

LILI MARLENE

Rehabilitation of abused song

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INTRO

*Vor der Kaserne, vor dem Großen Tor
stand eine Laterne und Steht sich noch davor
dann wollen wir uns da wieder sehen
bei der Laterne vor wir stehen,
wie einst Lili Marlene, wie einst Lili Marlene.*

Those are the first phrases of already famous German love song that rose out of obscurity to become one of the most mysterious songs ever written and composed and even more unlikely anthem of World War 2. While it's gentle melody captured the hearts of both the Axis and the Allied soldiers fighting across North Africa and Europe , the success of Lili Marlene is more of a metaphysical phenomenon , which would be one of the main premise in this thesis along with ideological consequences this song has suffered. In 1941 , a chance broadcast of the song on a German army radio station in Belgrade , made "Lili Marlene" an instant favourite with the Axis troops. British soldiers tuning into the enemy broadcasts eventually adopted the song as their own, and within months "Lili Marlene" had become the universal soundtrack of a world at war. I would particularly like to research and to find out what exactly might have happened in those historical gapes to allow to this love song or shall we already call it a symbol , to become exactly it's opposition. How is possible for one song to pass through the transition from an ordinary written poem to twenty years later the most favourite and at the same time one of the most detesting melodies for the time of Nazi regime. I would prefer to build up this research out of several main chapters and each of them would be following the historical facts in which the song of Lili Marlene has been shaped , what might have caused to get abused for certain ideological and strategical matters of that time as well as to find out the possibilities of it's rehabilitation , which is going to be a very tricky segment , because it applies on wide range of other abused or misinterpreted symbols and songs.

This theme forces me to get deeper into researching the factors of how the certain political dogma like Communism or Fascism , affects individual as well as collective

subconsciousness and how perfectly orchestrated and choreographed social as well as military activities may become the curtain behind which the actual destructive ideology is blooming. As an incredible important part of this thesis I would need to dedicate one chapter to Hans Leip an artist and young Prussian soldier during the WW1 who wrote the words for the poem that would eventually become "The song of a young soldier on watch" ("*Das Lied eines jungen Soldaten auf der Wacht*") in the later years , during the WW2 when set to the music by Norbert Schulze , become well known as "Lili Marlene". In order to avoid a description of the historical facts , I would be focusing more on what and which phenomenon made possible that one , on the first hand, lovely and almost naively written love song, had become such a complex and metaphysical phenomenon to be able to unite the enemies, as cited in the book "Lili Marlene" by Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller.

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In the Third and Fourth chapter , I 'll be giving a report of what exactly formed Lilli Marlene



to be a person , who or what is Lili Marlene , or perhaps who is Lili and who Marlene ? Are they just a fictional manifestation and delusion of a soldier in delirium seeking for emotional and sexual intercourse, or there is something even more complex. After giving a proper look through the phenomenology of Lili Marlene , I will conclude this thesis with the chapter entitled , ' De-Nazification of the Song ,' in which I will be giving certain methods and the possibilities for this song to get back to its original meaning eventually succeeding to get a rid of the notorious connotation which gained in the second half of the past century. Also, apart of historical references I will be talking referring on

my personal investigations on this theme during the past 3 years , giving the examples of my interpretation of Lili Marlene as a phenomenon that interest , showing a glimpse of something that eventually may evolve into a big personal dramatic piece in the near future.

CHAPTER ONE

HANS LEIP AND THE BEGINNING OF A POEM

In this first chapter I would like to pass shortly through the life of Hans Leip , an artist and a soldier on his duty , falling in love, writing the poem for Lili Marleen , bringing to the light, but certainly not knowing what's gonna become out of that song twenty years later. Hans Leip was a poet, novelist and playwright born on 22 September 1893 in Hamburg . Leip was the son of a former sailor and harbour-worker at the port of Hamburg. He was educated there and in 1914 became a teacher in the Hamburg suburb of Rothenburgsort. In 1915 he was called up by the German army and after training in Berlin served on the Eastern front and in the Carpathians. After being wounded in 1917 he was discharged on medical grounds. He first had ambitions as an artist, but then turned to writing, although he illustrated his books himself. Researching the book ‘‘Lili Marlene’’ written by Matthew Miller and Liel Leibowitz , I found many hidden details from the life of Hans Leip at one point frankly confronting with him regarding several parameters that accidentally occurred. In this chapter I wouldn't have intentions to write briefly about the life of Hans Leip but rather more to approach to the problems that forced him into writing a lyrics for Lili Marlene , at that time the poem was originally titled "Das Madchen unter der Laterne" (German. "The Girl under the Lantern"). He reportedly combined the nickname of his girlfriend with that of a nurse. The poem was later published as "Das Lied eines jungen Soldaten auf der Wacht" ("The Song of a Young Soldier on Watch") in 1937, now with the two last (of five) verses added by Leip. It was set to music by Norbert Schultze in 1938 and firstly recorded by Lale Andersen in 1939.

Hans Leip as a young man ever since arriving in Berlin a few months before to begin his military service , started detesting the sound of locomotives. For him the harsh sound of turning wheels , the clatter of men and metal tossed together at great velocity were the sounds of death. He used to observe from the distance next to his barracks , how these trains carry off loads of fresh faced young men into a battle and then, months latter bringing them back as total invalids often disfigured and burned beyond recognition. He actually couldn't cope with the fact that those fresh and young boys were forced by their duty into something that they didn't want frankly as well as didn't deserve as humans. Hans have been thinking for a while ,

how all these young lives were completely ruined just for the purpose of certain ideology. One soldier more or less , not a big deal, the mass is important and , I believe they thought as long as they have a quantity of military recruits they wont need to worry. But for Hans Leip and his artistic nature, that was just a pitiful life. He didn't want to be a soldier being sent to fight for the country and eventually lose his life . He wanted something much more from his life. I myself also found such a great similarities with my life in the late 2000's studying abroad and escaping military service, which as a matter of fact, influenced the majority of my works. Let's return to the subject. In the book written by Leibovitz and Miller , they are explaining how Leip also didn't want to get married with his girlfriend at that time Lina Stellmann. They claim that he could never be able to settle down and to start a normal life , a life of a family man, a father taking care of his children. Leip wanted to travel as far as he could imagine, wanted to be free, to see much more and to lead creative life , a life in which he wouldn't be detached to one women waiting slowly for his death. He started thinking about two female figures that made him intrigued and inspired. One of them was Betty a strong women , white incarnates , face like a alabaster , who was peasant frequently feeding the chickens in front of her house. The second that caught Leip's eyes was the beautiful girl called Marlene. I wanted to mention those two female characters from Leip's early adulthood because both would play an enormous role while giving the birth to the new poem , twenty years later to become one of the most famous as well as the most notorious songs in the history.

Leibovitz, Liel and Miller, Matthew (2008). Lili Marlene: The Soldiers' Song of World War II. New York, NY: Norton. [ISBN 978-0-393-06584-8](#)

CHAPTER TWO

TWO DECADES LATER , WW2 AND THE BEGINNING OF THE SONG



Norbert Schulze from the book of Leibovitz, Liel and Miller, Matthew (2008). Lili Marlene: The Soldiers' Song of World War II. New York, NY: Norton

This chapter will be accompanied by several documents , found online or already published , will be matter of researching the body of a soldier , his duties as a military subject on the frontline and his fears and desires as a human. This chapter I found also extremely important and intriguing from personal point of view , as I myself have never been a soldier despite being resident of a country that was in a major political problem at that time , and being constantly in the state of fear that one day I shall be forced to become a soldier , going to the army, fighting and presumably at one point loosing my life for the ideology which is not even mine. These thoughts were constantly overwhelming my brain, so I decided to flee and to fight for my own ideology. I found this matter of a paramount importance for the theme I am researching and for some future theatrical pieces that may arise from this topic. I am extremely curious to get deeper into the structure and psychological profile of an individual soldier as a sample and then, afterwards to try to find out what may have been a collective psychological profile and perhaps to see if there are any way to trace some basic aspects of their desires, traumas and duty for an ideology which is very closely connected with the mass glorification of the Lili Marlene song and finally brought the song to the unbelievable fame and popularity that perhaps no other song ever succeeded so far. But before I start writing



about the consequences that this “Song of a Young Sentry“ caused during and after the WW2 , I will have to give the historical overview and references of how this song came from the written poem had become the Global hit and not just a lovely song but rather more the global phenomenon uniting all ideological enemies and opposite fronts under one cloud. Somewhere in 1938 , young musician Norbert Schulze , who at that time had become the official composer of the Third Reich , mostly writing the military music, marches and hymns to encourage the soldiers to get ready for the war. But somehow while searching for the right poem which

might be suitable enough to be set to the music , being asked by a singer Jan Behrens , Schultze flipped through the small book of poems by Hans Leip entitled “*Die kleine Hafenorgel* “ and one particular song caught his attention immediately and it was the song entitled “ *Song of a Young Sentry* “ and after a quick reading , seemed to suggest an organic melody. He thanked Behrens for the book and promised him a few compositions. But when the song was ready, few days later , Behrens was clearly disappointed claiming that this song is too “ girlish“ and he with his baritone voice is not going to sing it. Schultze was taken aback by the criticism but however, he did not want to give up, firmly believing that there is something special in those nostalgic and quite sentimental words , so he decided to send the copies of his freshly composed music to several of his colleagues he also decided to send one copy to female singer Lieselotte Helena Berta Brunnenberg known as Lale Andersen. He wrote to her and was convinced that her harsh voice would suit perfect to some of his new compositions. Andersen however gladly responded and said she would be trilled to sing , but was visibly surprised that Schultze didn’t ask her to sing “ Song of a Young Sentry “ which version composed by her friend Rudolf Zink she was already singing. I would like to point out that this was in fact the very beginning of the song lately infamous and known as Lili Marlene , but due to overwhelming amount of historical details and names, I would need to skip certain descriptive chapters and to jump to the very clue of how the Song of a Young Sentry had become controversial Lili Marlene. Somewhere in the fall of 1938 , over the course of a few hours , with a studio orchestra , “ Song of a Young Sentry “ was recorded.



But it sold just under seven hundred copies and was largely ignored by both the critics and the public. “ Bugle call or not , it was not masculine enough war a nation slowly and steadily marching toward war. And while Lale Andersen’s voice harsh and high-pitched , might have intrigued the sophisticated aesthetes of Berlin’s cabarets , it was a far cry from the popular tastes of mainland Germany , especially as the lyrics she was singing dealt with the parting and sorrow of war as opposed to its glory and honour.“

‘ *Lili Marlene* ‘ chapter ‘ *Lili Marlene* ‘ p. 62

Both Andersen and Schulze were hoping that perhaps radio broadcasting could bring this song to the ears of a larger audience and might spark an interest in their tune , but as history displaying an impeccable sense of timing and a healthy dose of irony, “ Song of a Young Sentry “ was firstly broadcasted the very first time on the night of November 9 , 1938 , a night that would forever be remembered as *Kristallnacht* . “For Lale Andersen and Norbert Schulze the song could not have arrived at a more unfortunate time . Too soft and gently at the time when the country’s culture czar pushed for violent and triumphant military music . The lyrics spoke of young lovers separated by war. The Nazis , preparing for battle on a massive scale, wanted words that praised the nation, the leader and the martial spirit. After its initial airing at *Kristallnacht* , when few would have even heard the song , - Song of a Young Sentry “ failed to win any acclaim. “

‘Lili Marlene’ chapter ‘Bombs ! Bombs ! Bombs ! ‘ p. 75

On the 6th April 1941 after German occupation of Yugoslavia , strategically and pragmatically enough Radio Belgrade became ‘*Deutscher Soldatensender Belgrad* ‘ which radio broadcaster was Karl-Heinz Reintgen was getting ready to entertain German soldiers on the front and to keep them updated concerning the ongoing orders and activities. Finding the new building for radio purposes and hosts was not a big issue but there was something that seemed as a minor problem but in fact it caused the fertile situation for “ Song of a Young Sentry“ to increase in the desired way. Reintgen as a broadcaster and his stuff of five running



the military radio station had to find a way how to fill the 21 hours of available radio programming with only 54 (fifty four) records. Reintgen played his few albums in an endless rotation but it was not the way on the longer scale.

He sent one of his subordinates to Vienna to bring some available gramophone recordings to be able to make his duty and his program more fulfilling and more entertaining for all German soldiers weather in the deserts of North Africa or in Europe. This can be perhaps one of the reason why Lili Marlene soon afterwards had become so popular among the soldiers. We can not immediately claim that the lack of musical recordings at Radio Belgrade was the main and the only reason why this particular song got easily listenable and captivating , affecting later on almost everything on it’s way. There was something much mysterious and deeper that caused such a magnetising effect deluding until the point of surrendering all soldiers on all



fronts becoming one of the biggest enemies for every commandant who wanted to defeat the physical enemy on the front. However, Kistenmacher who was sent to Vienna was in a very hurry so he just grabbed the pile of randomly chosen recordings and immediately went back to Belgrade. Among them, accidentally enough was the song written by Hans Leip, set to the music by Norbert Schulze and delivered by Lale Andersen, the sentimental “ Song of a Young Sentry “ or “ The Song

of a Young Soldier on Watch “ or simply enough “ Lili Marlene “. In the beginning Reintgen was doubting should he play that very song being aware of it’s commercial failure in Germany, and after several hard deliberations with himself, he decided to give a chance and air the song for the first time after the Kristallnacht. This historical moment was the initial trigger and once broadcasted and left in the air, there was no way back.

This was in fact the point when nobody knew and hoped that this sentimental schlager is going to make such a notorious as well as tremendous effect which we can compare with “ butterfly effect “ according to which theory, one simple movement in the microcosmos may cause such a large and waste movements in the macrocosmos. In Germany after 1942, Lale Andersen after reportedly being involved in some sort of espionage, was forbidden from leaving Germany and banned from performing. It was the declaration made by Hans Hinkel who was a German journalist and ministerial official in Nazi Germany. She was also banned not only from performing but from being written about by the critics as well as from being associated with the song of Lili Marlene. But even though Andersen’s life was ruined and her career literary ripped off, her voice and her interpretation of ‘ Song of a Young Sentry ‘ Lili Marlene, once broadcasted from the Radio Belgrade became unstoppable. This song and it’s sentimental, sweet melody was so contagious that those soldiers on the front in the most difficult circumstances, both physical and mental, went completely possessed and addicted.

“ Radio Belgrade , and night after night , always at the same time, would come, throbbing lingeringly over the ether , the cheap, sugary and yet almost painfully nostalgic melody, the sex -laden , intimate , heart-rending accents of Lili Marlene“.

‘ Lili Marlene“ chapter “ Epilogue “ p. 203

While searching for the online documentations I found accidentally one blog that published the text with headline : ‘Singing Enemy Songs : Lili Marleen ‘ and immediately caught my attention.

source : www.strangehistory.net

In the beginning of this report , there is one beautiful explanation which may also take a part in this category :

“One of the most moving moments in cinema is the extraordinary ending of Kubrick’s Paths of Glory. A young German girl is pulled in front of a crowd of the French soldiers forced to sing. The poilu mock her but as she nervously begins the mood changes. The soldiers join in and drown her anxious, uncertain German, humming along. What begins as a musical lynching ends as a moment of unlikely understanding between enemies.”

The text also states that in reality, out of the film context , there are stories of Silent Night/ Stille Nacht being sung on both sides of the trenches at Christmas in the WW1 , but claiming difficulties to document. Finally the only and perhaps the main example was the song of Lili Marleen that can be documented by record sales alone. I am not going to give many further explanation in this chapter, concerning the song and it’s timeline , I will be explaining more in the other chapters.



CHAPTER THREE

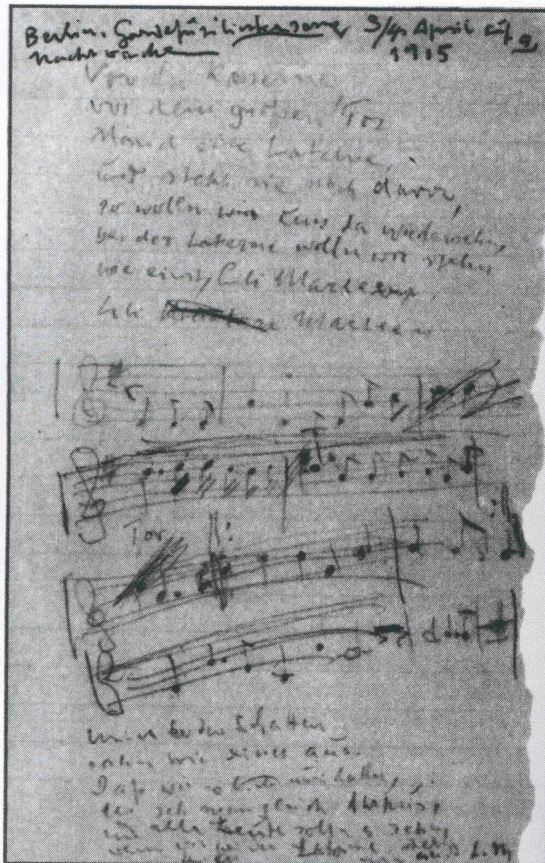
INTERPRETATIONS OF LILI MARLENE

When I started thinking and writing about various interpretation of “ The Song of a Young Soldier on Watch” or known Lili Marlene , I have intended to collect only the most significant interpretations of this song, as throughout the history, particularly during the eighties , we can find so many interpretations used in almost all possible occasions , such as celebrations, parties, parades , even karaoke. But is it all worth of showing and discussing about. In most cases the song of Lili Marlene has been taken for a grant and many occasions were benefiting from its lovely and cheerful melody. Departing from a very personal point of view I will be showing just the most significant historical interpretations of Lili Marlene apart of number of the interpreters as well as a number of the translations until nowadays.

German film actress Marlene Dietrich contributed enormously to the popularity of the song. Having come to the U.S. five years earlier to make American films, in 1935 Adolf Hitler demanded that she return to the Fatherland. Dietrich, and ardent anti-Nazi, refused, resulting in her films being banned in Germany. She worked tirelessly during the war years with the USO, entertaining Allied troops with her cabaret performances that featured the song Lili Marlene. For her work, the U.S., the French, and eventually the Israeli government awarded her medals for he valuable work to the war effort. Her recording of Lili Marlene (both in German and in English) remains the signature version of this song.

Regarding Dietrich's interpretation of Lili Marlene , I would like to point out that while listening all her records there is a feeling that she brought that song to the sphere of commercial success as she has never sang "The Song of a Soldier on Watch" on the way how it was

meant to be sang by NAZI regime. Since retaining in United States and being a film star Dietrich sang this song much more in the style of a capella , sometimes nearly speaking the words but not really singing , using only a piano to follow her or at one of the studio recording there was just a single accordion. The whole feeling listening her interpretation of Lili Marlene was both, emotionally charged and simple , but also giving the feeling of commodity and relaxation. She sang that song translated in English making the huge popularity of that song, but she also recorded in her native language , German. In the film entitled "Judgment at Nuremberg"(*Urteil von Nürnberg*) 1961 , directed by Stanley Kramer in which she was playing the role of Mrs. Bertholt , at one point while walking together with Chief Judge dan Haywood (Spencer Tracy) they both heard the soldiers chorally singing Lili Marlene . She said that even if he doesn't understand the words , German original interpretation got much more emotions and is much more



Hans Leip's original handwritten version of "Song of a Young Sentry," dated 1915. Leip composed his own music to accompany the poem, a tune much slower and sadder than the one made famous by Norbert Schultze.

telling then for instance an English version. But however , Lili Marlene was translated to more than 50 languages , so the distinction between German and French is as big as between Italian and Japanese , but in all cases , despite the distinction between the translation , the melody is remaining almost intact. I shall also point out that having the opportunity to see the original notes for "Song of a Young Sentry " written by Hans Leip in 1915 , I figured out that his interpretation of the music accompanied by the poem , was much slower and sadder than the one made famous by Norbet Schultze.

In this chapter I would also like to say a few words about Lili Marlene taken for the film. In 1981, German film director Rainer Werner Fassbinder has directed a film with the same title



Lili Marlene , the main role giving to Hanna Schygulla (Willie Bunterberg) which basically is an interpretation or translation of the life of Lale Andersen . Fassbinder made a melodramatic Hollywood style drama in which Hanna Schygulla gave fantastic vocal interpretation of the character , but her acting skills were far less convincing, at least for my taste. She has appeared four times singing Lili Marlene under different social, politic and health conditions which is pretty incredible seeing how the same song can go through the changes in it's interpretation being caused by particularity of the current moment. However that film show us the characteristic style of Fassbinder's artistic language and his incredible skills to organize a fascinating camera angles as well as filming frames. I must admit that Fassbinder 's Lili Marlene affected my decision in establishing a character which I myself can carry on giving to this phenomenon perhaps some new meanings and the possibilities while combining with personal and collective histories.

However, in my case, when I started getting interested and paying an enormous attention about that song , I never wanted to go very far away from the nature and it's historical connotations. Lili Marlene is indeed a love song , but on another hand the song which describes separated lovers , due to the war.

So, despite various interpretations bringing this song sometimes even to completely inappropriate areas , I desperately intended to keep this motive respecting at least the core of it's nature. I must admit it was quite issue for me to start working on this character. In the beginning I really wanted to construct a fictional character of Lili Marlene , firmly believing that once I make the first performative image , I will be continuing much more in the direction of a theater play in which I will be both , directing and playing the character , following it's historical patterns. My greatest intention was to make the premiere of a theater play in Hamburg , as I wanted to bring this song to the city where it belongs. Nevertheless , the first

image of "The Song of a Soldier on Watch" (WW3 Lili Marlene) gotta premiere in Brussels while working on my artist in residence program at Bains Connective. But somehow , after a while , I decided to leave the concept aside for some time and to see how and in which direction it might be heading to. I have made several presentations at Hochschule fur Bildende Kunste , HFBK , Hamburg and while discussing with Jeanne Faust , my master mentor , even visibly refusing to change my thoughts in the beginning , I slowly started figuring out that , heading in the direction of Lili Marlene as a theater play might be a trap for me , so I started interrogating myself and my intentions. After several self deliberations I told to myself that something indeed must get changed and not only in the way how the planned theater play should be constructed but much more researching seriously what or who is Lili Marlene that I might be concerned about, so I decided to work much more in trying to find out those matters of my interests. To come back on the main issues of this piece which could bring me to the dead road. From the very beginning I was aware of it's historical connotations , ideological usage and what the history has been telling us since nowadays. There was a major problem of problem of getting into something which could be easily called " documentary theater about historical phenomenon of Lili Marlene " . However , I realized that my intentions and desires of making the documentary theater about the time in which I didn't even exist , playing the character which was already established , might be indeed such the end of my road concerning this piece. Fortunately enough , somewhere in July 2012 , I started my first negotiations with Kampnagel center for choreography and performance in Hamburg concerning the possibilities to suggest my first project which might be produced and showed to the audience. At that time I was in Belgrade , Serbia on my summer vacation , both , resting and thinking what might be the concept for my performance. I can't rationally explain how the selection of ideas and thought in the brain actually works , but somehow , strangely enough I realized that Lili Marlene might not necessarily be exactly the character/ phenomenon happened during the 1st and 2nd World War . I said to myself , if I play freely enough I could say that Lili Marlene is just part of one much larger entity which at that time I couldn't clearly define. After some time of very serious works I became thinking that Lili Marlene could be in fact just one character in the collection of the other characters forming the main entity. It was nothing else but Me. It was suddenly so obvious that Lili Marlene is timeless and spaceless phenomenon and can take different forms and shapes depending of the conception. It's the song that after all I found myself pretty attached to. But however , I should not revoke the historical facts. I frankly believe I should take Lili Marlene as a personal motive , as one of my shells and to push it forward , being and remaining open for all eventualities which might arise on my way.



To avoid being pretty subjective describing my work and particularly this performance, I shall cite the text written by curator Dobrila Denegri for the exhibition/catalogue "Theater of Life" in which frames I was invited to perform "The Song of a Soldier on Watch (WW3 Lili Marlene)"

“Branko Milisković studied sculpture, and there is truly sculptural approach in the way he “constructs” his performative personas: it is meticulous process of “building” a character and finding it’s ideal proportion between what might be considered real and transposed identity, or gender. In the piece “The Song of Soldier on Watch (WW3 Lili Marlene)” he seems to incarnate both, the figure of the mythical heroine from the song as well as the figure of the soldier who wrote it. In 1915 Hans Leip, a German poet and playwright called to join the army and fight on Eastern front during World War I, wrote lyrics for the song than entitled "The Girl Under the Lantern" which later on, especially during the World War II, became extremely popular by the name Lili Marlene. During the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941, Radio Belgrade became Soldatensender Belgrad and broadcasted programs to entertain the German armed forces. This song was played frequently and was also very popular on both sides of the front line. “Lili Marlene” was presumably one of the first songs of which one thought it could lead to an individual and collective resistance of the soldiers on the front. From this point takes stand Branko Milisković for his interpretation of “World War III Lili Marlene”, creating an ambiguous and androgynous character in whose appearance we can find echoes of cabaret as well as performance art of the late ‘70s and early ‘80s. Since Duchamp’s alter-ego Rose Sélavy, the notion of transvestitism and androgynousness was questioned by a number of artists, like Ulay, Urs Lüthi, Michel Journiac and later by artists like Yasumasa Morimura and Cindy Sherman who gave another layer of meaning, shifting the frame of references from gender towards history of art and media culture.

In Branko Milisković's work this approach is put in relation with a personal history and traces of his own (traumatic) background of a young person raised in the conditions of the war in the territory of former Yugoslavia. So not by chance that the question of identity and cultural conflict emerges beyond the surface, but it doesn't overshadow fascinating performative aspect of the work. "The Song of Soldier on Watch (WW3 Lili Marlene)" is an enduring performance in which Milisković is singing his version of Lili Marlene with the sound of the gun bursts in the background, for about eight hours engaging both, himself and a public, in a journey that can reach almost a state of trance. Its the intensity and state of personal and collective catharsis that artist is trying to achieve with his theatrical but still very minimal and direct performative gestures.

Passages from the book Lili Marlene by Liel Leibovitz & Matthew Miller

Yet he nevertheless appreciated their power , the compelling melody , and the harsh sensitivity of Lale Andersen's delivery. Rommel knew that for his men , and for the men strewn all across the North African front, this song , this " Lili Marlene" , was supporting them, keeping them from collapsing , and reminding the soldiers of all nations, that they were, on some level deep beneath their khaki clothes, still human , still alone , and still longing to reunite with those they had no choice but to leave behind.

Erwin Rommel , soldier popularly known as The Desert Fox, was a German Field Marshal of World War II. He won the respect of both his own troops and the enemies he fought.

" Lili Marlene" chapter ' We're the D-Day Dodgers" p. 144

" Something about the sentimental tune , they explained to the German officer , meant more to them than stuffy regulations. later on, von Luck would find out that the Americans and French were singing the song in the desert as well. For the reconnaissance men plucking each other off the sands and playing the alternating roles of captive and captor "Lili Marlene" was common ground , something shared and sacred that men of all flags could appreciate and enjoy , weather freely in the cool evenings or bound and shackled in enemy hands."

" Lili Marlene" chapter ' We're the D-Day Dodgers" p. 149

In Italy however the song would take a ribald and politicised turn when word spread that Lady Astor , a prominent politician and society lady, had referred to the English armies in Italy as the " D-Day Dodgers" , a phrase that rankled the grizzled veterans of Alamein and the more recent hard-fought battles in Italy at Anzio and elsewhere . Insulted by the suggestion that the Italian front was merely a sunny, clubby refuge from the brutal fighting on the beaches of

Normandy were the Allies had launched their D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944, the men of the Eight Army penned their own lyrics to “ Lili Marlene“ in a version seething with rage , resentment , and ultimately , a quite sense of pride and accomplishment :

*We're the D-Day Dodgers out in Italy
Always on the Vino, always on the spree.
Eight Army scroungers and their tanks
We live in Rome-among the Yanks.
We are the D-Day Dodgers, over here in Italy .*

*We landed at Salerno, a holiday with pay ,
Jerry brought the band down to cheer us on our way
We all sang the songs and the beer was free.*

*We kissed all the girls in Napoli .
For we are the D-Day Dodgers , over here in Italy .*

*Now Lady Astor, get a load of this,
Don't stand up on a platform and talk a load of piss.
You're the nation's sweetheart , the nation's pride
But we think Your bloody big mouth is far too wide .
For we are the D-Day Dodgers , out in sunny Italy.*

*When You look 'round the mountains , through the mud and rain
You'll find the scattered crosses, some which bear no name.
Heartbreak and toil and suffering gone
The boys beneath them slumber on
They were the D-Day Dodgers, who'll stay in Italy ...*

By this late point in the war , “ Lili Marlene“ could no longer be said to be property of any one army or country. It had become a truly ubiquitous tune on the battlefields of the Second World war, and on almost every front , in almost every campaign , versions of it were scribbled and sung.

The American armies occupying their de-Nazified zones in defeated Germany also tried their hands as songwriters. Their versions, a mixture of the vulgar and the heartfelt, captured both the joys and frustrations, the confused emotions and powerful urges that the soldiers of all sides had suppressed through the last few years of war and hardship:

*Down by the bahnhoff , American soldat
Zie haben cigaretten and a beaucoup chocolat
Das ist prima, Das ist gut
A zwanzig mark for fumph minute
Vie fiehl , Lili Marlene ? Vie fiehl , Lili Marlene ?*

*Oh Mister Truman, won#t you send us home ?
We have conquered Naples and we have conquered Rome
We have defeated the master race
Oh why won't you give us shipping space ?
Oh why can' we go home ?
Oh why can' we go home ?*



' Lili Marlene' chapter ' We're the D-Day Dodgers' p. 156,157

I would also like to give just a samples of three different translations of the song made by Italians , English and French. I have chosen those three languages out of more than 50 due to significant political importance on the front during the WW2.

English lyrics

Mack David is credited for the American version (published in 1943 as "Lili Marlene") made famous by Marlene Dietrich though there is speculation that Dietrich actually may have written some or all of those English lyrics herself.

*Outside the barracks, by the corner light
I'll always stand and wait for you at night
We will create a world for two
I'll wait for you the whole night through
For you, Lili Marlene
For you, Lili Marlene*

French lyrics sang by Connie Francis

*Devant la caserne, quand le jour s'enfuit
La vieille lanterne soudain s'allume e luit
C'est dan ce coi là que le soir
On s'attendait remplis d'espoir
Tous deux, Lili Marleen
Tous deux, Lili Marleen*

Italian lyrics

*Tutte le sere
sotto quel fanal
presso la caserma
ti stavo ad aspettar.
Anche stasera aspetterò,
e tutto il mondo scorderò
con te Lili Marleen
con te Lili Marleen*

CHAPTER FOUR

DE-NAZIFICATION OF THE SONG

Many years ago I used to listen one version of the song Lili Marlene sang by Marlene Dietrich. Somehow I knew only about that particular interpretation and of course it was the time still without internet and online sites such as You Tube etc. I also used to watch one famous serbian feature film entitled "Balkan Express" in which one of our infamous bohemian singers Toma Zdravkovic sang the song of Lili Marlene being forced by Nazi occupier. For me at that time in the late years of my childhood I remember that song was much different then the other popular or folk music in my surroundings. It was the song and the melody in particular , made me feeling like I knew that song all my life. Simply unexplainable I had a feeling it was already planted in my roots. At that time I wasn't aware that Lili Marlene has anything to do with the Belgrade city , former capital of EX Yugoslavia. Many years later , when I moved myself in Hamburg I started listening the same song more often and thanks to the online sources , I was surprised to find out many interpretation of Lili Marlene apart of Marlene Dietrich's infamous German and English versions. Somewhere in early 2011 I was invited to be an Artist in Residence at Bains Connective centre in Brussels , Belgium. Being already very influenced with the notion of this sentimental but war smelling song , I have decided to propose a live performance entitled "The Song of a Soldier on Watch" which basically was the first title for Lili Marlene , which beginnings I already pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis. However, I wasn't sure exactly what might be the invisible force pushing me to work and to release the first living images of emerging performance which later will be known as "The Song of a Soldier on Watch (WW3 Lili Marlene). While reading the numbness statements and historical facts about the period before and during the Second World War , I was delighted to find out that Lili Marlene was firstly publicly broadcasted from Soldatensender Radio Belgrad , which at that time was situated in the building three blocks away from todays building. I decided to travel back to Belgrade and to find out if there might be some possibilities for digging the archive of Radio Belgrade and perhaps find some traces. Somewhere in August 2011 I was hosted in one of the radio programs of Radio Belgrade 2 , so was giving the report concerning my recent works and plans in Germany and abroad. After a while , when the program was over, I went to the sound studio mentioning to Mr. Dejan Ivanovic who is tone designer of radio program , that I will be

working on the performance which main premise will be the song of Lili Marlene , so asking him if there might be any chance I can get some rare recordings sang my Marlene Dietrich. He told me that the first recording of Lili Marlene which became famous during the nasty years of WW2 , and which used to be played every night at 21:57 , was in fact interpreted by Lale Andersen , who was btw unknown to me until that moment. However I had very lame hope they are going to provide me with those materials. But , literary one night before I was traveling back to Hamburg , Mr. Ivanovic called me and said : “I have 4 rare recordings for you and if you have the time, please come by as soon as you can”. I was literary stunned once I started listening those amazing , very first audio recordings , live broadcasted , completely unmastered. He provided me with four versions of the song. One of them was the instrumental melody for Lili Marlene performed by ¹Anton Karas on the zither.

¹) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Karas

It was simply outstanding melody so minimalistic but yet so rich and expressive , kept me thinking for a long time until finally it had become the soundtrack for my vocal while performing “The Song of a Soldier on Watch” (WW3 Lili Marlene) October 2011 in Brussels / Belgium. Since then I have been performing that first , main singing living installation in Belgium, Poland, France and Germany.

In this last chapter of the thesis , after explaining the history of how the song of Lili Marlene inhabited my body and became one of the most important characters in my work , I would like to concentrate even more on the possibilities of De-Nazifying this sentimental love song, as well as to find out how perhaps the process of cleaning could look like and for how long that process may last. This process may also apply to the other abused signs, songs and symbols , but however, the results might not be guaranteed.

I would like to ask certain questions , to interrogate this pretty complex method of researching the possibilities and it’s difficulties of “decoding” already abused sign/ symbol / song and bring it back to it’s original meaning.

- How one poem passed such a weird historical journey from being just a love sentimental and rather melancholic poem , then twenty years later under completely different political circumstances set to the music , remaining both , the most despised songs and the most listened and beloved songs on all fronts ?!
- How is possible that German song can be sang by the soldiers at all fronts while fighting each others ?!

- How is possible that one song telling the story about longing for a love between the soldier and his beloved person can upset Joseph Goebels , the minister of propaganda during the NAZI regime, forcing him to order another version of the same song , which has to be more military ?!
- Was it the song powerful enough to make the soldiers weaker and finally forcing them to surrender ?
- What was exactly about Lili Marlene that made all soldiers from different fronts to get united at certain point , singing or even humming the melody , lately even translating to more then 50 languages ?!

I am afraid that on most of those questions might be almost impossible to give a strictly rational explanation on how certain phenomenon might happened. I would like to cite Lale Andersen's quote after being asked about the reason for such a success of the song Lili Marlene , she answered : "Can the wind explain why it becomes a storm ?" This incredible song which is nothing less then phenomenon , simply and literary got alienated from it's basic origins and at certain point suspended high enough, became living it's own life and affecting everything and everyone whenever it was broadcasted. One of the major significance of Lili Marlene was that this song during the singing career of Lale Anderson was not popular and was probably favourable in very closed German cabarets. But once being accidentally taken from Vienna and even more accidentally broadcasted from Radio Belgrade , after several deliberation in the studio , this song simply got released in the air and with highly contagious melody along with sentimental lyric being repeated every night at the same time , perhaps we can spot some explanations why it becomes so addictive.

According to John Steinbeck, Lili Marlene was perhaps "the only contribution to the world by the Nazis". But the truth is that not even the almighty German propaganda was able to control the sudden popularity of this song. Unlike traditional wartime compositions, Lili Marlene is not a song about fighting and victory, but about love and death. Broadcast just before 10 o'clock each night by a military radio station, Lili Marlene united and gave hope to the distraught and persecuted of all Europe: it's melancholy tune was even heard at the threshold of the gas chambers. The world was cruelly divided into two camps, but Lili Marlene travelled across all the frontiers and hostilities: English and American soldiers sung it too, or listened to it with tears in their eyes when Marlene Dietrich did. How Lili Marlene, the most famous German song of all time, was able to retain its innocence despite the horror of war is still a mystery.

Lili Marleen , The Biography of a Song by Rosa Sala Rose , edition 2013

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Visuals and credits

Page 4 - Hans Leip , 1917

Page 7 - Norbert Schulze from the book of Leibovitz, Liel and Miller, Matthew (2008). *Lili Marlene: The Soldiers' Song of World War II*. New York, NY: Norton

Page 8 - Lale Andersen , In dem Ufafilm "GPU" singt Lale das schwedische Matrosenlied "Sorte Rudolf" (Schwarzer Rudolf).

Page 9 - Radio Belgrade , ca . 1941

Page 10 - Karl-Heinz Reintgen , 1941

Page 11 - Electrola , Lili Marlene , vinyl record , 1939

Page 13 - Marlene Dietrich with US troops , ca 1942

Page 14 - Hans Leip's handwritten version of Lili Marlene , 1915

Page 15 - Hanna Schygulla , Lili Marlene by Reiner Fassbinder , 1981

Page 15 - The Song of a Soldier on Watch , Branko Miliskovic , 2011 , Photo by Dominika Sobolewska

Page 17 - The Song of a Soldier on Watch , Branko Miliskovic , 2012 , Film still

Page 20 - Soldiers next to the radio listening Radio Belgrade , Lili Marlene.

Biography of author

Branko Miliskovic was born in 1982 in Belgrade/Serbia. Born in Former Yugoslavia he was the last generation of Marshall Tito's Pioneers. In 1989 Yugoslavia broke up and he has started his basic education passing through the period of isolation, embargo, inflation and devastation of his country. After having completed the secondary school for Architecture, Miliskovic studied Polytechnic High School (Industrial Design) and Faculty of Fine Arts , class of Mrdjan Bajic in Belgrade/Serbia. In 2007 he made a transfer to the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague / The Netherlands and obtained his degree in 2009. Communicating with the audience, both in a direct and tinged with mystification manner , the artist uses body and identity as the main media. Creating subsequent characters , he faces with their national background. Miliskovic sees his work as a system of designated and highly self controlled situations in progression through which he is passing , aiming to leave a permanent trace and bring his own standards . Branko Miliskovic is particularly devoted to a long term works, living installation, cabaret, film and video. Miliskovic is currently based in Hamburg / Germany finishing his MA degree in class of Jeanne Faust and was mainly represented by Les Halles (BXL) and Kampnagel (HH).

He was performing and exhibiting in Venice ,Turin, Alba (Italy), Hamburg, Berlin, Gießen, Baden-Baden (Germany), Brussels (Belgium), Paris (France) , Krems (Austria) Belgrade(Serbia), Tel Aviv (Israel), Moscow (Russia), Piotrkow Trybunalski ,Torun (Poland), Turku, Helsinki (Finland), Trondheim (Norway), The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Eindhoven, Haarlem, Arnhem, Den Bosch (The Netherlands).

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