

Summary of Overall Research Project

I am a writer, thinker, reader and visual artist who crosses disciplinary and generic boundaries. More an articulate generalist than a niche specialist, I have produced a body of published work that is interdisciplinary, non-traditional, experiential and thematically interconnected. While the main trajectory of my writing is from scholarship informed by critical theory towards less conventional (in academia at least) literary travel writing/creative non-fiction, I have continued to write in many different genres throughout all stages of my career. An external referee assessing my promotion file described me as “a thinking journeyer through the world” who is “open to and not reduced by applying his critical capacities to all manner of experiences, whether those experiences reside in what we might call high or low cultural moments.”

My writing career thus far, to identify a few fundamental themes, is partly concerned with space in all its facets and its relation to modernity as a general mode of being and to literature/art. My doctoral dissertation and my early academic publications focus on urban space mainly in the 19th century and homologies in modernist literature such as the spatial form of cubism/cubistic narratives and expressionism in art and literature, as well as homologies in postmodernist writing in the form of William Gibson’s hyperspaces. My travel writing, though its focus is obviously different, does not abandon these concerns entirely. I continue to be interested in space, but space in its geographical sense, the physical space across which I travel, the contours of the land and the space of the sea and its islands, the design of villages, towns and cities, and also the ideological, symbolic spaces of nations (specifically Yugoslavia, Croatia) and even the less formally identifiable spaces of local regions with all their attending social/cultural micro values. My academic interest in modernity becomes in these travel narratives a slightly different interest in the present moment of my travelling, the so-called phenomenological now, but also the historical, political and cultural moment at which I am travelling. The record of the world and people I encounter at a specific moment in time, even as that times recedes into the past, I believe, will be significant for future readers and scholars.

Another issue or theme in my writing is the importance of vision. In my doctoral dissertation and my early academic articles, vision is presented as the dominant sense and is bound up with the reifying processes of capitalism. Vision in these early works is optical. Likewise, in my travel writing, vision has had precedence over the other senses; what I see is at the heart of what I describe. In time, this optical view of vision has evolved into an understanding of vision as ‘perception.’ This becomes clear in my recent articles on anamorphosis, in which the vision-based technique in art and architecture becomes a pattern of significance as apprehended by a reader or viewer. Following Ernest Gilman in *The Curious Perspective*, I understand ‘seeing’ not exactly as ‘vision’ in an optical sense, but also ‘perception’ or ‘understanding’ in an integrative sense; readers read a literary text from page to page over time (or view a film from beginning to end). But their understanding is not complete until they ‘see’ the work as a whole, as if spatialized in their mind as a simultaneous pattern of significance. In my later creative non-fiction writing, specifically my memoir *Drink in the Summer*, vision as perception becomes a broader appreciation of the world involving the other senses. The totality of an experience is more than a purely optical appreciation of it. Also, my own memories are integrated into the text, a seeing backwards, which adds complexity to the world and experiences I lay out for readers.

Another theme throughout my writing, which runs counter to my early academic interest in urban modernity, is the significance of the ‘country’ and the accompanying mentality of the rural outsider. This theme can be seen in my writing on William Faulkner and Vincent van Gogh but also in my fiction and most obviously in my travel writing. Short stories like “Waiting for the Strike” as well my three books which concentrate to a large extent on the peasants of the former Yugoslavia and Croatia, all involve people living on the ‘perimeter.’ My record of the latter especially may be of interest to English readers going forward since it concerns a way of life that no longer exists today, at least not in the form it used to. In *Croatia: Travels in Undiscovered Country*, I write about the disappearing peasants of northern Croatia whose daily work life I came to know well, whose dependence on the land and the seasons I documented, and whose work practices I recorded.

This brings me to the region that has been a focus of some of my research. Less a theme than a field of interest, the former Yugoslavia and Croatia have become a complex subject of my trilogy of travel writing/memoir. As I suggest in the preface to my book on Bosnia, I concentrated on this complicated, ethnically-fraught region, “partly out of fascination with the place, its people, and its history, and partly because I started to sense a much bigger project emerge, like a shape under the ocean’s surface.” For me the region became both a physical space occupied by real individuals, well-known and obscure, but also a metaphysical, imagined place with its familiar ‘characters,’ locations, lifestyle – my own Croatian Yoknapatawpha County. Individuals who make cameo appearances in my first book reappear, are fleshed out in more detail and in all their humanity, in my third.

I have three peer-reviewed books in print, *Croatia: Travels in Undiscovered Country* (2003), *Bosnia: In the Footsteps of Gavrilo Princip* (2010), and *Drink in the Summer: A Memoir of Croatia* (2023). My first two books are the first works of literary travel in English on these nations after their independence, are available in over 800 libraries in 43 countries, continue to be sold by major online booksellers, have in the case of *Croatia* gone to a second printing, and have been reviewed in publications such as the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Slavic and East European Journal*, *Quill and Quire*, *The Antigoniish Review* and elsewhere. *Bosnia: In the Footsteps of Gavrilo Princip* won the Silver Medal at the Independent Publishers Book Awards in the History category (2010). *Drink in the Summer* departs from the travel genre somewhat, recounting mainly my own experiences, both serious and humorous, in the north and south of Croatia since my first arrival there in 1969, as well as the stories of the people I met along the way.

My other published writing includes scholarly articles, travel essays, political essays, personal essays and short fiction. These publications number approximately 50, though some of the travel essays also appear, in edited form, in my books. Accompanying my writing are over 80 published photographs, both in my books and in newspapers and literary journals.

To a large extent, my focus has been on literary travel writing. While my books in this genre are a unique trilogy of sustained material exploration of two former republics of what used to be Yugoslavia, they are also examples of *literary* writing in which I deploy methods often associated with fiction such as recounting the stories of people’s lives, using dialogue to sketch portraits of individuals or recreating the past via signs in the present as a historical novelist might. In other words, these works, like much of my writing, interweave genres, styles and narrative tactics. I refer readers to the preface of my third book, *Drink in the Summer*, in which I say that it “balances the open, confessional nature of memoir with the reticence and mystery of literary fiction, and uses both

a relaxed, conversational, digressive register in keeping with all those conversations in kitchens over *gemischt*, and a tighter, journalistic, less demotic one” more typical of formal travel writing.

My future directions in writing are these: 1) a novella titled *Old Bridge, Black House: A Diptych*; 2) *Anything's Better Than Dying*, a novel; 3) a monograph on anamorphosis titled *The Secret Perspective: Anamorphosis in Literature, Visual Art and Film*; a theoretical fiction titled *Graffiti*.

Summary of Scholarship

My scholarly articles have all been published in peer-reviewed journals in Canada, the United States and England.

The first of these, “The Dialectics of Modernity: Reification, Space and Vision” appeared in *Rethinking Marxism* in 1995 and emerged from my doctoral dissertation. In it I suggest that most analyses of modernity overemphasize time at the expense of space and fail to ground it in some material structure. As I argue, “it is on this point of interaction between capitalist spaces and the subjects who occupy them that modernity is most clearly visible. At its most abstract, then, my argument is that the capitalist process of *reification* (which will serve as a suitable shorthand for capitalism as a whole) permeates the spatial organization of modern cities and transforms what has been the dominant human sense since the Renaissance, vision, producing a totality that constitutes the modern. The nineteenth-century architectural form of the arcade will act as a paradigm for the conjunctive modernity outlined below.”

In published essays that followed this one I go on to develop further the connections between the processes unfolding in urban space and modernist art and literature. In modernism, modernity “in the relational sense discussed in [the paper above] is evident, among other ways in the subject/object opposition generated by reification in the form of the distance between creator and work (the objective correlative) or audience and work (the notorious opacity of modernist art objects), in addition to the fragmented spatial topography of modernist narratives expressed through various devices like juxtaposition or simultaneity. But, on the dereified side of things, modernism also conflates the reified subject/object opposition onto the level of form (cubist rotation and fragmentation of the pictorial field, otherwise a sign of reification, now understood as the inclusion of subjective *position* within the aesthetic object).” Thus the expressionist distancing between subject and object (the objective correlative) which seems to copy the alienation of workers from their products under capitalism might also be repudiated in the sense that the subjective component within the object of labor is included on the level of form. For example, in Faulkner, “the subjective component of poor white tenant labor is also translated into the slow wound-together nature of Faulkner’s sentences themselves. This involves, in turn, the readers’ own work since such style is a bar to easy and unreflective consumption.”

My article, “The Production of the World: Translation, Compensation, and Anamorphosis in van Gogh and Faulkner,” develops these ideas further and introduces anamorphosis. In his essay “The Production of the World,” John Berger explains how viewing some Vincent van Gogh paintings in Amsterdam healed an aphasiac-like inability he had been experiencing to hold meanings together or to “make connections,” and how his angst was eliminated and reality as he understood it was “confirmed” by the apparent wholeness of the reply in the paintings. For him this wholeness derived partly from what I call their *translational* capacity to unite in one work two forms of labour – that of the object world of peasants van Gogh often painted *and* the act of painting itself – which allowed for a depiction of reality beyond the “screen of clichés” erected by society. As the world becomes, according to Berger, the object of an aesthetic equation (is remade, turned into an art object), so too is desire objectified through a process here called *compensation*. Compensation is a symbolic redressing of peasant drudgery and what Fredric Jameson calls the “transformation of a drab peasant object world into the most glorious materialization of pure color in oil paint.” This yearning for wholeness in van Gogh is presented through a distortion in expected style, a ‘slanted’ quality in the

paintings. A broader anamorphic mode indexes van Gogh's gaze, and is termed a "protracted stain" by Slavoj Žižek to denote the difference between "traditional" painting's single anamorphic element and a wider one pervading an entire painting as in van Gogh. To widen this analysis, I also consider some consonant literary examples from William Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, *The Mansion* and *As I Lay Dying* because his work, like van Gogh's, similarly focuses on agrarian life in an increasingly modern world, also experiments with the received forms by which reality or truth is rendered, and on certain points also belongs under the rubric of expressionism.

Another related article of mine continues with these issues. In "The Sadness is in You: Memory in the Boxes of Joseph Cornell, William Gibson, and E.L. Doctorow," I begin by arguing that the combination of revelation, surprise and remembering, which is part of the experience of opening boxes, is evident also in many works by American assemblage artist Joseph Cornell. The unexpected arrangement of bric-a-brac in Cornell's constructions tends to surprise first-time viewers, and is an example of a particular sort of fantasy, to borrow a definition from Slavoj Žižek in *The Plague of Fantasies*, because even though the objects are material things, they are poised between positive objectivity and the signifying circuits of their symbolic structure. This in-betweenness characteristic of fantasy is evident in the manner in which the past is rendered in Cornell's works. Viewers are invited to peer inside a box and decipher its field of meaning like psychoanalysts interpreting dreams of a patient (opening a box analogous to opening a mind). The surprise for viewers upon looking into the boxes and the limitless connections viewers can make put Cornell's constructions in the realm of the anamorphic. The important difference between Cornell's actual constructions and those of an imaginary (fictional) machine boxmaker's in William Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Count Zero* is, ironically, that Cornell's are cast as fantasies of the past while the latter are examples of 'real' personal memory. A third box, which appears in E.L. Doctorow's *City of God*, contains a harrowing minimalist shorthand and other documentation of Nazi atrocities in a Jewish ghetto in Lithuania. What we have here, then, is a third mode of memory – historical fact – which complements the first two – fantasy and personal memory, in a three-stage narrative which leads from an abstract rendering of the past to a material one. Although Doctorow's box contains material evidence of the past, it does nevertheless include an element of fantasy. The box exposes the irrational fantasy at the heart of Nazism, unveiling the inter-subjective social fantasy of the Jewish plot which gave average Germans a sense of empowerment, an identity and place in a society whose meaning and logic had eluded their control. The unseen and imagined spectre of a Jewish threat comes into play here. No ideology can fully account for social reality in its entirety, so a fantasy element is incorporated in order for ideology to explain away in advance its own failure or gaps of logic (in this case, economic and social failures in Germany).

In another published article, "Anamorphosis in David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, I turn to film. Among the ways that anamorphosis is evident in *Mulholland Drive* is its two-part design, which forces viewers to detect a hidden perspective in the first part of the film. Anamorphosis is visible also in the distortive imagery and changes in optical registers such as the stylized jitterbug scene at the start of the film. Anamorphosis, finally, is noticeable in the form of an anamorphic figure like the Cowboy who casts a haunting pall over the action, and who seems to exist both in the world of the film and outside, entering mysteriously or obliquely, at an angle as it were, with no clear, determinable place of origin. An analysis of anamorphosis in *Mulholland Drive* leads me to argue that an anamorphic drive is central to Lynch's work more generally, and that Lynch belongs to a very long tradition in the visual arts dating back to the 15th century.

In “The Secret Perspective: Anamorphosis in *Hamlet*, I argue that the secret perspective was not so secret in Shakespeare’s time. There is evidence throughout *Hamlet*, for example, of an anamorphic sensibility, noticeable most obviously in the form of the haunting ‘thing’ which arrives on stage from outside the ‘living’ world of the play, at an angle as it were, but also in the way the covert is centrally embedded in the play’s action and meaning – how much of the play remains distorted or hidden from both the characters in the play and from readers/audience beyond it, obliging them for ‘re-form’ the world anew. In this essay, I will explore anamorphosis in *Hamlet* in two separate but connected areas: 1) the Ghost as a “tangential clairvoyant” – Maurice Molhollo’s term in the context of Miguel Cervantes – which denotes a spectral figure that exposes what has been hidden from sight (though that object may have been visible (i.e. ‘suspected’) all along and, in the added sense I am suggesting, sets in motion the main action of the play even though it is not a central actor itself; 2) the secret perspective of intuited, repressed, verbal, or off-stage material beyond the immediate sight or consciousness of characters, readers/audience. In both cases – of the Ghost as tangential clairvoyant and of the wider intuited, repressed material in the play – anamorphosis in *Hamlet* involves a new perception of a previously distorted object or situation, which leads to two similar yet opposed responses: either one of complete surprise (“I would never have guessed”) or astonished confirmation (“I knew it all along”).

Summary of Travel Writing

My travel writing falls under the category of 'research/creation.' In terms of research, the program is 1) an inquiry into the culture and history of the former Yugoslavia through scholarly works available in print as well as through online sources (news reports, photo essays, documentaries); 2) primary research in the 'field;' a physical journey across the region and an exploration of its cities, towns, villages and landscapes, as well as informal encounters with its people.

My travel research is also a *creative* program because it belongs to the genre of literary travel writing. I use a landscape as an occasion to explore a place *beyond the limitations imposed by formal, 'traditional' scholarship*. An interdisciplinary form, travel writing attempts to document a country's present and past, the taste and feel and atmosphere of its land, its hidden corners and forgotten places. Travel writers often give voice to a region's silent citizens, although it is equally possible that more prominent figures find a place. In my own work I usually employ literary tactics in framing the story of a journey, organizing it according to narrative conceits ("in the footsteps of..."), creating narrative suspense ('what happened next'), recreating the past in detail as a historical novelist might, employing dialogue in sketching encounters with locals. In addition, I include my own perspectives on the places and people encountered in the act of traveling. The result is an amalgam of scholarship, literary craft, personal documentation and photographic artistry of a country or region.

One writerly skill I have tried to develop in bringing this geographical region to life is that of 'word paintings,' a term borrowed from John Ruskin, who sought to document the nuances of a given day's material qualities through detailed, visual notation in order to possess its beauty. This micro-visual documentation has been an apt one for myself as a travel writer (minus the obligatory emphasis on beauty). In Ruskin's hands, this notation is exclusively visual and entirely material (i.e. lacking figurative language). My intention has been to expand on his model by involving the other senses. In my writing, Ruskin's word paintings become a series of 'videographs' inserted into the texts at selected points.

Besides this documentation of a material journey, I have also produced an account of a region's people. In doing so, I have tried to balance open commentary with silence (i.e. allowing the individual's words, actions, self and surroundings to speak without, always, my overt commentary). To some extent, Bruce Chatwin's sketches in *In Patagonia* have been a useful model. Chatwin is a minimalist when it comes to portraying the people he meets, though a form of commentary is present indirectly through his material descriptions. The use of objective correlatives, borrowed from the modernists, is one technique whereby descriptions of externals are meant to reveal something internal about the individual, an emotion or attitude. However, while objective correlatives usefully serve a travel writer when describing people he or she meets for only a short time, and barely knows, they fail to account adequately for the writers' perspectives themselves. What one ends up with, and one sees this in Chatwin, are shadowy hints of a writer's self or personality diffused throughout the overall piece. At the same time, I have avoided those travel accounts in which writers privilege personality and self-discovery above everything else. Even in my memoir I have not descended into lengthy self-absorption. One possible solution to this dilemma of commentary versus silence is the introduction of another voice and set of eyes, a companion traveller, whose opinions trigger a discussion and (in the process) a natural revelation of the writer's self. As readers of my books will know, this commentator mainly takes the form of my father, an escaped emigrant from Yugoslavia. His memories and sardonic remarks become central in my narratives, especially in my memoir, in which he has a strong presence and becomes a memorable

‘character.’

My research in the field has a number of basic components. It is a material journey across two of the former Yugoslav republics as well as a social, political and subjective/personal journey. The first component of this program, the physical journey, provides readers with a material experience of the region, the natural geography, in addition to urban geography, from small villages to towns and to cities.

The second component of this program is a social journey. This does not mean a nostalgic ethnography, a catalogue of traditional folk activities and costumes, or a documentation of a South Slavic ‘type.’ Like any travel writer I am interested in the practical humanity of the people among whom I travel and have lived.

The third component of my program is a political journey. My program is based partly on relevant political issues, both past and present, that concern the people I meet. As might be expected, any political discussion in the former Yugoslavia can be highly complex and contentious. I have in the main tried to be objective and even-handed in my choice of topics and points of view. However, since two of my works concern Croatia mainly, I have necessarily allowed these individuals to express their points of view freely.

The final aspect of my program is a subjective and personal one. This means, firstly, documenting both the material and spiritual character of a region at a particular moment in time *as I experience it*. As such this program enters the domain of the literary by capturing an impressionistic, subjective picture of the region, focusing on hidden, unexplored or forgotten corners. Such ‘in-between’ matter creates for readers the atmosphere and subtle qualities of an area not usually noticed or deemed significant. The second aspect of this subjective element in my travel writing, particularly in my memoir but also in my two other travel books, is a record of my personal experiences, impressions, emotions and memories. These together add another register to the formal objective aspects of my travel writing. Connected to the personal is another related quality prevalent in my writing, that of humour. My own interpretation of events, encounters or situations, the situations in and of themselves, can be comedic, which adds another register to my work. One example of humour in my travel writing is the encounter with Bosnian police described on pp. 77-79 in *Bosnia: In the Footsteps of Gavrilo Princip*.

Where might one situate my travel writing against what existed in English *before it*? Publications about the former Yugoslavia are legion and what follows is hardly a complete list. Many publications focus on the country’s disintegration and the war. They include war reportage (Ed Vulliamy’s *Seasons in Hell*), books on the destruction of Yugoslavia from a political, sociological or cultural perspective (Branka Magas’ *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-Up 1980-92*, memoirs of the war experience (Zlata Filipovic’s *Zlata’s Diary: A Child’s Life in Sarajevo*). History books about individual republics (now independent nations) are also common (Noel Malcolm’s *Bosnia: A Short History*; Marcus Tanner’s *Croatia*; Tim Judah’s *The Serbs*). There are numerous cook books. In terms of travel writing there are many travel guides on the former Yugoslav republics now. A ‘problem’ with these guides from a literary travel writer’s perspective is that they provide practical information on travel in the country concerned, and do not reveal much about the spirit of these places. However, there are a few literary travel books in English that do cover the former Yugoslavia, or its individual republics, but these are rare and are dated (Harry De Windt’s *Through Savage Europe: Being the Narrative of a Journey Throughout the Balkan States and European Russia* [1907];

Rebecca Lamb's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* [1941]; Bryan Hall's *The Impossible Country: A Journey Through the Last Days of Yugoslavia* [1994]). A well-known travel book, Robert D. Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (1993), only partially is concerned with the former Yugoslavia (ignoring Bosnia-Herzegovina altogether), and perpetuates stereotypes of the 'Balkans.' Another weakness of these books is that they either do not contain any photographs, or contain outdated ones (Kaplan's only photograph of Bosnia, on the cover, is one of Sarajevo prior to the First World War). Some travel books exist, like *Marco Polo's Isle: Sketches from the Island of Korčula* (Spence and Glynn, 2005), but focus only on one island. Similarly, many travel essays exist in the press which focus on individual islands or locations in Croatia and other former republics, but do not attempt to provide a wider picture of the region. Memoirs written by members of the diaspora like Jennifer Wilson (*Running Away to Home* [2012]) do exist but they are not written from the point of view of a partial 'insider' who has decades of experience travelling to the region. American-Croatian Josip Novakovich has written a memoir on Croatia (*Plum Brandy: Croatian Journeys*; White Pine Press, 2003), but his reminiscences cover an earlier period than mine, are America-centric and contain little actual travel through the entire country as in my writing.

Therefore, as the first writer of literary travel books in English on the new Croatia and Bosnia post-independence, my program as a totality has resulted in unique and original contributions to writing on this part of the world. And my third book, *Drink in the Summer*, even though, like all memoirs, necessarily tells a unique story simply because it is personal, documents changes in a small village and region over five decades which no one in English has done.

Summary of Essays

Many of my essays are travel essays and have been published in mainstream newspapers and literary journals in Canada. These are the typical venues for publication of travel writing. Some of these travel essays are early versions of the ones that ultimately appear in my books, in a changed form. They run typically about 1000 words, while the chapters in which they are situated in my books tend to be longer.

My other travel essays concern mainly Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, though I have also written about Maui, and certain 'adventure' activities such as biking and open-water swimming.

My non-travel essays are diverse. Some are political, exploring such subjects as the revival of Yugonostalgia in Croatia recently, the state of affairs in the western Balkans, or the sycophantic reporting of the CBC. Other essays are non-political and discuss such matters as the life of a Nova Scotia blacksmith, the early year of my son's hockey life, the career of football legend Walter Payton. I have published one review, of George Elliott Clarke's *The Quest for a "National" Nationalism in Journal of Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*. Increasingly, it is safe to say, I have begun to develop a style which is different from my previous travel and essay writing, but which is noticeable in my memoir – a more pointed, acerbic, conversational and, at times, humorous register which combines formal, 'high cultural' rhetoric and sentence design with informal vocabulary and looser syntax, and begins to approximate my manner of speech and oral storytelling.

Summary of Fiction

I have published nine short stories, ten if you count “Old Bridge, Black House,” which was accepted by *The Wascana Review* (University of Regina) before the review folded (the story never appeared). Except one, all my stories have been published in Canadian literary reviews, the majority of which are well-known and long-established. My published stories are set either in Nova Scotia or in the former Yugoslavia.

There are some connecting themes or qualities. Many of my stories share a spectral or anamorphic sensibility. Like the slanted object in the foreground of Hans Holbein’s painting “The Ambassadors,” which comes into legibility if viewed from the right angle, many of the characters in my stories inhabit their world at a slant, so to speak, or encounter individuals who seem alien to the normal spatio-temporal world, like ghosts, or who possess a vision or power that separates them. For example, a story set in Antigonish County in the 1930s, “Waiting for the Strike,” has to do with a lightning rod installer who discovers a talent for detecting strikes before they happen. The story has, obviously, magic realist elements. It was accepted for publication by Alistair MacLeod, former editor of the *Windsor Review*. Perhaps he saw in this story a setting as well as a combination of realism and anamorphic mystery that appealed to him.

Many of my stories are located in rural environments, and are generally serious in tone, although “Reports from *The Casket (1)*” which describes a long-standing feud between a Dutch immigrant and a local man in Antigonish, is a tall tale. These rural stories include a trilogy set on the island of Rab, though the landscape is deliberately ‘continental’ at times to emphasize, in a homologous fashion, the difference between ethnicities in the story. In this trilogy, the characters are given turns speaking like those in modernist texts of cubistic design. My aim is to present the contradictions and differing points of view on events without direct interference by an external narrator. The language reflects the different voices of the characters. These include a young woman in “Rab (3)” whose mother resists her daughter’s relationship with a Serbian-Canadian who wants to take her far from the island. An elderly local man, former 18-year-old Ustaša recruit during the Second World war, Slavko Jakopač, intervenes physically to allow her to escape her family. (Slavko Jakopač makes appearances both as a character here but also as a real person in my first book, in my essay on Yugonostalgia and also in my memoir at the start of the chapter titled “Drink in the Summer.” My only children’s story, “The Old Man and the Storks, tells the story of an old man who shelters a wounded female stork at his home. The story as I write it is set in an undefined country world where there are storks on the chimneys of houses and people working the land. It has some allegorical aspects which both Croatians and Atlantic Canadians might notice, such as the long journey of the male stork from home and his delayed return and separation from wife and family. These particular allegorical elements are not accidental, but I should point out that they were already ‘there’ in the ‘true story’ from eastern Slavonia (Croatia).

Many of my stories concern parentless children (“Stuck to his Blood,” “Old Bridge, Black House”) or broken families or severed familial connections (“Waiting for the Strike,” “The Old Man and the Storks,” “Rab (1,2,3)”). This theme is continued in my memoir with the account of my father, whose mother abandoned him and his brothers when they were young to marry a man living across the hill.

An outlier fiction is an ‘experimental’ essayistic story concerning the mainly ideological conflict between a film and a graffiti cult which are in a war for the hearts and minds of a city’s

citizens, probably Zagreb. "White Hand, Black Hand" takes the form of an essay and tackles (anticipates?) the tension between language and visual culture which one finds ubiquitous in our contemporary world. However, the story is also clearly an allegory for the competing interests during the final death throes of the former Yugoslavia. My plan is to include it in my new theoretical fiction, *Graffiti*, which I have begun working on.

Old Bridge, Black House: A Diptych. This novella is told in two parts. The protagonist in both parts is a woman named Maja Lončarić. However, the specifics of her life in Part One and in Part Two are different so that it is not clear whether she is exactly the same person. The woman in Part One might be an ideation of the woman in Part Two. One might be a wish fulfillment of the other. Or possibly a nightmare.

Finally, I have finished a novel titled *Anything's Better Than Dying*. It opens with the protagonist, a man called John Marcher (named after the character in Henry James' "The Beast in the Jungle"), swimming at an empty beach in Malignant Cove, Antigonish County. Marcher soon discovers that he is not alone. When he emerges from the water, he notices someone farther down the beach, too distant to see clearly, going in. These two people, unknown to each other, become doppelgänger of sorts as the novel proceeds. When Marcher leaves the beach to go home he does not see the swimmer any longer, only the person's yellow bag on the sand and a car in the parking area. Returning the next day for another swim, Marcher is shocked to see both the bag and car still there, in the same spot, abandoned. He assumes the man has drowned or has swum to his death (he assumes it is a man even though he never sees him clearly). With no one as a witness, Marcher makes the impetuous decision, in contrast to the hesitating character in James' tale, and for reasons that become clearer in time, to drive off in the person's car, the keys having been left behind, accidentally probably, on the ground....

Summary of Photography

If I include my memoir, *Drink in the Summer*, I have published around 80 photographs. Some of those which appeared in newspapers first, appeared in my books afterwards. Most were shot in film, though recent ones published in newspapers and in my memoir are digital. Most illustrate some aspect of the accompanying text and are all realistic in approach. For example, in *Croatia*, on p. 41 in the chapter concerning the northern region of Prigorje, the photo of a peasant woman named Mila Juranko cleaning her pig sty, surrounded by pigs, usefully captures a material moment in her daily work life. All the photos in the book are presented in black and white, but this one was shot in black and white film (Ilford 400), and conveys, through the film grain and the dark shade, the bleak nature of the woman's life. The scene, enhanced by the film quality, also illustrates the antiquated aspect of this traditional, mostly disappeared world. Only if readers connect this photograph with the depiction of Mila Juranko's last years in my memoir in the chapter titled Srebrnjak Mansion + Cres + Vis does the photo acquire a poignancy it may have only hinted at originally.

A number of my photographs are 'still lifes.' In *Croatia*, these include the back end of a cow in a barn, a ladder leaning against a hay loft of a barn made of stone, a cobbled alley in an Adriatic town. An unpublished photo is of a bathtub at the end of a street in Dubrovnik. These photos capture quiet moments. They show signs of a human presence, but no people. They hint at human labour and movement, but include none. The feeling such photos might give to viewers is of silent moments, or pauses, in which the world is speaking, not the people. These images are also 'painterly' in the sense that they do not seem to capture instants of time as photographs tend to do. Rather, the moments they depict, as John Berger says about paintings generally, seem more like the moments of a painting which, "unlike a moment photographed, never existed as such." These photographs give the illusion of being 'emblematic' of a world and time as much as they document a specific instant in it.

Other photographs of mine do show people in the act of doing something. One shows a peasant gathering corn stalks during the winter (in *Croatia*), another a man reading in Dubrovnik (in *Croatia*), another a diver leaping off the new bridge in Mostar, Herzegovina (in *Bosnia*). Many were shot with a Pentax K1000 film camera and 50mm lens which had to be focussed manually.