room of treasures" (the black cell: the body) some experience without meditation of consciousness. Such a development bears testimony to both the gaze becoming a precondition of the possibility for a witness – gazing leaves the outside reality to imprint outside through open eyes against the resistance of the conscious: the non-seeing look—and the new archive (the soldier's body): the stored past without meditation of consciousness, which belongs only to a "a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant"; both are a *precondition of possibility for* emerging the ethical subject (in Agamben's wording) from the author of the war memoirs – letting the "unsaid" free from its "prison": "the said" (murmurs of discourses, noises of statements) through *parole*-function from its position of the power. So there is "the said" in the military report (locked in the state archives): "there were 60 cases of madness and 33 of muteness and deafness" **after one** of the summer defeats of 1916"⁹³, and there is something left "unsaid": because... And if following N. Iliev's witness, then this left unsaid "because" it develops into another picture: "at the elbow of Cherna, and in the fields of Monastir.... our positions were covered with torn human bodies, to the one side there were cut off hands,

⁹³ CAM, Veliko Tîrnovo, F.347, inv.1, u.a. 45.

on the other—legs, the living were spotted by the blood and brains of their dead comrades. In the rage of the battle those who had gone mad threw their bombs at their comrades-in-arms⁹⁴. So the human being who spoke out might have overcome the “murmurs of discourse” (on honour, duty, heroism, man’s stamina, soldier’s endurance during the blaze of war) to bear witness to another heroism: to be there in the inferno, by leaving the work of trauma (compulsion to repeat) in “complicity” with his ideologically and politically unconscious of the man at war (what does it mean to be there) to do his best in breaking the burden of the “silenced” (by drawing the witness in Agamben’s words: the relation between potentiality of language and its taking place, the between possibility and impossibility of speech, the role of *parole*). As I already noted, the study of the conventional archives informs us of the number of cases going through the court-martials’ processes (1917–1918) by leaving enough suspense in the official reports, and this anxiety left unspoken “there” is to be relieved by what is “said” here (N. Iliev’s narrating war): “driven mad due to a sudden detonated volcano, the soldiers dispersed as frightened flocks. Those who drifted away (he neither uses the verb desert nor leave – S.D.) from the battle, from the unimaginable hell, they have been arrested and sent to the drumhead court-martial”⁹⁵. So “the said” through the search for the *parole* (games of speech, especially archived experience in words) here serves the function of transferring the culpability from the sentenced to one who cannot understand why “they drift away”, then the consciously and carefully found a predicate (“drift away”) – as if avoiding connoting the guilt to the war performances by predicates such as “desert and leave” – works as a missed defense for those sentenced, as if replacing what is lacking: a war psychiatrist composing the anamnesis of shell-shocked; so the function of “the said” here is to manifest what has been stored in the soldier’s body: a tacit rebellion against the unfairness and senselessness brought about by the soldier’s death sentence⁹⁶. And, N. Iliev’s delayed war reportage continues to develop what remains unsaid in the censor’s military reports, but, however, might have sustained the arguments for reprieving the soldier’s death sentence: the “perception of some deep injustice” – done to the “soldier killed for neglect of duty” – produces negative effects on the soldier’s body in a way to

⁹⁴ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj...”, Cit.op. 14–15.

⁹⁵ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj...”, Cit.op. 15–16.

⁹⁶ There is another witness to his perception of unfair game played there: it is the personage of military prosecutor, who emerges from some paralleled reality (left unfolded here as some dark background) and standing out against the contextual reality of his brave soldiers in his war short stories. Iliev’s way to confront his narrative came about by a brave combatant – not shaken by fear, but “accused of being a coward” – to the military detective dreading death under fire in the trenches, reveals exactly this traumatic experience: to witness the unfairness of being “sentenced to death” due to a “moment of weakness”, “to be human in the inhuman: war inferno”, and continues to bear witness to what was perceived as an unbearable scene: these moments of seeing totally destroyed soldiers’ lives, a death that killed twice, physically and morally, a death that made human life senseless, deprived from any human value whatsoever, a death to end in an unmarked grave without a cross.

jeopardize the war victory (“apathy, unwillingness to endure there” as reported by war censors). And, N. Iliev’s soldier – decorated several times, now sentenced to death after moving away from “the unimaginable hell” – looking at 40 recent unmarked graves without crosses and flowers, bears witness to the core of the experience of war through his barely heard words: “What is happening... (as if waking up from nightmares to face the reality-nightmare – S.D.) we are fighting for this Macedonia! We fought before, we fight now... Free us and we are going to fight again...”⁹⁷. Thus he might have left the very important clue to the war experience, although cleaned up, buried under war *meta*-narrative’s picture of the battlefields; this character might have left such a valuable trace of the searched documents (not only the clemency appeals – piling up in the conventional state archives’ dossiers) for “what is standing” and “why it does not stop” transpiring behind the figure of the reprieved, it is a clue to the shadow that plots the war memoirs, for the spirit of the shot soldier the survivor acts upon, for a past that resists being killed (because of its traumatic impacts), and compulsively returns albeit disguised as something else (frenetic repetition of war reminiscences: reprieved). So the occurred reality takes into account clemency appeals to end up in the reality of the reprieved soldier, although developing the positive war memory becomes a common place of reviving positive remembrances of reservist officers when they come to cope with their trauma (the soldier’s death sentence), here it comes to develop its negative by articulating in an unbearable image: “tied to a picket for execution by shooting (down), dropped body deprived of any value whatsoever, blind and alone”, the image of the past neither to lighten again in their unpublished works, nor in their mourning (in private and public), image of the past to stay behind what is unfolding, plotting their war narrative, the past resisting remembrance and thus to be constrained to detour and return as another frenetic image: the “hand that did not sign the death sentence”.

So as if a three-dimensional-image – a “helpless hung up body, tied and blind” (“without waiting to finish smoking their last cigars, they tied their hands to a picket, and blindfolded them with black cloth”⁹⁸), “the unmarked grave without cross or flower”, “the military cross: the wearing of medals on the survivor’s chest, and the obscuring of medals on the shot soldier’s chest” – gives a clue to track out the process of witnessing the soldier’s death sentence, so it brings to the unbearable view – the *Gorgon*, seeing her, is killing by transforming human into inhuman – and its witness, both remaining inseparable, although separated in time and space⁹⁹. Such inseparability of the unbearable view and its witness are so helpful in grasping “where and how” this dreamt of (in my study’s case) figure of “a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant” is to appear. So, here, through N. Iliev’s mourn narrative,

⁹⁷ Cf. Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj...”, Cit.op. 16–19.

⁹⁸ Iliev, Nencho, “Kraj ...”, Cit.op., p.21.

⁹⁹ Cf. Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of ...*, Cit.op. pp. 54-5, 150-1.

I faced both the unbearable view, seeing what brings to the margin for humanness and inhumanness – “tied to a picket for shooting down, drooped, kneaded body, blind and alone dead”, “a life shamed in its disgrace and killed for the sake of killing” – and its witness who is a particular human being who speaks out through the game of *paroles* at different places (drawings, reservist officers’ mourn narrative where this figure has never been left to developed by leaving the lacunas in their witness to be listen to). So N. Iliev’s mourn narrative makes me meet with the ethical subject – the human being who speaks out – above and beyond (the murmur of discourses, the noises of statements on honourable and dishonourable) about “what happened then in 1915–1918, about what cannot be witnessed to: the scene, the view of which, is the transformation of the human into inhuman, and thus it contains something like an apostrophe, call for humanness in the human that cannot be avoided, that is the witness and nothing else (in Agamben’s wording)¹⁰⁰. So both (the view to bear and its witness however separated in time and space) living inseparable (in trauma) by urging on the author–function (trapped in noises of discourses, murmurs of statements, depending on his position in the field of power) unavoidably cohabits (not always comfortably) with a partner (answering the call for its humanness): an ethical subject (a survived eyewitness overcoming the inhuman – the impossibility of seeing and speaking¹⁰¹), however bearing witness (through the lacunas) to both the human (non-rejected call of his humanness), and the inhumane: impossibility of seeing and of speaking, so I faced with the survived participant: the human being particularly speaking out about what is impossible to be witnessed (through the lacunas left by): the *Gorgon*’s view that transforms human into inhuman, a view however becoming a possibility of witnessing.

So due to my happy discovery of a non-conventional archive: the soldier’s body of survived (eye)witness and its document, I was encouraged to embark on this adventure: to listen to the lacunas of witness to reach the core of the war experience and its witness (not be assigned to the public space to accumulate sources for legitimizing political fights and resolving the national identity crisis in public), so this adventure I owe to N. Iliev’s mourn narrative – a response to his loss and a past that resists departure because it has been traumatized, I owe to an “a living eyewitness, victim, and survived participant”, N. Iliev who cannot survive the same nightmares of his unpublished plays – his war trauma (a death which humiliates the life, the bare life).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ My analysis here bases on Agamben’s research figure of *Müselmann* and it refers to his study on process of witnessing. Cf. Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of ...*, Cit.op.

Резиме

Снежана Димитрова

Смртна казна над војницима (1915–1918): Траума, архиви и сведоци (Студија случаја на основу необјављених ратних драма и објављених кратких прича Ненча Илијева)

Ауторка чланка настоји да, служећи се неким методама психоанализе, на примеру драмских и прозних текстова бугарског писца, новинара и високог државног службеника Ненча Илијева, примени мултидисциплинарни приступ истраживању историје. У питању је студија случаја, којом се испитује један екстремно трауматичан аспект прошлости и његов одраз у сећању на рат: извршење смртних казни над војницима на линији фронта током Првог светског рата. Поред нове архивске грађе у чланку су коришћени и други, неконвенционални историјски извори, као што је књижевност и преписка, којима се настојало разоткрити поље колективног несвесног и подсвесног.

Ауторка настоји да у паралелно истражује сферу идеолошког/политичког несвесног, али и трауматичност самог прикупљања и обнављања сећања на рат. Таква оријентација ове студије ослања се на три главна ослоња: 1) на психоаналитички приступ литератури о Првом светском рату и на његова постигнућа у односу на проучавање поља потиснутог; 2) на дискурзивну анализу представљања идеологије у наративима о Првом светском рату, чиме се настоји да се премости расцеп између замишљених и стварних услова живота у рату и друштвених последица тог расцепа; 3) на микроисторију која отвара индивидуални ниво искуства настојањем да се поклони пажња проучавању документа који препуштају празнинама да говоре, трансформишући их тако у наративну стратегију која следи трагове људских бића „која као да никада нису ни живелала“.