

Post-Yugoslav Cinema and the Shadows of War



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Post-Yugoslav Cinema and the Shadows of War

A Study of Non-Representation in Film

Asja Makarević

Amsterdam University Press

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Preface

I was thirteen years old when the Bosnian war ended. My adolescence and adult life have been shaped by the post-war condition. Characterized by precarity, corruption, a prolonged waiting for a better life, for a more prosperous future to arrive, the post-war condition has made an everlasting imprint on my being. Luckily, my exposure to cinema began at an early age. First through a brief experience as a young film actress, then by watching films screened at the Sarajevo Film Festival. The festival was founded during the war as an act of civil resistance. It was there that I recognized film's potential to provide different perspectives on the war. The films helped me better understand my environment as I was learning to come to terms with my post-conflict confusion. Later, I was fortunate enough to turn my passion for films into an opportunity to work at the Sarajevo Film Festival. Through my work as a programmer, I realized that the ongoing transition from a single socialist society to a group of liberal states was a prevalent theme in the works of filmmakers from the region. The cultural and political idiosyncrasies of the unordinary state I had lived in made me want to better understand the complexity of my environment through film. It was at the University of Amsterdam, during my MA studies, that two encounters laid the foundation for what would become this book. Thanks to Patricia Pisters, I was introduced to the film philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and the huge potential that his concepts have for understanding films made in and about a post-war society. The other encounter relates to the denial of the historically established facts about the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. During one of my MA courses, one fellow student presented a famous still showing the imprisoned Fikret Alić and other men behind the barbed wire of a camp located in the Trnopolje region of northwest Bosnia in summer 1992. Adopted and broadcast by numerous media outlets, it stirred international political outrage. During the student presentation, the still was referred to as a photograph that was framed in such a way as to incite a strong emotional reaction and a prompt international military intervention. Its veracity was undoubtedly brought into question.

Back then, I knew that any understanding of a post-Yugoslav cinema would require a historically situated knowledge. Throughout the research for this book, it became clear that a post-war cinema of a multi-ethnic society could be read and understood through the lens of a detailed, nuanced, and ultimately available historical knowledge and the potential of non-representational strategies to account for it. As I am writing this preface,

conflicts are on the rise and truths are being contested over and over again. With the ongoing wars on Gaza and Ukraine, it is now more pertinent than ever to look into the possibilities and limitations of non-representational strategies to engage with the realities of what could be future post-conflict societies. It is my hope that with my reflections on the social implications of non-representational images of war, which are immanent to their aesthetic properties, I can provide a substantial contribution to the fields of film, media studies, and memory studies.

This book would not have come into being without Alexandra Schneider, who accompanied me at the early stages of my academic path, and Vinzenz Hediger, who encouraged me to conduct dedicated research on a delicate topic of political and aesthetic importance for southeast Europe and beyond at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. Without their steady encouragement and the generous *Promotionsförderung* of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, the whole endeavour would have been impossible.

I am grateful for the meaningful and ever-resonating feedback from within the field of cultural memory studies that I received from Astrid Erll. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Nevenka Tromp, who provided me with her astute, up-to-date reflections on contested historical narratives of the causes of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. My appreciation goes to Emily Langston and Manuel Eising for hours spent discussing the state of international law and its application within the region of former Yugoslavia, the wars fought in the 1990s, and the lack of sincere reconciliation in their aftermath. The whole venture would not have been as enriching and exciting without Dijana Protić and Maša Guštin, who were there with their comments backed by a profound and detailed knowledge of post-Yugoslav cinema, its production and aesthetic properties, with their hearts and ears open, also when my spirits were low. Bronwyn Birdsdall and Daniel Hendrickson did a wonderful job proofreading my manuscript and giving me alternative solutions, words, sentence constructions, but also encouragement to carry on with my writing when I needed it most. My sincere thanks goes to my loving parents Volga and Bakir, and my brothers Timur and Dino for their enduring support and great company. And finally, my gratitude goes to my anchor, Christoph, without whom I would not be what I am today. I am eternally grateful for his patience, love, attention, and for our magnificent little family, which we have with our children Danijal and Tara.

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is still considered to be a post-war country, both by its inhabitants and external observers. The concept of *post-war* implies that the country and its people are tied more strongly to the past than they are oriented towards the future. A post-war society appears to be permanently overshadowed by the past, while the future is permanently postponed. Paradoxically, as long as the future is kept at bay and the post-war condition kept alive, Bosnia maintains a certain significance on the global scene. However, living in the temporal vacuum of the post-war condition cannot be a long-term perspective. But when and how will the status as a post-war society be lifted?

Inevitably, war is a major topic in contemporary post-Yugoslav films.¹ The experience of war comes to the fore in cinema either through conventional representation or, drawing on a concept of Gilles Deleuze, through what one could call strategies of non-representation. By conventional representation, I mean clichés and images with definite and stabilized meanings, which produce no further associations. Non-representation, on the other hand, refers to images that encourage attentive spectatorship, evoke various and conflicting experiences, and are open to multiple layers of meaning.

A range of post-Yugoslav films produced from 2001 onwards provides spectators with non-representational images that offer innovative approaches to the collective past, while simultaneously reframing contemporary experience. What I propose to call non-representational images in post-Yugoslav cinema appears to offer a more dynamic relationship to the past and the present, while reflecting complex processes of the formation of collective and individual identity, memory, guilt, and responsibility. But if

¹ By now, *post-Yugoslav cinema* as a term has entered and greatly shaped writings by scholars such as Pavle Levi, Jurica Pavičić, Dino Murtić, and Dijana Jelača. For more material related to the post-Yugoslav cinema, see Pavle Levi, *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu: estetika i ideologija u jugoslovenskom i postjugoslovenskom filmu/Disintegration in Flames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*; Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film: stil i ideologija*; Dino Murtić, *Post-Yugoslav Cinema: Towards a Cosmopolitan Imaging*; and Dijana Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory: Narrating Trauma in Post-Yugoslav Cinema*.

these dynamics are inherent in non-representational images, is there indeed a way in which such images can contribute to overcoming the post-war condition? In particular, I want to investigate how contemporary images of war shape film aesthetics in post-war Yugoslav cinema, and to what extent non-representational strategies and their reception contribute to the process of reconciliation.

Films

Film production in the immediate post-war period in Bosnia and Herzegovina was limited and included a number of low-budget documentary, mainly short films and a few fiction titles. The reason for such a development can be found in the fact that the disintegration of Yugoslavia brought an end to a joint national cinema. Instead of one, there are now seven national cinemas: Bosnian, Croatian, Kosovar, Montenegrin, North Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovenian. All began with significant drawbacks due to the Yugoslav disintegration wars, followed by post-war and post-socialist transitions and the ensuing privatization. The first country to recover its audiovisual production was Slovenia, which founded the Slovenian Film Fund in 1994. Croatia and Bosnia were more directly affected by the Yugoslav disintegration wars and their screening network was largely destroyed. Serbia's distribution system remained largely intact due to the absence of direct conflict until the 1999 NATO bombing.² Serbia and Kosovo founded their film centres in 2004, followed by Croatia in 2008 and Bosnia in 2009. North Macedonia and Montenegro were the last post-Yugoslav states to restore their national film policies by introducing public film agencies in 2013 and 2017, respectively. The smaller size and output of the film-producing territories of the emerging states of former Yugoslavia necessitates neighbourly, cross-border collaborations. Another factor that led to the gradual revitalization of the audiovisual sector in the region was the adoption of an international co-production funding scheme. All the states except for Kosovo are member states of Eurimages, a cultural support fund of the Council of Europe. A revision of the convention in 2018 lowered the minimum participation level for a co-producing partner to 5 per cent. This move has enabled "smaller producing countries" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2005, 79) to become co-producing partners on bigger projects

2 For more information about the dissolution of the Yugoslav film industry, the demise of distribution circuits, modes of production, and established audience, see Petar Mitrić, "A Popular Post-Yugoslav Cinema: Does It Exist and Why (Not)?" and Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*.

from which they had been previously excluded due to budgetary constraints. The quick adoption of international co-production as an industry practice has shaped the film-production landscape in the former Yugoslavia over the past decade. Given that a ruined distribution system has left many areas without access to cinema, film festivals and co-production markets assume the role of alternative exhibition outlets. CineLink Industry Days at the Sarajevo Film Festival, as a case in point, acts as a hub for film activity within, across, and beyond the post-Yugoslav region.

The acclaim given to Danis Tanović's Oscar-winning feature debut film *No Man's Land*, made in 2001, boosted the production of a series of multiple award-winning films in Bosnia. *No Man's Land* is broadly considered an important landmark for post-Yugoslav cinema in general, and Bosnian cinema in particular. Films produced in the period 2001–18 were initially taken into consideration. The corpus comprises fourteen films that, to a certain degree, follow non-representational logic. The earliest production is from 2007 and the latest from 2018. Three other films that I make comparisons with were added at a later stage of the research and date back to the middle and the end of the 1990s.

All the films selected engage with the historical experience of the Yugoslav disintegration wars in the period 1991–2001. The films were chosen based on how they account for the enduring post-war condition in Bosnia and the post-Yugoslav states of Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo as the most affected by the wars, and whether and how they contribute towards ending the condition. They either zoom in on a victim and victimhood, perpetrator and perpetrator trauma, bystander and complicity in cover-up crime, or they engage with the question of war and the post-war condition from the diasporic perspective of its filmmakers.

Fourteen of the films were made by filmmakers based and active in the former states of Yugoslavia; namely, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. The directors include Aida Begić, Goran Dević, Srđan Dragojević, Ognjen Glavonić, Neven Hitrec, Zvonimir Jurić, Namik Kabil, Šejla Kamerić, Emir Kusturica, Vladimir Perišić, and Jasmila Žbanić. Igor Drljača, Vladimir Tomić, and Lidija Zelović are the authors of the three other films. They left the former Yugoslavia as refugees and are now active in the diaspora in Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands, respectively. The filmmakers' personal, lived, and embodied experiences of the turmoil caused by the disintegration of Yugoslavia, manifested through the wars and migration, and maintained by post-war corruption and poverty, prove pertinent for the formation of non-representational images of war. The objects of my study are, therefore, films made by filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia.

The films premiered mainly at international film festivals, from Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, Amsterdam, and Nyon, to Sarajevo. Most of them received considerable critical acclaim, with a few of them being recognized with the festivals' highest prizes. For instance, Emir Kusturica's *Underground* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1995 and Jasmila Žbanić's debut feature film *Grbavica* won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale in 2006.³ A premiere at an internationally renowned film festival, followed by considerable critical acclaim, customarily enhances a film's wider circulation and theatrical distribution at home and overseas. And, as I argue throughout the book, it also contributes to the process of reconciliation within the region.

Out of the seventeen films in the focus of this research, twelve had a regional premiere at various programme sections of the Sarajevo Film Festival, where five were awarded top prizes. *Ordinary People* collected two of the main prizes at the Sarajevo Film Festival, one for best film and the other for best actor in 2009. *Children of Sarajevo*'s lead actress Marija Pikić and *The Load*'s main actor Leon Lučev were awarded the Heart of Sarajevo for best female and male role in 2012 and 2018, respectively. *Interrogation* was named as the best documentary film at the 2007 edition. In the same category, *Flotel Europa* received the Special Jury Mention in 2015.

The Sarajevo Film Festival is a privileged showcase of post-Yugoslav cinema. Founded in 1995, in the days of the siege of Sarajevo, it was an act of resistance to the war destruction. Coming out of its intimate phase as a small-scale event that gathered international filmmakers and intellectuals to celebrate the city's survival, over the course of thirty years it has grown into an international film festival focusing on the region of southeast Europe, broadly understood. From the industry perspective, over the past three decades, the festival has aspired to become the hub for regional film professionals, as it plays an essential role in the development and financing of European co-productions in the region. The festival's industry section covers a wide range of activities aimed at filmmakers at different stages of

3 Vladimir Perišić's and Ognjen Glavonić's debut feature films premiered at the Cannes Film Festival: *Ordinary People* at International Critics' Week in 2009, and *The Load* at the Directors' Fortnight in 2018. *The Load* was selected for the Discovery Programme of the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival, where Igor Drlića's feature debut film *Krivina* competed in 2012. A year later, Jasmila Žbanić's film *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* premiered at the festival's Special Presentations section. Vladimir Tomić's debut film *Flotel Europa* had a premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival's Forum section in 2015. A year later, Ognjen Glavonić's *Depth Two*, a prequel of *The Load*, featured in the same programme strand. Namik Kabil's debut film *Interrogation* was in the line-up of the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, and was shown at the 2012 Visions du Réel Film Festival, where Lidija Zelović's *My Own Private War* competed with other international mid-length documentaries in 2016.

their careers. Both aspects, the programming and industry activities, reflect the festival's chief ambition and the role of a talent spotter. This role implies a tireless search for novel cinematic approaches, which tend to refine the existing film aesthetics. Since this quest encompasses films originating from the area, marked by recent conflicts and turbulent histories, it is likely that the Sarajevo Film Festival would be profoundly interested in looking for, selecting, and showcasing films that avoid the use of representational images of war.

Now that I have briefly introduced the objects of my study and touched upon their distribution potential, I will elaborate on the methodology—the theoretical framework and the structure of my book.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

There has been a clear shift in the established scholarly approaches to post-Yugoslav cinema.⁴ This shift has transformed the study of representations of war in terms of trauma, ideology, or narrative into a study of the very conditions of representation, its possibilities and impossibilities. I use this shift by picking up on Gilles Deleuze's concept of "non-representation," which offers an alternative to a focus on regimes of representation and underlines what these regimes leave out. Around the apparently contradictory concept of images of non-representation, I develop a heuristic to select and analyse films that I consider to be particularly relevant with regard to the difficulties of accounting for the historical experience of the ongoing post-war condition.

I draw on the most systematic study of post-Yugoslav cinema, that of Jurica Pavičić on film style and ideology, published in 2011. Pavičić offers a tripartite categorization of post-Yugoslav film: films of self-victimization, films of self-Balkanization, and films of normalization. These categories propose a coherent narrative of a shared past with the purpose of laying the groundwork for a shared future for their respective countries or communities of origin. They categorize films according to what could be called the ideological objective and possible influence of their narratives. Films of self-victimization argue that the war was the result of external prediction; films of self-Balkanization internalize and amplify western stereotypes about the intrinsic irrationality of Yugoslav peoples and politics; and films of normalization attempt to create

4 By established scholarly approaches, I mean the following monographs: Levi, *Disintegration in Flames*; Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*; Gordana P. Crnković, *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film: Fires, Foundations*; Murtić, *Post-Yugoslav Cinema*; and Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory*.

a false consistency through narratives that suggest that what is still persistently present—the unresolved past—has actually been resolved and turned into a liveable past. I depart from and simultaneously challenge Pavičić's model and distinguish three categories of post-Yugoslav cinema: films of over-representation, films of representation, and films of non-representation. Films of over-representation (often in melodramatic or epic modes) stage victim competitions and strengthen divisive ethnic stereotypes, or resort (in more postmodern modes) to relativizing forms of self-Balkanization (that is, they roughly correspond to Pavičić's first two types). Films of representation reject such strategies and instead tend to use minimal realism, classic narrative arcs, and linear storytelling (roughly Pavičić's films of normalization). Finally, films of non-representation tend to reject linear narrative storytelling, and work instead with silences, long shots, shaky camera, and the insertion of archival or home movie footage. These films derive their power from the non-representational images, which in their self-reflection have the capacity to elicit particular effects and provide political awakening. Non-representation proves to be a matter of degree. My categories cut across Pavičić's categories and constitute a sliding scale, along which films can be located and categorized with nuance and subtlety, always with an eye to the implications of stylistic choices and formal strategies for a politics of memory.

Historical Context

Historian Tony Judt's insight into various interpretations of the causes of the Yugoslav wars provides a valuable framework within which to analyse the disintegration of Yugoslavia. His account is supplemented by two other overviews of contending historiographies of the Yugoslav wars and their aftermaths. One is by historian and international politics scholar Jasna Dragović-Soso and the other by Eastern European studies scholar and principal researcher on history and politics in the trial of Slobodan Milošević, Nevenka Tromp. The detailed accounts by Allan Little, Christopher Bennett, and Laura Silber, former war correspondents previously active in the region, highlight the same discussion. The writings by philosopher Asim Mujkić, sociologist Dino Abazović, and political scientists Tarik Haverić and Senada Šelo Šabić offer necessary tools for engaging with idiosyncrasies in the post-Dayton governance model of Bosnia and Herzegovina and broader concerns posed by post-conflict societies. Confiscation of memories, children of communism, non-Yugoslavia are concepts developed by writer Dubravka Ugrešić, philosopher Boris Buden, aesthetician and art theorist Miško Šuvaković, respectively. They expand our understanding of problems that accompany the transition from a single socialist society to a group of liberal democracies

in general and to Yugoslavia in particular. Literary scholars Vlad Beronja and Stijn Vervaeke engage with the multi-faceted meanings surrounding the term *post-Yugoslavia*, and political scholar Nicole Lindstrom distinguishes reflective from restorative *Yugo-nostalgia*, drawing on the well-known concept by literary theorist Svetlana Boym. Their ideas facilitate the formation of a clear distinction between the post-war and post-Yugoslav condition.

Representation and Non-Representation

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and literary theorist and feminist critic Gayatri Spivak engage with the complexities and problems of representation. Their insights pave the way for the conceptualization of non-representational images. Philosopher Henri Bergson's conception of time as duration and his actual/virtual distinction—as expanded in Deleuze's cinema books and in the writings by media theorist and curator Laura U. Marks and film scholar Darlene Pursley—provide a theoretical framework for this segment of the book. A return to Bergson's notion of attentive recognition proves rewarding when reflecting on the possibilities and limitations of two models of film spectatorship: the temporal model offered by Deleuze and the spatial model proposed by film scholar Vivian Sobchack. Deleuze's notable concepts, like nomadism, modern political film, optical image, crystal image, and powers of the false are evoked as they assist further conceptualization of non-representational images of war. Most of these notions, according to Deleuze, emerged after the Second World War in French and Italian cinema as a response to the unimaginable war destruction and the loss of an organic link between man and the world. They are referenced and utilized in the book as they assist in accounting for the comparable post-war condition in post-Yugoslav cinema. Philosopher Jacques Rancière's understanding of problems of representation as a triple-constraint of resemblances in arts is a necessary addition in this development.

Post-Yugoslav Cinema

Film scholar Jurica Pavičić's tripartite categorization of post-Yugoslav film—films of self-victimization, films of self-Balkanization, and films of normalization—provides a tool for critically reassessing the existing correlations between the dominant, nevertheless distinctive ideologies of post-war Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and their corresponding film representations. This reassessment leads to a new categorization of films: films of over-representation, films of representation, and films of non-representation.

With regard to the first category, which subsumes Pavičić's films of self-victimization and self-Balkanization under the same heading, special

attention is paid to the notion of melodrama and the scholarship on Balkanism. Melodrama is discussed as conceptualized by literary scholar Peter Brooks, film historian Thomas Elsaesser, and closely analysed by film scholar Barbara Klinger. Historians Maria Todorova and Larry Wolff, religious studies scholar Milica Bakić-Hayden and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek offer valuable interpretations of Eastern Europe and the Balkans as they engage with the complexity of east/west dichotomy that grounded scholarship in Orientalism, a concept coined and developed by literary scholar Edward Said. The contributions made by film scholar Dina Iordanova about Balkan cinema, her notion of self-exoticism in particular, are an indispensable part of the same discussion. Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of the carnivalesque, Fredric Jameson's criticism of postmodern pastiche, and Linda Hutcheon's view on postmodern parody as contributions made in literary theory are necessary additions when reflecting on the aspect of self-exoticism or self-Balkanization in films of over-representation. In addition to the concepts and writings by Elsaesser, Iordanova, Pavičić, and Žižek listed above, the book makes use of the invaluable insights into relations between ideology and style, memory and representation in post-Yugoslav cinema made by scholars Dijana Jelača, Pavle Levi, Dino Murtić, and Sanjin Pejković.

Memory Studies

With the reference to the emergence of non-representational strategies, from films of representation to films of non-representation, several concepts from memory studies prove essential for establishing a line of argument. A closer look at the difficulties of representing victim and perpetrator trauma, complicity in cover-up crimes, silence and denial about atrocities is made possible by means of Dominick LaCapra's notion of perpetrator trauma, Cathy Caruth's anti-mimetic model of trauma, as characterized by Ruth Leys, and Michael Rothberg's understanding of the complicity of an implicated subject. Alison Landsberg's idea of prosthetic memory, Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory, Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, and Astrid Erll's understanding of mediated memory are referenced as they assist the conceptualization of non-representational images of war as articulations of memories in films made by mainly diasporic filmmakers of a younger generation. In the context of diasporic film scholarship, the book makes use of the following concepts: Hamid Naficy's cinematic chronotope, a term grounded in Bakhtin's famous literary concept, Laura U. Marks's writing on intercultural cinema, and Dagmar Brunow's understanding of anti-essentialism in the transcultural memory of documentary cinema,

which draws on the notion of the situatedness of knowledge by cultural theorist Stuart Hall.

Structure

The book is divided into four chapters.

The multi-faceted meaning of the adjectives *post-Yugoslav* and *post-war* are reflected in Chapter I, titled "Post-Yugoslav Cinema in the Face of Post-War Culture." The notion of a post-war society assumes an inability to detach from the war, to separate trauma and the legacy of the war from the present. *Post-Yugoslavia* implies the retrieval of once lost memories of living in the former federal state. It may in time persist on its own, as a separate entity and a gentle reminder of antifascism, multiculturalism, and solidarity, once deeply shared values among South Slavic people. The distinction between the post-war and the post-Yugoslav condition, which is outlined in this chapter, justifies the imperative to move beyond the post-war condition. In the context of filmmaking, overcoming post-war status assumes finding aesthetic means to convey memories of the war while avoiding the traps of representation. Chapter I introduces the notion of non-representational images of war. They are conceptualized as ideas and affirmed differentialities in the Deleuzian sense and they present rather than represent war traumas in their belatedness. The non-representational images express the reluctance to swing easily into film narrative, to connect with other images and produce clear-cut meanings that would corroborate official state narratives. They cause disruption to the existing representation from within. The non-representational images of war introduce, obscure or otherwise complicate the wider context of war within narratives that actively seek to avoid it. The conditions of their emergence are contextualized, and a model of implied spectatorship is introduced.

Chapter II, titled "Beyond Self-Victimization," revolves around the portrayal of a victim, which varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each film submits to. The emphasis is placed on the shift from representation to non-representational strategies. And this shift is partly reflected in the change of register within the oeuvre by the same filmmaker. Non-representational images of war can deviate from the linear, cause-and-effect narrative, but remain supportive of the film's overarching optimism and related goals, as in *Grbavica* and *Snow*. They can appear as inserted home videos or news footage and challenge the coherence of the narrative structure, as in *Children of Sarajevo* and *For Those Who Can Tell No*

Tales. Alternatively, the cause-and-effect narrative can be left behind, and new temporalities can emerge with new sound/image arrangements, as in the full-fledged films of non-representation *Depth Two* and *1395 Days without Red*. The objectification of victims, on one side, and escaping the convention of representation in order to restore dignity to victims, on the other, are questions that are addressed in this chapter. Limits of representation are carefully analysed.

Chapter III, titled "Limitations of Non-Representation," acts as a mirror-image to the second chapter: revolving around the portrayal of a perpetrator that varies from film to film, again depending on the degree of representation each film submits to. While *Underground* and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* resort to the strategies of over-representation, the use of grotesque and hyperbole, *Ordinary People* and *Blacks* shift away from such forms and focus on dead time in warfare or the paratactic ordering of an unconnected narrative. Finally, *The Load* and *Krivina* are characterized as films of non-representation as they attest to a failure to remember the commission of war crimes and the silent complicity in their cover-ups. By introducing Dominick LaCapra's notion of perpetrator trauma and its relation to and integration in a film narrative, a discussion about the possible drawbacks of non-representation can be initiated. The treatment of individual and collective guilt and accountability come under careful scrutiny.

Chapter IV, titled "Excavating Memories of War," revolves around the after-effects of the Yugoslav disintegration wars, as experienced and depicted in films by filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia who work(ed) and live(d) in the diaspora. One of the working hypotheses of this chapter is that a spatio-temporal distance from places of war trauma and/or post-war anxieties leads to an experimentation in style and contributes to the rise of non-representational images of war and the stronger presence of films of non-representation. *Flotel Europa* and *My Own Private War* combine archival footage with home movies in mosaic-screen compositions and slow-motion montage, thus showing that non-representational images of war can offer points of entry for the productive, multidirectional exchange of mediated memories of the Partisan struggle and the Bosnian war. They can also draw attention to the failure to reconcile emotional confession with collective responsibility, familial remembrance with public representation, as they seek to account for the historical experience of the post-war condition.

Before I draw out an explanation of what makes the post-war condition diverge from the post-Yugoslav condition, an overview of the conflicts that took place in the former Yugoslavia is needed.

Contending Overviews of Historiographies of Yugoslav Disintegration Wars and Their Aftermaths

At this point, it is time to introduce the reader to the issue of contending narratives on the causes behind the disintegration of Yugoslavia. I bring forward two overviews, one by historian and international politics scholar Jasna Dragović-Soso, the other by Eastern European studies scholar and the principal researcher on history and politics in the trial of Slobodan Milošević, Nevenka Tromp. The overviews serve as a good foundation for understanding the chronology of the contending narratives of Yugoslav disintegration wars as offered by two scholars from former Yugoslavia. They also elucidate why I opted for a third, concise, and comprehensible account of the competing narratives offered by British historian Tony Judt.

In her article “Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations,” Jasna Dragović-Soso suggests that the narratives about the causes of Yugoslav disintegration wars diverge between those authors who regard structural factors and those who emphasize the role played by agency and historical occurrences. Soso’s classification follows a chronological time frame and entails five sets of explanations for the Yugoslav disintegration wars (Soso 2). The first cluster of interpretations is based on the *longue durée*, highlighting the so-called ancient hatreds, a clash of civilizations or the legacy of imperial rule in the Balkans. The second revolves around the historical legacy of nineteenth-century South Slav national ideologies. The third centres on the legacy of Yugoslavia’s socialist system. The fourth is focused on Yugoslavia’s disintegration in the second half of the 1980s and the role of political agency, while the fifth set of explanations is concentrated on the influence of external factors. The arguments based on “ancient hatreds” and a “clash of civilizations,” proposed by George Kennan and Samuel Huntington respectively,⁵ find the cause of the conflicts in the country’s multinational and multi-confessional character, which was developed in the distant past, producing the primordial identities of the different national groups (Soso 2). The identities appear to be fixed, defined by the language, religion, and myths of ethnic descent, whereby one group is distinguished from the other and set against the other in cyclically repeated violent clashes.

5 For more information, see Soso 30; under footnotes 6 and 9, see two following sources: George F. Kennan, *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict*; Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*; and Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

According to Soso, the third, more nuanced explanation belonging to the same set of explanations appeared later on, and made use of Yugoslavia's historical geography as being located at the borders of large multinational empires. There are two main schools of thought that regard the role of the nineteenth-century national ideologies in Yugoslavia's failure as a state; the first emphasizes the inherent irreconcilability between Serbian national ideology on one side and Croatian and Slovenian on the other. Drawing on the main conclusions, Yugoslavia was an impossible country either because of the inherent Serbian hegemonism or Croatian and Slovenian separatism. The proponent of the first variant of this school is Ivo Banac and the advocates of its second variation are Milorad Ekmečić, Vasilije Krestić, and Ljubodrag Dimić.⁶ In Soso's view, both rival explanations are essentially the same and no less deterministic than the *longue durée* approaches. The second school of thought belonging to the second set of explanations emphasizes the incompatibility of all particularist nationalist visions (Serb, Croat, Slovene) with an overarching Yugoslavism. The proponents of this view are Andrew Wachtel and Aleksandar Pavković.⁷ The criticism of this interpretation is, in Soso's view, based on the prototypical nature of the conflict between the supranational Yugoslavism and particularist nationalism, given that the experience indicates that they are not only mutually exclusive but co-exist with each other. The third cluster of explanations seeks to find the cause of the dissolution of the country's socialist experience. Authors such as Vojin Dimitrijević and Valerie Bunce⁸ highlight the transformation of Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and early 1970s into a semi-confederation as the major turning point in the country's evolution. As Soso reminds us, both perceive the constitution of 1974, which essentially granted more autonomy to each republic, including the two Serbian provinces Vojvodina and Kosovo, to be the major factor that led to the collapse of the federal state. According to these authors, the decision-making system had been weakened, thus enabling the federal units to assume the real centres of power. For Dejan Jović, the constitution is not the cause but the result of politics, which is the interaction of different subject positions. Other authors have emphasized

6 For more information, see Soso 1–39; under footnotes 34, 35 and 36, see the three following sources: Milorad Ekmečić, *Srbija između Evrope i Srednje Evrope*; Vasilije Krestić, *Un peuple en hôte: Les Serbes de Croatie et l'État croate*; and Ljubodrag Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija*.

7 Ibid., in footnote 28 see two related sources: Aleksandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*; Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe*, 109; and Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*.

8 Ibid., under the footnotes 57 and 59, see Dimitrijević 466–67; Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, 2.

economic factors, claiming that Yugoslavia suffered from the same systemic weakness as other socialist economies.

The fourth set of explanations for the disintegration of Yugoslavia sees the role of political as well as intellectual agency as responsible for Yugoslavia's demise. The policies and strategies of specific domestic political agents took place within the particular context of the end of the Cold War. In Soso's view, there is a near consensus in the scholarship about the centrality of the role played by the former President of Serbia and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milošević in the dissolution of the country. One side of the debate on Milošević's role takes a broad intentionalist approach and ascribes a level of coherence and premeditation, as opposed to the other, which assumes that Milošević was an intelligent but ultimately reactive player. Following the latter line of reasoning, he was too much of a pragmatist to have followed any strategic plan for a Greater Serbia, and his cause was to ensure his survival. The proponent of the first view is Louis Sell, and the advocates of the second are Lenard Cohen and Susan Woodward.⁹ In her overview, Soso discusses another aspect of the same debate on the role of political agency in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This aspect solidifies around the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1986 in which sixteen academics have analysed the causes of the Yugoslav crisis after the death of Tito. This highly controversial text consists of two parts. One entails the causes and manifestations of the crisis, and the other is concerned with the status of Serbia and the Serbian nation. One group of analysts, including Branimir Anzulović,¹⁰ are convinced that the Memorandum acted as the blueprint for Milošević's Greater Serbia. The others, including Aleksandar Pavković, argue that the document argues for a "reformed Yugoslav federation," that the intellectuals gathered around it were essentially Yugoslav in their orientation, less invested in reaching the solutions that the document proposes but more in "re-opening" the Serbian "national question."¹¹ Lastly, scholars such as Audrey Budding¹² argue that

9 Ibid., under the footnotes 81, 79, and 68, see three related sources: Louis Sell, *Slobodan Milošević and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*; Lenard J. Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević*; Susan Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia*.

10 Ibid., in footnote 29, see related source, Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*.

11 Ibid., in footnote 28, see related source Aleksandar Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*.

12 Ibid., in footnote 103 see Audrey Budding, "Serbian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: Historical Background and Context." Expert Report for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, 57. See also, Audrey Budding, "Systemic Crisis and National Mobilization: The Case of the 'Memorandum of the Serbian Academy,'" 49–69.

the Memorandum is more of an index of a belief system and a change of attitude rather than an explicit post-Yugoslav Serbian national programme. This view is shared by Soso. She maintains that the Memorandum is an embodiment of a discourse based on an extreme vision of victimization and uses the term *genocide* to depict the situation of Serbs in Yugoslavia, Kosovo in particular. Given that in Yugoslav public discourse the historical memory of the Second World War and the later situation of Kosovo Serbs were not openly discussed, Soso claims that the images invoked by the word *genocide* had the potential to be harnessed for a more belligerent policy of ethnic cleansing.

Finally, the fifth set of explanations for the dissolution of Yugoslavia looks into external factors such as western austerity policies, but also at what scholars perceive to be the premature recognition policy of the emerging states of former Yugoslavia by western countries. According to Soso, Susan Woodward maintains that the western demand for austerity policies turned what she sees as the regular political conflicts over economic resources into a crisis of the state and constitutional conflicts.¹³ In a similar vein, Raju Thomas believes that the international recognition policy of the federal republics led to the disintegration of the state.¹⁴ Sabrina Ramet and Daniele Conversi have a somewhat different view.¹⁵ They believe that the main mistake by the western powers was not the recognition of seceding republics but the adherence to the fiction of a “united” Yugoslavia, which encouraged the army-backed Serbian military onslaught. As could be seen, the above-mentioned authors tend to accentuate external factors not as a reaction to the Yugoslav crisis but as one of its leading causes.

In her article “Ongoing Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Historiography of the Conflict that Won’t Go Away,” Nevenka Tromp suggests that most scholarly studies, following the dissolution of the state in 1991, focused on the events that led up to its collapse. They concentrated mainly on the issues surrounding succession after the death of the president of former Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, the crisis of the federal system, and the economic crisis as the principal causes for the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation. Since the international community was heavily involved in the mediation of the Yugoslav conflicts, there is significant scholarship on its influence on

13 Ibid., in footnote 124, see Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*.

14 Ibid., in footnote 130, see Thomas Raju G. C., “Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Secession: Principles and Practice.”

15 Ibid., in footnote 137, see Sabrina Petra Ramet, “The Yugoslav Crisis and the West: Avoiding ‘Vietnam’ and Blundering into ‘Abyssinia’”; Daniele Conversi, *German-Bashing and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*.

the ground during and after the wars. Many diplomats and reporters have produced biographies based on their experiences in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which, according to Tromp, enhance our understanding of the Yugoslav conflicts within a broader context of geopolitical interests of the post-Cold War powers in southeast Europe. In the early 1990s, the framing of the causes of the Yugoslav wars was based on the argument of Yugoslavia's right of existence as a state. According to Tromp, the arguments can be grouped into three categories: 1) Yugo-pessimists; 2) Yugo-optimists; and 3) Yugo-realists. Yugo-pessimists doubt Yugoslavia had a chance to survive. They emphasize the differences between its constituent peoples and ethno-religious groups. They refer to the centuries of foreign domination of the former Yugoslavs by the two competing empires, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, as they seek to explain the deep-rooted animosities between the South Slav peoples through their imperial rule. This line of argument supports the narrative of civilizational separation, accentuating the cultural, religious, historical, and political differences, as opposed to the similarities between the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. Yugo-optimists regard the constitution of Yugoslavia in 1918 as the realization of a centuries-old dream of the South Slav people to liberate themselves from foreign occupation. The conflicts in the 1990s are perceived as the clash of the state projects. Yugo-realists see the formation of the Yugoslav states in 1918 and 1945 as part of wider international trends in the aftermath of the world wars. As for the 1990s conflicts, they consider them to be influenced by internal and external factors. Perceived as political conflicts, they were influenced by the ethnic, religious, and ideological tensions of the 1980s. The political and economic crises laid the foundation for the rise of radical ideological movements, whereby political elites, who came to power through the multiparty elections in the 1990s, manipulated ethno-religious groups while pitting them against each other.

As mentioned earlier, foreign diplomats and reporters have produced biographies based on their wartime experiences, which enhance our understanding of Yugoslav conflicts. The same goes for the role of the trial archives at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which was established in 1993 by the Security Council of the United Nations to prosecute the war crimes that had been committed during the Yugoslav wars and to try their perpetrators. As Tromp highlights, the criminal responsibility for war crimes gets established at the tribunal but should not be confused with historical responsibility. She maintains that these archives present important sources for historians and other researchers who seek to reconstruct which war crimes happened, where, and how, and who is responsible for them.

Taking into account the question of responsibility, she recognizes two main approaches to the question of which side incited the violence and engaged in the commission of mass atrocities to achieve its geo-political agenda following the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Tromp designates them as “relativists” and “intentionalists.” Relativists build their arguments on the sources that were available before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) created its first trial and related archives. When the war broke out in 1991, scholars of international relations applied conflict theory to the Yugoslav crisis, arguing that all parties shared equal blame for the violence, which “resulted from a complicated interplay of many factors, leading to an escalation of the crisis that was beyond the control of one single party.”¹⁶ As Tromp further explains, they perceive Serbia’s policies as reactive to developments driven by the leaders of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and the International Community. They see Milošević as someone who genuinely wanted to preserve Yugoslavia but failed due to the cause-and-effect chain of events at the national and international levels. In Tromp’s view, this approach tends to relativize the war crimes, stressing that all parties engaged in their commission equally. Relativists reject seeing the asymmetry in the commission of large-scale atrocities by the Serbian side, even when confronted with the evidence to support this claim.¹⁷ According to Tromp, the proponents of this approach are Dejan Jović, Susan Woodward, and Lenard Cohen. She claims that intentionalists build their arguments on the records of the criminal prosecutions at the ICTY and the intentions of the political and military establishments whose actions led to large-scale atrocities. They see the Yugoslav crisis as part of a planned strategy by Serbia’s political elite led by Milošević that depended on violence to meet preconceived geopolitical goals. The dominant interpretation suggests that Serbia’s ethnocentric policies under Milošević drove Slovenia and Croatia from the Yugoslav federation. As Tromp clarifies, Serbia’s plan A was to centralize the Yugoslav federation. Once Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, Belgrade turned to plan B, which aimed at creating an ethno-national Serb state. The main criticism of the intentionalist approach is that international criminal law deals with individual criminal responsibility, whereas historians are interested in the historical processes. However, part of the task of the prosecution at the Hague Tribunal was to prove and emphasize that Milošević did not invent

16 Nevenka Tromp, “Ongoing Disintegration of Yugoslavia: Historiography of the Conflict that won’t go away,” 43.

17 Ibid., 43–45.

Serbia's state ideology, it had existed since the nineteenth century, and he was not its mere puppet but the omnipotent executor.¹⁸ The proponents of this approach are Nevenka Tromp, Sonja Biserko, Louis Sell, Norman Cigar, and Paul Williams.

Now that I have provided both overviews, by Soso and Tromp, it is relevant to see how their respective chronologies of contending narratives differ from each other. Soso's overview tends to accentuate the country's socialist experience, external factors, and economic reasons as the main causes for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Tromp's overview emphasizes the agency of political elites, Milošević in particular, in the premeditation of violence-led wars, and relies on the overwhelming evidence collected at the ICTY over the years. Tromp also insists on situating the socialist experience of Yugoslavia within the wider context of other socialist countries. Given that both overviews come from authors from the former Yugoslavia, I decided to introduce the third, concise, and all-encompassing overview by the British historian Tony Judt. The main reason is his acute observation and the following conclusion—only a few interpretations consider the Yugoslav people as the agents responsible for the wars. Economic problems in conjunction with ethno-nationalist politics designed in Belgrade were more likely the actual causes of the wars. This position proves valuable for my approach when analysing the films.

Five to six related but independent conflicts were fought in the territories of the former Yugoslavia in the years 1991 to 2001. In his book *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, Judt provides an account of the various interpretations of the causes of the Yugoslav wars, which will prove valuable as a framework here. Two interpretations, preferred by western media and taken up by European and American statesmen, read that the Yugoslav disintegration wars stemmed either from age-old ethnic feuds or from the imperial ambitions of various countries. The notion about ethnic feuds conforms to the perception of Yugoslav people as ill-tempered, bloodthirsty, and ready to engage in violent acts against one another at any time. As these characteristics are supposedly immanent, pre-given, and therefore unchangeable, violence repeats cyclically and seemingly beyond the will of those involved. The other interpretation takes into consideration the interests of the former imperial powers and of current economically

18 Ibid., 45. Under the footnote 21, see, for example, Tromp, *Prosecuting Slobodan Milošević*; Sonja Biserko, *Yugoslavia's Implosion: The Fatal Attraction of Serb Nationalism*; Sell, *Slobodan Milošević and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*; and Norman Cigar and Paul Williams, *Indictment in The Hague*.

dominant countries in the area of the former Yugoslavia. In either case, the Yugoslav people are perceived as victims of either inescapable destiny or the manipulations of the others (Judt 665–66). Only a few interpretations have considered Yugoslav citizens as the agents responsible for the wars. Economic problems, married with the ethno-nationalist politics designed in Belgrade, were mostly not recognized, although Judt clearly lays out that they were more likely to have been the actual causes of the wars.

The wars unfolded as a reaction to first Slovenian, then Croatian and Bosnian declarations of independence from the federal state of Yugoslavia. The Slovenian declaration of independence was initiated by growing dissatisfaction in the Slovenian government, with the centralization of federal power in Serbia. The rising nationalism of Slobodan Milošević, former president of the League of Communists in Serbia and future president of the Republic of Serbia, sounded an additional alarm. In his bid for power, Milošević replaced the declining ideology of communism with a nationalist patriotism. Tony Judt suggests that his behaviour was not inherently unusual for communist leaders at the time, when “with the ideological legitimacy of Communism and its ruling party waning fast, patriotism offered an alternative way of securing a hold on power” (Judt 671).

A quarter of the federal budget was contributed by Slovenia, the inhabitants of which amounted to 8 per cent of the federal population and equalled the total population of Montenegro and Kosovo, which contributed only 4 per cent and 1 per cent to the federal budget, respectively (Judt 670). The north-south opposition became stark as economic problems started mounting, resulting in growing debt to the International Monetary Fund, which “rocketed from under 3.5 billion dollar in 1973 to more than 20.5 billion in 1981.”¹⁹ According to historian Christopher Bennett, the standard of living dropped by nearly 40 per cent between 1982 and 1989, with inflation reaching its peak at above 2,000 per cent in December 1989 (34). Ante Marković, Yugoslavia’s last prime minister, was appointed as the head of government of technocrats to address Yugoslavia’s economic problems. With his reforms, which included wage freezes and price liberalization, he managed to decrease inflation from more than 2,000 per cent at the end of 1989 to below 10 per cent only two months later. Encouraged by the success of his reforms, Marković founded his own non-communist political party, with the idea of providing a democratic mandate and legitimacy to the federal government. To achieve this goal, he needed to hold federal elections before any of the republics went to the polls. Unfortunately, this reasoning

19 Bennett 34, as taken from David Dyker’s *Yugoslavia: Socialism, Development and Debt*.

came too late, as Slovenia's communists had already obliged themselves of multi-party elections at the republican level in April 1990. Any attempt aimed at increasing the influence of Yugoslavia's federal centre posed a potential threat to Slovenians (Bennett 40). Growing economic concerns made Slovenians think they would be better off managing their own matters without obeying the Belgrade-governed rule over federal expenditures.

Chronologically, the first conflict to take place was in Slovenia after the vote for independence from the federal state of Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991. It lasted ten days, until the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) withdrew from Slovenia. Given its duration and the number of casualties, around fifty soldiers on both sides (Little and Silber 166), it is hardly considered a war. Furthermore, it was a conflict between Slovenes and the federal system rather than a conflict between Slovenia and Serbia. As stated by the authors of *The Death of Yugoslavia*, Allan Little and Laura Silber, the war has been perceived as phoney, as it followed a series of secession talks between Milan Kučan, the President of Slovenia, and Slobodan Milošević.²⁰ Both leaders were united in their opposition to the federal system by which they felt constrained, unlike JNA generals, who were left outside the loop, believing that they were defending the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. Upon the withdrawal of the humiliated and vilified JNA forces to Croatia, it became clear that the army no longer protected the borders of the federal state of Yugoslavia, nor the interests of all Yugoslavs—rather, it was in service of expansionist Serbia. In public, Milošević continued to present himself as the defender of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia while doing the opposite. In the years to come, he would continue to play this double game.

The second conflict, which followed shortly after Croatia's vote for independence, was between Croatia and its rebellious Serb minority, which was backed by the Yugoslav People's Army (essentially and at the time Serbian and Montenegrin army forces and paramilitaries). To a larger degree, the conflict was halted by January the following year, thanks to the 14,000-troop United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), which was installed in Croatia to separate Serbs from Croats (Judt 676). The so-called Sarajevo Accord required Serb forces to give up on the captured territories, where Serbs did not live before the war, and asked peacekeepers to enable displaced Croats to return to their homes (Bennet 62). The agreement was not implemented accordingly, as the Serb leadership had blocked the return of the displaced Croats and disabled the reintegration of Serbs in Croatia. Therefore, the conflict, which appeared to be halted in 1992, was periodically

20 These talks took place between January 24 and July 18, 1991 (Little and Silber 166–69).

reinstated—in January 1993, May 1995, and August 1995 in particular—with the advances of the Croat army re-capturing areas previously occupied by Serb forces (Bennett 74). It is relevant to add that in the final military operation called *Oluja* (“Storm”), around 200,000 Serbs were forced to leave and never return. Various sources estimate that 700–2,500 Serbian civilians who refused to flee were killed. To the present day, these retaliatory attacks remain a stumbling block in Croatia’s coming to terms with its own past war crimes.²¹

The third in line and the most ruinous of all was the war in Bosnia, between the Croat-Muslim side and the Serb side. This war started following the Bosnian independence referendum, which took place between February 29 and March 1, 1992. The independence—pushed by Bosnian Muslims and Croats, and voted against by Bosnian Serbs—led to a declaration of war against the newly independent state. The aim was to carve out a new, ethnically clean state, Republika Srpska, with the backing of the Yugoslav army (Judt 674). The official beginning of the Bosnian war is April 6, the same day that the European Economic Community recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state (Little and Silber 228). It is also the day when hostilities between the two parties broke out into full-blown violence.

The Dayton Peace Accords (DPA), reached on December 14, 1995, after three weeks of negotiations, marks the official end of the Bosnian war. The agreement followed the US-led NATO air strikes, which helped transform the existing military situation on the ground (Bennett 8). Signed by Alija Izetbegović, representing Bosnian Muslims, Franjo Tuđman, speaking for Croats, and Slobodan Milošević, on behalf of both Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serbs, the agreement effectively stopped the war and prevented further casualties. It has, however, divided the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina into two entities: The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (predominantly composed of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats) and Republika Srpska (comprising mainly Bosnian Serbs).

The NATO campaign came into force on August 28, 1995, seven weeks after the Srebrenica genocide, which accounts for the worst mass murder in Europe since the Second World War.²² After three and a half years—with

21 More information about this can be found in Nemanja Rujević, “The Crimes of Others.” *Deutsche Welle*, 8 Mar. 2015, www.dw.com/en/anniversary-of-operation-storm-the-crimes-others-committed/a-18624692. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

22 In ten days, July 11–22, the summary executions by Bosnian Serb Army and Serb paramilitaries left 8,373 men dead or missing according to the Potocari Memorial Center Preliminary List of Missing Persons from Srebrenica 1995.

approximately 100,000 dead or missing citizens,²³ which makes it the highest number of casualties of all Yugoslav countries, with 1.2 million Bosnians living as refugees abroad, and an additional 1.2 million displaced internally (Bennett 8)—and after a series of futile, internationally mediated ceasefires, peace talks and proposed maps of Yugoslavia and Bosnia,²⁴ the US-led NATO campaign brought the war to an end.

International involvement in the internal affairs of the countries of former Yugoslavia had been eagerly anticipated ever since the beginning of the crisis. Their help was required for the successful transition from communism to liberalism. At first, the European Community (EC) preferred that Yugoslavia remain unified, assuming that the break-up would be messy and would serve as a blueprint for the up-and-coming dissolution of the Soviet Union (Bennett 50). Later, it became clear that the EC was divided between countries who preferred the seceding republics, including Germany and Austria, and others, led by France, who were supportive of the existing borders, favouring the status quo, hence backing the Serb-governed Yugoslavia (Judt 676).

The Bosnian leadership invited coordinated international intervention: first, due to the UN Security Council's arms embargo, which was imposed on all Yugoslav states from September 26, 1991, and second, due to the fact that the Bosnian army had entered the war unprepared (Little and Silber 198). The reasoning by the Bosnian government was that if the international community had not been ready to engage and prevent further assaults or

23 This number ranges between 97,207 confirmed (62 per cent Bosniaks, 25 per cent Serbs, just over 8 per cent Croats) and 5,100 unconfirmed names of Bosnian citizens, as provided in the 2013 report by the Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo, to 104,732 Bosnians (65 per cent Muslims, 22 per cent Serbs, 9 per cent Croats, 5 per cent others), as provided by the 2010 ICTY report.

24 Of all the peace talks, the two most notable on the topic of Yugoslavia were the Lord Carrington Peace Plan and the Vance Peace Plan, which were supposed to provide each republic with as much sovereignty as they wanted, with the possibility of staying associated with the central organization as much as they wanted; in addition, the second plan argued for the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to keep the warring parties in Croatia separated. The first failed, the second was accepted as the Sarajevo Accord and to a significant degree prevented further casualties and destruction in Croatia. Of all the peace negotiations concerning Bosnia-Herzegovina's internal borders, prior to the Dayton Peace Accords, the most notable were the Vance-Owen Plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, and the Contact Group Plan. All three produced different maps, according to which territorial distribution among the three ethnic groups was envisioned. All three were rejected: two by Bosnian Serbs, one by Bosnian Muslims. For more information about the Lord Carrington and the Vance Plan, see "Chapter 14: Yugoslavia *a la Carte*" (190–204); for the Vance-Owen Plan, see "Chapter 21: Last Chance 'Café' (276–90); for the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan, see "Chapter 23: The HMS Invisible" (303–08) and for the Contact Group Plan, see "Chapter 27: A Dagger in the Back" (335–44) in *The Death of Yugoslavia*, by Allan Little and Laura Silber.

neutralize enemy forces, at least the arms embargo should have been lifted so that the Bosnian army could have armed its forces and counterattacked the disproportionately stronger Bosnian Serb army (Little and Silber 198).

With regard to the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, at least three problems should be mentioned. The first is the timing of their operations, the second is the number of forces allocated to Bosnia, and the third fundamental problem is their objective. If Bosnia had managed to declare independence together with Slovenia and Croatia and the peacekeeping forces had been installed at the same time as in Croatia, perhaps the war could have been prevented. Instead, they arrived when the war had already broken out—34,000 troops were supposed to operate in the so-called UN “safe areas,”²⁵ while in reality 7,000 were available (Little and Silber 275), 3,500 were deployed, and only a couple of hundred were allocated to Srebrenica (Human Rights Watch 9). As a result, the UNPROFOR failed to keep the “safe areas” safe. Tony Judt reminds us that the UN forces were historically introduced into war-torn areas to guarantee and maintain peace; but in Yugoslavia there was no peace to maintain, neither the will nor the means to implement it (Judt 676). With their arrival in Bosnia, the objective of the UN forces shifted from keeping the warring sides apart to protecting civilians from the armed attacks. Even if they were committed to protecting civilians, they ended up protecting themselves, particularly in the “safe areas” of Srebrenica, Žepa, and Goražde. General Rose, commander of the UN peacekeeping force at the time of the fall of Goražde, argued against the air-strikes, which would push the UNPROFOR from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement.²⁶ In his opinion, the UN should have remained neutral and not have favoured one side over the other (Little and Silber 326). One thing, however, remains unclear: how was it possible to keep the “safe area” safe without aligning with the weaker side? By failing to protect civilians, in Srebrenica in particular, the UNPROFOR left its neutral stance and, ironically, aligned with the stronger party, enabling the aggressor to dictate the future flow of events. The Srebrenica massacres, followed by the second

25 On April 16, 1993, the UN Security Council declared Srebrenica a safe area. It meant that it was free from armed attack or any hostile act. As of May 6, 1993, this status was extended to Bihać, Goražde, Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Žepa according to the Security Council Resolution 824, as could be found in Bennett 288. The first to fall was Goražde on April 16, 1994, followed by Srebrenica on July 11, 1995, and Žepa a fortnight later, as can be found in Little and Silber, pp. 329, 349, and 350, respectively.

26 Throughout the war, the strong opposition to NATO airstrikes repeatedly came from the United Kingdom and France, which, according to Little and Silber, were the main troop-contributing countries in Bosnia (Little and Silber 350).

major shelling of the Sarajevo marketplace, which took place on August 28, 1995, triggered a series of American-led, sustained NATO airstrikes against the Bosnian Serb army's strategic positions. All of a sudden, preventing further casualties did not seem that unlikely anymore. Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, 60,000 NATO forces—named IFOR—became responsible for peace implementation.²⁷

Beside the numerous failures of UN policy in the Bosnian war of 1992–95, their efforts in setting up the Hague-based ICTY²⁸ needs to be acknowledged. In its twenty-four year-mandate, the ICTY has indicted 161 and sentenced ninety-three individuals. The most prominent leaders responsible for designing and commanding over ethnically cleansed areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, like Radovan Karadžić, President of Republika Srpska, and Ratko Mladić, General and Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, received life-long sentences. After twenty years, in the longest landmark ICTY trial, the Serbian state officials Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović were convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Bosnia and Croatia.²⁹

The fourth war, which followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia, is a separate war between Bosnian Muslims and Croats. It emerged in January 1993 as Croats attempted “to carve out an ephemeral statelet in the Croat-dominated region of Herzegovina” (Judt 674). A series of secret meetings between Croat and Serb leaders³⁰ served to plot the partitioning of Bosnia with the purpose of annexing its ethnically cleansed areas to Croatia and Serbia. Even if Serbia

27 IFOR was active between December 1995 and December 1996. Afterwards it was replaced by the 32,000-troop-strong SFOR, which remained active until December 2004, when operations were passed onto European Force Althea (EUFOR Althea). From 2012, the total force of EUFOR was at 900 troops from nineteen nations.

28 On May 25, 1993, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 827, formally establishing the ICTY. It has jurisdiction over four types of crime: genocide; crimes against humanity; violations of the laws or customs of war; and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. More information about the ICTY can be found at www.icty.org. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

29 More information on the importance of this landmark trial can be found in Molly Quell, “After 30 Years, the UN Court’s Last Verdict on Former Yugoslavia,” *Justiceinfo.net*, Jun. 2, 2023, www.justiceinfo.net/en/117503-after-30-years-un-court-last-verdict-former-yugoslavia.html; Julian Borger, “Serbian secret police chiefs face verdict over atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia,” *The Guardian*, Jun. 29, 2021, www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jun/29/serbian-secret-police-chiefs-face-verdict-over-atrocities-in-croatia-and-bosnia; also in, Biserko, *Yugoslavia’s Implosion*. Both accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

30 The first meeting between Milošević and Tuđman took place on March 25, 1991, in Karadordevo, Serbia, as can be found in Bennett 57. The second, which involved Mate Boban, Bosnian Croat leader, and Radovan Karadžić, President of Republika Srpska, took place on May 6, 1992, at the airport in Graz, Austria, as stated in Bennet 69.

and Croatia were about to enter or were already at war with each other, it did not prevent their officials from secretly meeting and uniting against the common foe for the purpose of enlarging their respective territories.

Tuđman, like Milošević, was playing a double game: presenting one thing in public, for international consumption, while doing the opposite. Tuđman repeatedly demanded recognition of Croatian sovereignty within its existing frontiers, while he secretly plotted against Bosnia-Herzegovina, denying the neighbouring country the same right to sovereignty (Little and Silber 144). The Muslim-Croat conflict in Bosnia lasted until March 18, 1994, when the Washington Agreement put an end to the fighting between the two parties. Backed by the United States, outside the focus of attention of the UN peacekeeping forces, Croats went on to create a stronger army to reclaim the territories previously occupied by rebellious Serbs. At first Croat Serbs were supported by Serbia, only later to be left on their own.³¹ The Croats' renewed alliance with Bosnian Muslims in fighting against the common foe was one of the preconditions of the Washington Peace Agreement.³²

The fifth war to emerge took place in and over Kosovo, from March 5, 1998 to June 11, 1999, when the NATO forces stopped Slobodan Milošević from further expulsion and ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians. The long-time suppression of the Kosovo Albanians by the Serbian authorities first led to non-violent resistance by the Albanians, governed under the moderate leadership of Ibrahim Rugova. As this type of resistance proved too weak, young Albanians turned increasingly to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Originating from Macedonia in 1992, the KLA was committed to the armed struggle for the independence of Kosovo and, as Tony Judt points out, perhaps for union with Albania. Their guerrilla attacks on isolated police stations gave Milošević "an opportunity to condemn all Albanian resistance as 'terrorist' and approve a campaign of increasing violence against Albanians" (Judt 680). This campaign resulted in a series of massacres of whole families, followed by the massive expulsion

31 This turn was a reaction to the first strong opposition to the rule of Slobodan Milošević. It came from the Croat Serb leader Milan Babić, who was against the Sarajevo Accords, basically the Vance Peace Plan, which proposed to install a 12,000-strong UN force to keep Serbs apart from Croats in Croatia. Milošević was in favour of the plan, in which he saw "consolidation of his military gains" (Little and Silber 201). However, disapproval of the Croat Serb leadership left a bitter taste for Milošević. In the years to come Croat Serbs would gradually lose the support of Milošević.

32 On July 22, 1995, Tuđman and Izetbegović had a decisive meeting in Split. The common strategy of liberating the Krajina region was discussed (as elaborated in Bennett 75).

of Albanians from the territories of Kosovo. At first, the international response was divided. NATO and the United States were in favour of air strikes, whereas within the UN, which was supposed to authorize the action, Russia and China expressed strong opposition. The massacre in the village Račak acted as a trigger for the NATO operation.³³ Peace negotiations at Rambouillet between Madeline Albright, the US State Secretary at the time, and a Yugoslav delegation, were unsuccessful. They ended with Belgrade refusing to withdraw its forces from Kosovo and rejecting the international military presence in Kosovo. NATO intervention became inevitable. On March 24, without UN approval, NATO declared war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which at the time comprised the states of Serbia and Montenegro. Serious damage was caused to Serbia. However, the expulsion of civilians, which led to half of the Albanian population leaving Kosovo, could not have been prevented. On June 9, Belgrade agreed to remove its troops, NATO assaults were suspended, and “the UN duly mandated a ‘temporary’ occupation of the province by a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)” (Judt 682).

In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence, which by now has been recognized by 119 states, excluding Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The war over Kosovo was the last war, which Milošević initiated and effectively lost. It was the war that anticipated his impending fall. After he lost the 2000 elections to the opposing candidate Vojislav Koštunica, the Belgrade authorities extradited him to the ICTY, where he was charged with war crimes and genocide. In 2006, following his five-year-long trial and before the final verdict was reached, Slobodan Milošević died in his detention unit.

The last conflict in line was an insurgency in Macedonia, which involved the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army militant group and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia. It lasted nine months in 2001 and never grew into a large-scale war. The tensions resulted from the long-time oppression of Albanians, the largest Macedonian ethnic minority, expressed through the ban of public use of the Albanian language and public displays of Albanian national flags.

Now that I have provided contending historiographies on the actual causes of the Yugoslav disintegration wars and introduced Tony Judt’s overview, I will draw out an explanation of what makes the post-war condition divergent from the post-Yugoslav condition.

33 The massacre took place on January 15, 1999, and resulted in forty-five Albanian civilians dead.

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I Post-Yugoslav Cinema in the Face of Post-War Culture

Abstract: The multi-faceted meaning of the adjectives “post-Yugoslav” and “post-war” are reflected in Chapter I. The notion of a “post-war” society assumes an inability to separate trauma and the legacy of the war from the present. “Post-Yugoslavia” implies the retrieval of once lost memories of living in the former federal state. The distinction between the “post-war” and the “post-Yugoslav” condition justifies the imperative to move beyond the “post-war” condition. In the context of filmmaking, overcoming “post-war” status assumes finding aesthetic means to convey memories of the war while avoiding the traps of representation. Chapter I introduces the notion of non-representational images of war. The conditions of their emergence are contextualized, and a model of implied spectatorship is introduced.

Keywords: post-Yugoslav, post-war condition, non-representational images of war

I will commence by tackling the multi-faceted meanings of both adjectives, *post-Yugoslav* and *post-war*. Generally speaking, one adjective may be mistaken for the other due to two processes that take place simultaneously. The first being the transition from the socialist-governed federal state of Yugoslavia to the liberal democracies of the newly formed nation-states, and the second being post-war recovery and reconciliation. Discussions about the wars in the former Yugoslavia and their aftermaths often leads to a discussion about the change of regimes. I will elaborate on how these two processes intertwine, but also on what grounds I believe that they diverge. First though, I will briefly reflect on the meaning of the prefix *post*.

In *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, editors Vlad Beronja and Stijn Vervaet make a reference to Marianne Hirsch's explanation

of the prefix *post* in *postmemory*. Postmemory is the idea of a traumatic legacy passed to following generations by way of narratives and media. According to Hirsch, the past is brought to the fore not by recall but by imaginative reconstruction. One is shaped by “traumatic fragments of past events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension” (Hirsch 5). Events that took place in the past continue to have an impact in the present. Not unlike the *post* in postmodernism, *post* here implies a break, a gap, a discontinuity between the modern and postmodern, but also the lasting influence of the former on the latter as well as an intense relationship between the two. Beronja and Vervaeet suggest that in post-Yugoslavia, “‘post’ implies the (violent) break between socialist Yugoslavia and what came after it, as well as a certain continuity of its cultural, political, and social legacy” (Beronja and Vervaeet 5).

Making use of Hirsch’s understanding of postmemory, while taking into account Beronja and Vervaeet’s reflections on post-Yugoslavia, one notices parallel implications—one of rupture, a break between the time before the war (but also the time of socialist Yugoslavia) and the time after the war (but also the emergence of the national states following the break-up of Yugoslavia)—and the implication of the influence of the former on the latter. Considering post-Yugoslavia, the rupture is associated with the war, and the ongoing influence of the former on the latter is the idea of Yugoslavia that survives after its break-up. Using the same analogy when reflecting on the post-war condition, the rupture equals peace, and the legacy is that of the war on its aftermath. As could be seen, different breaks are implied: the war in the first case, peace in the second. On closer look, different types of influence of the former on the latter set the notion of post-Yugoslavia apart from the notion of a post-war condition. By different influences, I understand different stages that the notions of *Yugoslavia* and *war* have gone through. Following the break-up of Yugoslavia, the idea of Yugoslavia went through its negation and now is going through its reconsideration. This reconsideration should be understood merely as an attempt to regain lost memories about socialist Yugoslavia. At least three stages can be recognized: Yugoslavia, non-Yugoslavia, and post-Yugoslavia. With regard to the Bosnian 1992–95 war, in particular, two stages can be distinguished: the war and the post-war. I will elaborate on how the three-stage iteration of the notion of Yugoslavia differs from the two-stage iteration of the notion of war. I will draw out an explanation of what makes the post-war condition different from the post-Yugoslav condition. Before doing so, an answer is needed as to why the Bosnian 1992–95 war is taken as exemplary and should be acknowledged when the post-Yugoslav and the post-war conditions are addressed.

What singles the Bosnian 1992–95 war out among the five conflicts that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia is not only its duration and degree of destruction, but also and particularly, its lack of resolution. As previously described, the American-led NATO bombing of the key positions held by Bosnian Serb forces led to the Dayton Peace Conference, which resulted in the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA). The agreement has stopped the violence and prevented further casualties; nevertheless, it has effectively divided the country into two parts—the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Republika Srpska. No party was defeated, and no party won the war. Instead, all three sides were supposed to gain something, even the international community. The international presence that emerged from the DPA includes the Office of the High Representative, EUFOR and NATO in particular. The international factor still remains crucial to the country's development (Bennett 16). According to Christopher Bennett, the DPA did not resolve the Bosnian Question. The drafters of the DPA were under no illusion about its settlement. They were aware that the agreement was being used as a means to end the war but in no way represents a permanent solution to the Bosnian Question. The Bosnian Question comes down to two matters. The first is how some 2.2 million Bosniaks can live amid 4.5 million Croats and 8.5 million Serbs in the former Yugoslavia. And the second, how some 750,000 Croats and 1.3 million Serbs can live together with 1.9 million Bosniaks within Bosnia itself:

Depending on where the borders are drawn and whether or not they are respected, Bosniaks either form a minority squeezed between two more powerful ethno-nationalist groups or they comprise a relative majority in a territory shared by two large minority communities, both of whom generally consider the neighboring states of Croatia and Serbia their mother countries. (Bennett 15)

For Sarajevo-based sociologist Dino Abazović, the root of the problem is in the DPA itself. The agreement rests on profound contradictions: it declares a unified state of Bosnia and Herzegovina while acknowledging two antagonistic entities, it asserts democracy while establishing ethnically based institutions, it endorses individual rights while validating ethnic majoritarianism. In his view, the concept of so-called “power-sharing” does not function within the restriction of ethnic representation and instead of “positive consensus on cooperation to rebuild institutions, there is a negative consensus, which is manifested through the systemic blockage on the implementation of decisions necessary for restoration, social reconstruction,

and political reconciliation" (Abazović 36). Annex IV of the DPA, which to date is considered the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, acknowledges the existence of two separate, antagonistic entities. The impossibility of reaching commonly shared solutions is what halts Bosnia and Herzegovina from progress and keeps it deeply entrenched in its wartime past. As a result, Bosnia is a malfunctioning state, underperforming economically, epitomized by a perpetual crisis. The crisis enables the accumulation of power by the ethno-nationalist elites and halts its progress towards EU membership, which is broadly regarded as the final stop on the transitional journey towards democracy (Abazović 35).

Bennett considers democratization a failure as far as Bosnia is concerned. Even though elections take place regularly, with minimal fraud, the democratic process has failed to build stability or facilitate reconciliation in Bosnia. Moreover, it has reinforced ethno-national divisions. Bennett sees the reason for this in foreign policy-makers, who "have focused on 'what should be' in a Western liberal democracy, rather than 'what is' in a country where concerns about ethno-national security and survival are paramount" (Bennett 248).

For Abazović, the implementation of peace over the past thirty years has brought an "absence of war" rather than peace. Interestingly, historian Tony Judt uses the same formulation in his book *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. Bennett makes a similar remark in his book with the curious title *Bosnia's Paralyzed Peace*. He writes that Bosnia is not at war but, nevertheless, the absence of war is not peace (Bennett 266). The absence of war rather than peace is what epitomizes the Bosnian present. That is why it is possible to distinguish between two phases only: the war and the post-war. With regard to the Bosnian 1992–95 war, there has never been an interim phase, a non-war. Even though actual shootings and further destruction were effectively stopped, the underlying tensions have remained. The implementation of peace, thirty years on, appears to be a permanent ceasefire. In general terms, all three sides, all three ethnicities, feel equally disadvantaged. Bosnian Muslims consider the DPA unjust because it has awarded military gains by aggressors and has effectively divided the country along ethnic lines. Bosnian Serbs are unhappy because Republika Srpska is not an independent state but only an entity within the Bosnian state, while Bosnian Croats feel disadvantaged for not having their own, third entity. This equally shared and ever-growing dissatisfaction does not appear to be resolvable any time soon.

Now that I have explained what singles out the Bosnian 1992–95 war and what makes the Bosnian post-war present particularly agonizing and

remarkable at the same time, I will touch upon differences between the enduring legacies of the war and Yugoslavia. It seems plausible to distinguish between Yugoslavia, non-Yugoslavia, and post-Yugoslavia, yet the Bosnian war can be discussed only in relation to its post-war condition. Non-war as the interim phase between the war and the post-war is non-existent. Before I delve into the differences between the two legacies, I will reflect on the concept of non-Yugoslavia.

The Rule of *non-Yugoslavia*

According to aesthetician and art theorist Miško Šuvaković, as quoted by the philosopher Nikola Dedić, non-Yugoslavia stands for nationalist ideas and identities formed in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It is the belief that Yugoslavia is impossible, and that with the wars, it has completely ended (Dedić 169). The idea of non-Yugoslavia, understood as negation, the total cancellation of Yugoslavia, finds its echo in the writings of Dubravka Ugrešić. A renowned Zagreb-born writer who, for the past two-and-a-half decades, lived and worked in the Netherlands, wrote about the “confiscation of memories” in her book *The Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays*. She wrote that not only property, but also the whole country and its memory have been confiscated from the people of former Yugoslavia. The confiscation of Yugoslav collective memories started with the dissolution of the multinational state and was replaced by the construct of national memories. Ugrešić claims that the war has only accelerated the whole process and radicalized its measures. One memory was erased to make room for the other (Ugrešić 1998). Precisely the cancellation of Yugoslavia or the confiscation of collective memories about Yugoslavia has been forced by the transition from socialist state to liberal democracies. And, according to philosopher Boris Buden, this shift from one system to the other has turned citizens, political subjects, into “children of communism.” Only yesterday they were the protagonists and victors of the democratic revolutions and yet today they must “assert themselves before their new self-declared masters as their obedient pupils.”¹ The new self-declared masters, guardians, or tutors are, in Buden’s view, western bystanders who did not actively participate in the democratic revolutions of 1989–90: “Children of communism’ is not a

1 The article “Children of Communism” was first published as “Als die Freiheit Kinder brauchte,” in Buden, 2009, 34–51. The English translation is by the author and can be found online at: www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/children-of-postcommunism. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

metaphor but a figure of submission to the new form of 'historical necessity' that initiates and controls the process of the postcommunist transition."²

The final destination of this transition is democracy and a free society. The question of the future is already answered, whereas the question of the past no longer appears to make sense. As "children of communism," political subjects are not expected to have critical memories of the communist past. They have been made into children in order not to remember the past. Buden's children of communism have no memories, but also no responsibilities, not for crimes committed through privatization, not for the impoverishment of the masses, not for former war crimes, not even for genocide. As children, they are dependent. They must be guided and patronized by adults. This makes them all the more suitable to serve the new historical order, which in turn does not make them free at all. Buden goes on to claim that the "children of communism" are "marionettes in a historical process that takes place independently of their will and drags them with it to a better future."³ Growing up with the logic of historical determinism, which made promises of a better, classless future by means of class struggle, the "children of communism" are all too familiar with the concept of transition. The new, post-communist transition replaced the old one, but "the absolute certainty and the pre-given necessity of the historical development have remained the constant of the transition."⁴ Buden's point is clear: the citizens may have been granted freedom, but since when does freedom (or newly acquired democracy) need children as its political subjects?

The key feature of the so-called post-communist condition is the "repressive infantilization" of the societies that have recently liberated themselves from communism. The confiscation of collective memories, followed by the construction of national memories, has infantilized the citizens of the former Yugoslavia. One can certainly agree with Buden, however, in asking what else could have been possible for Yugoslavia, following the fall of communism elsewhere. As previously mentioned, Yugoslavia was a federal state with a huge debt, on the verge of economic collapse. Slovenia and Croatia, the economically more powerful and progressive states of the north, were unhappy about generating money for the poorer and perceived lazier southern states. Both states recognized the particular danger in the uneven distribution of economic performance among the states, in

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Slobodan Milošević's politics of centralizing power in Serbia, with huge expenditures over administration. The state was marked by inflation. Instead of borrowing even more foreign money, as was the case with Warsaw and Budapest, in Belgrade they turned to printing more and more of their own money (Judt 671). When Ante Marković came up with his reforms and helped solve the problem of inflation, it was already too late for the federal state of Yugoslavia. The economic aspect as a relevant cause in the break-up of Yugoslavia has been minimized over the years to make place for ethnic feuds as the preferred argument for a possible cause of the Yugoslav wars. The economic cause has been dismissed to serve a particular viewpoint, the so-called Orientalization of the Balkans, whether that be an outside gaze Orientalizing the Balkans or the insiders' adoption or interiorization of that outsider's gaze. I will return to this matter later, but here it is relevant to bring to awareness this crucial economic aspect. Clearly, poor economic prospects facilitated the destabilization of the country. They were, however, happily married with the concrete hegemonic ambition of Slobodan Milošević. The increasing unpopularity of socialism following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the economic hardship of the federal state and one man's opportunist venture into nationalism were all it took for the Yugoslav disintegration wars to unfold.

Ugrešić and Buden rightly blame the transition from a single socialist society to a group of liberal democracies for the "confiscation" of memories and for the infantilization of the post-communist societies. The concept of non-Yugoslavia that seeks to obliterate any kind of historical memory about the former state goes hand in hand with nationalist ideas. It has been a dominant public and political discourse ever since the wars ended. However, non-Yugoslavia or nationalist erasures of memories of solidarity, multiculturalism and Tito's Non-Aligned Movement urge a counter-argument. I believe this should not be a foreseeable retreat to Yugonostalgia, which is understood as "nostalgia for the phantasies associated with a country, the SFRJ, which existed from 1945 to 1991" (Lindstrom 233), where nostalgia denotes longing for the past that cannot exist (Starobinski 81–103). To the best of my knowledge, Yugonostalgia implies an attempt to attain what is unattainable. By commemorating Yugoslavia in a way in which citizens of former Yugoslavia are drawn to their past, it removes any possibility of leaving their past behind. Rather than finding solace and the encouragement to move forward, they lament over the lost past, over once living the Yugoslav maxim of brotherhood and unity. They opt to inhabit the uninhabitable time-space. Yugonostalgia, understood in this way, has similarities with a concept of restorative Yugonostalgia, as understood by political scholar

Nicole Lindstrom. Lindstrom draws on Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative Yugonostalgia is an "expression of longing for an essential Yugoslav past" and looks back towards a somewhat fixed time and space, whereas reflective Yugonostalgia "relies on a self-consciously ambivalent, politically engaged, and critical frame in indulging fantasies of this past" and is open to imagining possibilities for the future (Lindstrom 233). In Lindstrom's view, reflective Yugonostalgia is a reaction to nationalist nostalgia as well as to Yugonostalgia as a pejorative marker in the contemporary political discourse about the formal Yugoslavia. Reflective Yugonostalgia may be an adequate response to non-Yugoslavia, as it critically and politically engages with the fantasies of the past in former Yugoslavia. I must add, however, that I use the term reluctantly due to the weight that the word *nostalgia* carries. Fantasies about the past, with sentimentality attached to it, might not properly counteract nationalist erasures of memories about "brotherhood and unity" as once lived values in former Yugoslavia.

The Occurrence of Post-Yugoslavia

In this context, post-Yugoslavia may be a more persuasive counter-argument. According to Šuvaković, post-Yugoslavia is represented by the efforts of cultural activists gathered around the PRELOM Collective to build a network between the countries of former Yugoslavia "as a space for discussion, for presenting the idea of Yugoslavia in a historical sense" (Stijn and Vervaeke 169).

Efforts in preserving the historical experience of Yugoslavia confirm the previous existence of Yugoslavia. They make possible a revitalization of formerly belittled, denied, and abolished memories of Yugoslavia. They imply an option for the common future as well. The idea of post-Yugoslavia, which comes after the "cancellation" of Yugoslavia, and lives through different artistic projects, essays and cultural studies across the territories of former Yugoslavia, emerges as a reaffirmation, as retrieval of once lost memories.

In comparison with the situation in Yugoslavia, the Bosnian war has never gone through the same kind of negation. As previously noted, the war did not stop by itself. Instead, the foreign-intervention-backed peace settlement halted further destruction and killings. The agreement marks an abrupt break, a rupture in the relation between the war and the post-war. It has separated the war from its post-war condition. Nevertheless, the underlying tensions have survived and continued to exist in the post-war era. Not only because the war did not exhaust itself until one side claimed victory (as if

there were such a thing as victory in a war?), but also because the DPA did not offer any solutions to the problems that led to the war. The concept of post-war suggests a strong attachment, a persistent connection to the idea of war. Post-Yugoslavia insinuates legacy, but at the same time detachment, independence from the notion of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, as a federal state or a socialist ideology, will probably not come into existence again. But the collective memories of living in the former country could be restored after they have been rejected. Post-Yugoslavia implies how important that is for the prospect of a common future. Post-Yugoslavia seems to function as a kind of *Post-it Note*, as an afterthought, disconnected from its source, in the way that Rosalind Morris understands it, as quoted by memory studies scholar Marianne Hirsch:

“post” functions like a Post-it that adheres to the surface of texts and concepts, adding to them and thereby also transforming them in the form of a Derridean supplement. Post-its, of course, often hold afterthoughts that can easily become unglued and disconnected from their source. If a Post-it falls off, the post-concept must persist on its own, and in that precarious position it can also acquire its own independent qualities. (Hirsch 15)

I am convinced that *post-Yugoslavia*, in time, may persist on its own, as a separate entity and a gentle reminder of antifascism, multiculturalism, and solidarity, once deeply shared values among south-Slavic people. The notion of *post-war* has different implications. It assumes an inability to detach from the war, to separate trauma and the legacy of the war from the present. This inability to start a new chapter makes the *post-war* condition a far more negative experience. It perpetuates the status quo, the experience of living in a swamp, where nothing ever moves or changes. If *non-Yugoslavia* is experienced as the confiscation of the collective memories of socialist Yugoslavia, then the *post-war* condition expresses itself through the glorification of victimhood, through the projection of desired memories of past sufferings. Nationally constructed memories, carefully selected to glorify one ethno-religious group at the expense of the other, has been a dominant mode of remembrance in all the newly formed states of the former Yugoslavia. Remembrance of the war with all the complexities that it entails, with the critical reflection about individual and collective guilt and responsibility, has never really been sought in the newly formed states. I believe that an inability to disengage from the daily politics and the version of the past that has been constructed, imposed, and perpetuated by the

ethno-nationalist establishment from the beginning of the war onwards has, in large part, amounted to the failure of remembrance. A critical distance from this forced, dividing, and overdramatized version of the past is still required, but in no way provided. An ultimate peace, a non-war, a genuine distance from the war has been missing over the past three decades. By comparison, non-Yugoslavia as a prevailing public discourse may even have facilitated the emergence of post-Yugoslavia. A stark negation of Yugoslav identity and memories of the Yugoslav past is best exemplified in the trend of renaming streets and squares named after Josip Broz Tito, the president of former Yugoslavia, like in Zagreb; in the acts of devastation of partisan cemeteries, like in Mostar; or in the vandalism of antifascist monuments, like in Split in recent years.⁵ For the past thirty years, powerless populations have been served daily doses of toxic and divisive rhetoric, based on spreading fears and threats about the ethnic other. To illustrate my point, I refer to the public statement by Dragan Čović from February 6, 2018. At the time the statement was issued, Čović served as the Croat member of the three-person Bosnian-Herzegovinian rotating presidency that I will explain in more detail later: "I respect those who want a civic state, but today to say 'civic state' in Bosnia and Herzegovina means classical Unitarianism, and in some form, theoretically, it basically means an Islamic state."⁶

One of the highest-ranking state officials equates the model of a civic state with that of an Islamic state. This equation prompts two questions. First, on what grounds can the two models be equated? Second, given the existing equation, the "civic state," if applied to the Bosnian case, could solely pose a threat to the society, so where does this reasoning originate from? It must be acknowledged that the antithesis to the existing ethnic politics in Bosnia is the civic state. It is precisely a model that is aspired to by critics of the existing and failing DPA-grounded model of "consociational" or "power-sharing" governing:⁷

5 For more information about the recent demolition of a monument in Split, see "Croatian Man Breaks Leg Vandalising Anti-fascist Monument." *The Guardian*, Nov. 8, 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/08/croatian-man-breaks-leg-vandalising-anti-fascist-monument. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

6 Čović's statement in the original: "Poštujem one koji žele građansku državu, samo danas u BiH reči građanska država to znači klasičan unitarizam, u nekoj formi, u teoretskom obliku, a to vam znači u osnovi islamsku državu," can be found here: www.balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2018/2/6/covic-u-zagrebu-gradanska-bih-znaci-islamska-drzava.

7 Consociational or "power-sharing" is a model used for managing conflicts in divided societies. However, its prospects for contributing to peace and democracy in the long run are slimmer. More information about this model and its application to Bosnian society can be

A civic state is based on civic nationalism, which creates a sense of belonging to the state based on the principle of citizenship, i.e. inclusion of all members of a given society into a political union of individuals who enjoy equal rights and are bound by state laws. (Šelo Šabić 36)

As is evident, a civic model implies state laws and guaranteed individual rights. How then can the concept of an Islamic state, presumably resting on the rule of Islamic or *Sharia* law, be equated with the civic state? Sarajevo-based philosopher and sociologist Asim Mujkić details an interpretation of Čović's claim. In Mujkić's words, critics of the civic state option find it impossible to apply the universalist nature of civic society to the Bosnian case, to the specific three-constituent-peoples context. They find its universalism incompatible with the Bosnian case. If applied in Bosnia, it would be modelled into a standard "nation-state," where Bosniaks, who form the most numerous constituent people—by exceeding 50 per cent of the population, according to the 2013 Census—would become the "host-nation" (Mujkić 22). In this role, they would act as a majority and therefore impose their political will on the other constituent peoples, minorities, either in the entire state, or at least in the entity of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Having in mind that an overwhelming majority of Bosniaks is of Muslim religious background, the comparison of civic state with "Islamic" state by the Bosnian Croat HDZ⁸ party chief Dragan Čović certainly adds cultural, clash-of-civilizations-type of flavour to an already complex inter-ethnic problem. (Mujkić 22)

The fear of being an ethnic minority governed by an ethnic majority serves Čović well to re-activate and perpetuate the old Orientalist narrative while issuing an over-the-top warning about Islamism gaining ground. In the words of Marion Kraske, the former director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Sarajevo, this narrative is "suitable for vitalising enemy-images which can be used for one's own politics, one's own radicalisation" (Kraske 4). It can hardly

found in Senada Šelo Šabić, "Transcending Consociationalism: In Support of Civic Bosnia and Herzegovina," 34–39.

8 HDZ stands for Hrvatska demokratska zajednica or Croatian Democratic Union. Together with SDA (Stranka demokratske akcije/The Party of Democratic Action) and SDS (Srpska demokratska stranka/The Serbian Democratic Party) it forms the three ethnic parties that challenged the dominance of the secular Communist Party of Yugoslavia. All three, with the former Communist Party, now called the Social Democratic Party (SDP; Socijademokratska partija), form the contemporary party system in Bosnia alongside minor parties.

be a coincidence that Čović gave his statement, which multiple regional media outlets broadcast, while he was on his official visit to Zagreb prior to the Bosnian October elections, in which, once again, he was a presidential candidate.

Ethno-nationalist political leaders and officials have been exercising the same derogatory rhetoric over the past two-and-a-half decades as a means to maintain their power while diverting citizens' attention from profound socio-economic problems. These problems were caused not only by the war's destruction of industries, but also by the heavy corruption that came with the privatization of state-owned property. In terms of the overall employment rate, Bosnia and Herzegovina is ranked 187th out of 218 countries in the world, it has a declining population (3.72 million in 2010 to 3.52 million in 2016), and the highest youth unemployment rate in the world at 62.3%.⁹ Based on different polls and research methods,¹⁰ inhabitants primarily identify unemployment, corruption, and poverty as the top three problems. And politicians are perceived to be the most corrupt. Given these statistics, it comes as no surprise that citizens have grown embittered, resentful, and distrustful. Deprived of any prospects for their future, they have been slow but determined to acknowledge the values that they once shared with other citizens of the former Yugoslavia. Accordingly, the growing resentment of impoverished and disillusioned people has activated a post-Yugoslav sentiment.

As I have demonstrated thus far, a lack of an interim phase, the non-phase, makes two potentially similar conditions—the post-war and the post-Yugoslav conditions—rather dissimilar. Another distinction that sets them apart is based on a relation between the inside and the outside perspective. Post-Yugoslavia is an idea primarily relevant for the citizens of the former states of Yugoslavia, for insiders, who share memories of togetherness, solidarity, and so forth. Post-war is an idea that, nevertheless, implies a gaze from the outside, be that an imaginary outsider in Europe, the European Union, the west or, generally speaking, the international community. It feeds on a continuous need for outside approval.

If we look back at the periods before, during, and after the war, the need for foreign help has always been present. International intervention was required before the break-up of Yugoslavia, during the transition from a socialist state to liberal societies. Internationally mediated peace plans—the Lord Carrington Peace Plan and the Vance Peace Plan in particular—were

9 The statistics provided can be found in Šabić, 2018, 34–39.

10 A variety of polls and research methods by Transparency International and Center for the Study of Democracy are included in the article mentioned above.

intended to keep Yugoslavia loosely together. Peace plans and maps that followed were created to negotiate the advances of the Bosnian Serb army on the territories of Bosnia. During wartime, all three leading actors—the presidents of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia—were mindful of the spotlight that they were under from the international community. Seemingly fully aware of the international attention that he was receiving, Slobodan Milošević projected the image of himself as the guardian of the Yugoslav borders, even when his politics resulted in claiming the Serb-populated territories in Croatia and ethnically cleansing dominantly Muslim-populated areas in Bosnia and forcing the alteration of existing borders. Once it became clear that he had been running quite different politics from what he was representing in public, and when the economic sanctions against Serbia took their toll, he found himself in a more reconciliatory mood, especially during the Dayton Peace Conference. After Dayton, Milošević readily entered another war, in and over Kosovo. Tudman had similar ambitions with regard to his project *Herceg-Bosna*, claiming territories inhabited by Bosnian Croats. Once the Washington Peace Agreement was signed, and with the knowledge that he would get full support from the United States if the Croats reconstituted their alliance with Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs, he abandoned his expansionist ideas. From the beginning of the war, Alija Izetbegović was pushing for and relying on foreign intervention. Bosnia had entered the war unprepared, unarmed, essentially too weak to combat aggressors. In the post-war era, reliance on international help appears to be more problematic. The DPA contributed to creating political deadlocks. And the existing political problems obviously cannot be resolved from within the state, democratically, with a consensus reached by all three ethnicities. No matter how sound the demand for international intervention has been since the beginning of the political crisis in the former Yugoslavia, it has also served as an excuse for political inaction.

Beyond a Post-War Condition

The post-war condition suggests a constant delay in reaching political decisions that would serve the common good. Reluctance and inability to engage with the past so as to close the chapter and move forward are implied. Memories of past sufferings are constantly reawakened and bargained for the sympathy of the imaginary outsider, who is expected to authenticate them. The post-war condition implies a gesture of keeping oneself on a global map of interest for as long as possible, thus preserving a state of dependency while acquiring continuous humanitarian aid. The post-war condition is

also implicated in the daily rhetoric of the ethno-nationalist establishment. This rhetoric relies on and takes the full advantage of the wartime past, primarily as a tool of appropriating and maintaining victim status. To illustrate my point, I hereby refer to several occasions on which war crimes were honoured as heroic deeds. First, a minute of silence in the Parliament in Zagreb in honour of Slobodan Praljak, the Bosnian Croat General, found guilty of war crimes against the Bosnian Muslim population by the Hague Tribunal. Second, the award of honour for the convicted war criminals Radovan Karadžić, Biljana Plavšić, former president of Republika Srpska, and Momčilo Krajišnik, the former First Speaker of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, in the National Assembly of Republika Srpska. Third, the warm welcome to Vladimir Lazarević, the Serbian general convicted of war crimes against Albanian civilians in Kosovo, by the state officials and church dignitaries upon his return to Belgrade, followed by an invitation to share his knowledge with students at the Military Academy in Belgrade. These acts of honour for indicted war criminals can only be explained within the context of serious and deliberate neglect of the ICTY findings with the sole purpose of creating desirable narratives about the victimhood and martyrdom of one's own collective. Self-victimization can be also recognized in the tendency of the Bosniak establishment to manipulate the numbers of citizens killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina by publicly presenting higher numbers than the actual ones. In 2007, the Research and Documentation Centre, a Sarajevo-based, independent NGO, published *The Bosnian Book of the Dead* with 97,207 listed and named killed Bosnians, thereby debunking publicly circulated numbers of 200,000 or even 300,000 dead citizens.¹¹

As can be seen, the post-war condition is implicated in various forms of self-victimization, which are inseparable from the daily political discourse in the former Yugoslavia. It remains unclear, however, what the implications of the post-war condition are for the actual survivors of atrocities. My assumption is that survivors caught in the post-war condition are deprived of their dignity and agency. They are objectified and turned into helpless victims. Examples that come to mind are the widely broadcast reactions by members of the NGO Mothers of Srebrenica to the Hague verdicts of war criminals. I believe that questions as to whether they find a verdict fair or a sentence high enough do not help them regain their agency, considering that prolonged victimhood may equal a prolonged dependency. And this is what makes the post-war condition in the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular an endless and agonizing experience.

11 More information about this research can be found in Rujević, "The Crimes of Others."

In an interview, philosopher and sociologist Tarik Haverić emphasizes that the collapse of communism and democratization are historical processes, which could not and should not have been avoided. However, they have not materialized everywhere in the same way. In his opinion, western democracies, which started and aided these processes, have naively equated transition from socialism to liberalism with the introduction of multi-party elections. By doing so, they have enabled racists and ethno-nationalists to come into power as democratically legitimate candidates. Haverić concludes that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with two major problems: it is a post-conflict society and a society with an unfinished transition. The political parties in power are the same ones that produced the conflicts and took part in them. They obstruct the transition, which is why assistance from abroad is still very much needed.¹²

Troublesome for the insider, the post-war condition therefore draws the continuous attention of the outsider. The adjective *post-war* has a bitter taste due to its overuse in public discourse, in Bosnia in particular. In time it has become an empty signifier, which provokes impatience and annoyance. It barely adds any new layer of meaning and leads nowhere.

Now that I have illustrated where I see the major differences between the post-war and post-Yugoslav conditions, I will reflect on what I mean by moving beyond the post-war condition. Drawing on earlier remarks, what is at stake here is bringing an enduring and un-reflected legacy of the war to an end—making the post-war condition an afterthought, disconnected from the war as its source. As a separate entity, with its own, independent qualities, it invites further reflection. The implication is a coming to terms with painful and contradictory memories of the war, while criticizing a status quo that is experienced as an unchangeable and cemented legacy of the war but also as a habit of turning a blind eye to post-war conundrums, such as corruption and massive poverty.

Beyond Post-War Cinema

In the context of filmmaking, overcoming post-war status assumes finding aesthetic means to convey memories of the war while avoiding the

12 The full interview with Tarik Haverić is available here: Asaf Bečirović, "Intervju sa Tarikom Haverićem: Gladan čovjek spremno prodaje svoj glas na izborima zbog čega ostaje gladan naredne četiri godine." *Start Online*, Oct. 16, 2018. www.startbih.ba/clanak/tarik-haveric-gladan-covjek-spremno-prodaje-svoj-glas-na-izborima-zbog-cega-ostaje-gladan-naredne-cetiri-godine/100753. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

traps of representation. The experience of war comes to the fore in cinema either through conventional representation or through what one could call, drawing on a concept of Gilles Deleuze, strategies of non-representation. By conventional representation I mean clichés and images with definite and stabilized meanings, which produce no further associations. Non-representation, on the other hand, refers to images that encourage attentive spectatorship, evoke various and conflicting experiences, and are open to multiple layers of meaning.

Broadly speaking, conventional representation can corroborate the official state narrative. In the context of the former Yugoslavia, the latter implies exclusionary ethno-nationalist narratives, which rest on erasures of the collective memories of living in the former multinational federal state of Yugoslavia. The clearest illustration of such interventions are the destructions of monuments celebrating antifascist values in the 1990s followed by the renaming of streets, squares, and public institutions, and creating new commemoration practices across the former Yugoslav states.¹³ As memory-studies scholar Tamara Banjeglav emphasizes that these acts of violence do not contribute to revalorizing the past as much as they firmly negate antifascist values that were the basis of the former society (Banjeglav 99). She goes on to quote Benedict Anderson, who points out that what post-conflict societies and political establishments consider politically suitable does not necessarily correspond with what really happened in the past. Their considerations do not necessarily include commemorating victims from all sides or contributing to a dialogue about the past. They may as well revolve around the establishment of a national identity in a public sphere, ranging from that of a victim to that of a hero (Banjeglav 124). Film scholar Jurica Pavičić's famous tripartite categorization of post-Yugoslav film—films of self-victimization, films of self-Balkanization, and films of normalization—helped me critically reassess existing correlations between dominant, nevertheless distinctive ideologies of post-war Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, and their corresponding film representations, which is something that I elaborate on further below. For now, I claim that conventional representation of the experience of the Yugoslav disintegration wars often results in an extended promotion of pain and self-victimhood. Non-representation suggests an alternative that encompasses a tireless search for artistic practices that capture present-day, post-war realities, expressed through states of apathy, hopelessness, and disorientation. While

13 More details on the topic in Tamara Banjeglav, "Sjećanje na rat ili rat sjećanja? Promjene u politikama sjećanja u Hrvatskoj od 1990. godine do danas."

armed conflicts have been permanently contained, the political situation remains contentious and memories of the wars contested. Twenty-six years after the last Yugoslav war, competing narratives and adjoining political stances and policies keep separating communities and creating tensions. Subsequently, future goals are kept at bay, and hopes for the full recovery of a political system almost diminished. With the ongoing post-war and post-socialist transitions, hopelessness, aimlessness, and apathy constitute prevailing states of the present-day realities.

A range of films, such as Jasmila Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* (2013), Aida Begić's *Children of Sarajevo* (2012), Šejla Kamerić's *1395 Days without Red* (2011), Vladimir Perišić's *Ordinary People* (2009), Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić's *The Blacks* (2009), and Namik Kabil's *Interrogation* (2007) with its follow-up film *Inside* (2013) provide spectators with non-representational images that, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, offer innovative approaches to the collective past, while simultaneously reframing contemporary experience. What I propose to call non-representational images in post-Yugoslav cinema appear to offer a more dynamic relationship to the past and the present, while reflecting complex processes of forming collective and individual identity, memory, guilt, and responsibility.

But if these dynamics are inherent in non-representational images, is there indeed a way in which such images can contribute to overcoming the post-war condition? To answer this question, I propose to examine the emergence of non-representational images of war within post-Yugoslav contemporary cinema in the period 2000–18. In particular, I want to investigate how contemporary images of war shape the film aesthetics and the development of film language in post-war Yugoslav cinema, and to what extent non-representational strategies and their reception contribute towards the process of reconciliation.

Before I provide a detailed account into what post-Yugoslav cinema could possibly mean in the face of post-war culture, I need to reflect on a relation between non-representation and representation.

Non-Representation and Representation

In his seminal book *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze reflected on problems of generality. Generality implies that one term may be exchanged or substituted for another. Repetition, by contrast, implies non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities (Deleuze, 1994, 1). In Deleuze's view, ideas or

problems are singularities, affirmed multiplicities and differentiated positivities. As such, they are contrasted with fixed identities of concepts (Deleuze, 1994, 288). Deleuze reminds us that representation is defined, hence restricted by its four “iron collars”: identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement, resemblance in perception (1994, 29). Generality and representation suggest fixed positions, rigidity, absence of movement, whereas repetition implies an affirmed difference and movement of ideas.

With respect to movement, Deleuze regarded Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as philosophers who brought new means of expression to philosophy. In their work, the emphasis is placed on movement, and they criticize Hegel for not going beyond “false movement—in other words, the abstract logical movement of ‘mediation.’ They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action” (Deleuze, 1994, 8). Following their lead, Deleuze wrote about movement as that which implies multiple centres and superposition of points of view, as opposed to representation, which has a single centre, a unique perspective and as a result a false depth. Deleuze saw in theatre a figure that captures the nature of movement. He reminds us that:

structuralism is so often accompanied by calls for a new theatre, or a new (non-Aristotelian) interpretation of the theatre: a theatre of multiplicities opposed in every respect to the theatre of representation, which leaves intact neither the identity of the thing represented, nor author, nor spectator, nor character, nor representation which, through the vicissitudes of the play, can become the production of knowledge or final recognition. Instead, a theatre of problems and always open questions which draws spectator, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious, the final elements of which remain the problems themselves. (Deleuze, 1994, 192)

The richness of Deleuzian philosophy is in its affirmation of ideas or problems that resist being restricted by reason and keep on returning with a degree of difference. When translated into the field of cinema, ideas and problems can be termed non-representational images. These images are open to different interpretations and persistently escape the logic and coherence of narrative cinema. They pose questions, invite viewers to affective encounters, and, if we follow Deleuze, they can stir political awakenings. Why do they appear and matter in the first place?

In the context of post-Yugoslav films, non-representational images emerge as a response to film representations of war traumas, but also as a reaction to the agony of living in a disillusioned and apathetic post-war

and post-socialist society, as Bobo Jelčić's film *A Stranger* and Aida Begić's film *Children of Sarajevo* suggest.

Children of Sarajevo deals with the topic of war orphans in the capital city, young adults abandoned by the state who are in need of care and protection and who rely on themselves only. The film revolves around a young woman who struggles to make ends meet while taking care of her teenage delinquent brother. The use of home-video and news footage from the war, accompanied by shots made by a shaky camera that films the protagonist from the back or from the side, as well as the use of ambiguous sounds implying either war explosions or fireworks, render the underlying tension of living in the present-day city of Sarajevo. *Children of Sarajevo* offers a mirror image to the "postcard" image of Sarajevo.

Similarly, *A Stranger* offers an unconventional view on Mostar. Instead of bringing forward images of the Herzegovinian town with the old bridge bathing under the sun, signifying unity, brotherhood, resistance, and hope, the film offers images that suggest an atmosphere of a deeply divided, fractured city, entirely reflected in the fractured mind of the film's protagonist. *A Stranger* revolves around the protagonist Slavko's attendance of the funeral of his close friend Đulaga. Slavko is a Bosnian Croat and his dead friend Đulaga was a Bosnian Muslim. Both—one alive, the other dead—share the political context of Mostar. A simple social obligation has the potential to get Slavko in all sorts of trouble. Torn between family obligations and emotions on one side and loyalty to the ideology on the other, Slavko is on the brink of exploding at any moment throughout the film. *A Stranger* presents us with a day in the life of an ordinary man, a day in which nothing exceptional, yet everything fundamental happens. A shaky camera follows Slavko as he anxiously moves around his flat, around a waiting room at the office of a local man in power, whom Slavko somehow depends on, and around the streets of Mostar. Long takes are often interrupted with quick, sudden shots, outbursts of Slavko's madness. Providing sound and image to the invisible tensions of living in today's corrupted Sarajevo and ethnically fragmented Mostar, both films break away from conventional representations of present-day Bosnian society.

Similar to the time-image, which, according to Deleuze, emerged after the Second World War in French and Italian cinema as a response to the unimaginable war destruction and the loss of an organic link between man and the world, the non-representational images I discuss here emerged to reflect memories of the wars that keep returning and haunting survivors. In the immediate aftermath of the war, an indication of the recovery and prosperity of the former Yugoslav states, along with the awakening of

national identities, was soon replaced by a state of general apathy, caused by widespread corruption and massive poverty. To a certain degree, contemporary post-Yugoslav cinema engages with this sense of apathy through strategies of non-representation.

Deleuze's ideas about difference and repetition prove useful not only by offering a way out of the conventional representation of war experience, but for helping us understand how a current state of apathy in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which promises no resolution in the near future, can be approached and presented in film.

Even though Deleuze's critique of representation is inviting and open, scholars of postcolonial studies and political philosophy have heavily contested some of his notions. In her book *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*, film studies scholar Patricia Pisters summarizes these contestations. Her conclusion is that Deleuze's ideas are difficult to address within the existing frameworks of political representation, as they require a "framework capable of perceiving and affirming the reality of both the virtual and the actual rather than a framework that critiques the opposition between reality and ideological representation" (Pisters, 2012, 261).

One of the most direct criticisms of non-representation comes from postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak in her reaction to the text "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze." I have selected her text "Can the Subaltern Speak?" to offer a contrasting view to Foucault's and Deleuze's ideas about non-representation. Spivak expresses her concern over the philosophers' indifference to ideology and their rejection of representation. In their conversation, Foucault and Deleuze place emphasis on struggle as an action, a revolutionary act against the existing power structures. Prisoners, women, conscripted soldiers, homosexuals, and hospital patients are regarded as those "who act and struggle." Foucault and Deleuze denounce representation, which in the given context implies a centralism of a power structure, a hierarchy with a clear sense of domination. In his address, Deleuze makes a distinction between re-presentation as *darstellen* and representation as *vertreten*:

A theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience.¹⁴

14 This is quoted from the transcript of a 1972 conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. This transcript first appeared in English in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*:

Foucault conflates both usages of the same term when he discusses the historical role of an intellectual before 1848, before the Commune and before 1940, who:

spoke the truth to those who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth: he was conscience, consciousness, and eloquence. In the most recent upheaval¹⁵ the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves.¹⁶

In her critique, Spivak suggests that Deleuze and Foucault run both senses of representation together. *Darstellen* or “to speak the truth,” understood as subject-predication and signification, as in arts or philosophy, is considered to be representation in an economic context. *Vertreten* or “in the name of” is regarded as representation in a political context, within state formation and law, with a stronger implication of substitution (Spivak, 2013, 70).

According to Spivak, *darstellen* and *vertreten* imply related, nevertheless discontinuous senses of representations. They correspond with Marx’s model of a divided and dislocated subject, whose parts, individual and collective agency, are neither continuous nor coherent (Spivak 72). Conflating both usages of representation would not be a major problem if the philosophers did not suggest that beyond representation is where oppressed subjects speak, act and know, which, according to Spivak, leads to “an essentialist, utopian politics” (71).

Spivak’s critique is well grounded considering the position she speaks from. She addresses the problem and the need for the self-determination of the suppressed, the others of Europe, colonized subaltern subjects, who are at the receiving end of the imperialist exploitation chain. Leaving the representation out and ignoring the economic aspect certainly provokes scepticism of the Foucault/Deleuze project. How can the workers’ struggle

Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, and it was published in a special issue of *L’Arc* (No. 49, pp. 3–10), dedicated to Gilles Deleuze, which can be found reprinted here: “Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze—Transcript,” submitted by Joseph Kay, *libcom.org*, Sept. 9, 2006, www.libcom.org/article/intellectuals-and-power-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

¹⁵ Ibid. Note: the upheaval mentioned here is related to the May 1968 demonstrations as provided by the editor of *L’Arc*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

against institutionalized oppression be assumed without the necessary framework, without organized political parties or workers' unions? How can the oppressed self-determine if they are deprived of the tools, or as Spivak suggests, "textual ingredients," to do so? How is it possible to voice concerns without making claims? To me, these appear to be insurmountable difficulties.

Nevertheless, denouncing the entire Foucault/Deleuze project under the label "epistemic violence" for supposedly constituting the other of Europe as "the self's shadow" by denying him/her rights for self-determination by process of "denegation" (Spivak 75) and finding both philosophers complicit in securing "a new balance of hegemonic relations" for putting the economic aspect "under erasure" (Spivak 75) requires more detailed scrutiny.

Deleuze and Foucault make two relevant remarks that are not raised by Spivak. The first is their critique of representation as *vertreten* or "speaking for," when they criticize unions and political parties as organized social groups, which at first are required and may serve the interests of the workers who struggle, but in time may appropriate the same representative forms of centralism and hierarchical structures that they struggle against, leaving the oppressed under a double oppression. The second, consequential problem is related to what they refer to as the workings of "desire." Deleuze clearly points out that he does not find satisfying the explanation in Marxism, where power structures are perceived in terms of interests ("power is held by ruling class defined by its interests"). In his view, this definition does not engage with "investments of desire," which underlie power structures, which are not immediately recognized as the interests of the ruling elites, and which make power structures sometimes obvious, sometimes less so.¹⁷

Foucault goes on to illustrate Deleuze's point in the following way:

Moreover, the desire for power establishes a singular relationship between power and interest. It may happen that the masses, during fascist periods, desire that certain people assume power, people with whom they are unable to identify since these individuals exert power against the masses and at their expense, to the extreme of their death, their sacrifice, their massacre. Nevertheless, they desire this particular power; they want it to be exercised.¹⁸

17 This is quoted from the transcript of the same, earlier referenced, 1972 conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.

18 The quote is from the same conversation between Foucault and Deleuze.

In their conversation, Foucault and Deleuze dismiss the idea that the masses, during fascist periods, were simply deceived, that they were caught in the trap of ideology. At no point, however, do they claim that “desire” should be understood in opposition to “interest.” On the contrary, as Foucault emphasizes, “we never desire against our interests, because interest always follows and finds itself where desire has placed it.”¹⁹ Spivak fails to recognize that for Foucault and Deleuze “interest” and “desire” correspond to the Bergsonian actual/virtual distinction. According to Bergson and Deleuze, “the actual” and “the virtual” are not in antagonism with each other. They are both considered to be real, “as opposed to the conception of distinguishing the mental/imaginary/etc. as unreal from the physical/factual as real” (Pisters, 1998, 104). Spivak, therefore, fails to recognize that “the virtual” encompasses knowledge, memory, visions, ideas, and is real insofar it has an effect on us. “The actual” and “the virtual” are not in antagonism but in a dynamic relation of co-dependence and are both equally political as they help shift our perception of reality. By claiming that Foucault and Deleuze oppose the notion of “desire” to the notion of “interest,” Spivak relegates “desire” as “para-subjective matrix, cross-hatched with heterogeneity” (69), in other words as unreal and irrelevant. With the same determination with which Deleuze and Foucault dismiss the notion of representation (understood as both, *vertreten* and *darstellen*), Spivak refuses to engage with their understanding of “desire” while recognizing “interest” in a dynamic economic situation as the single pertinent argument for discussing the struggle of the oppressed.

Foucault and Deleuze’s claim for (political) action appears to be rather disturbing for Spivak. She asks how their indifference to ideology and rejection of representation can be political. And how asubjectivity can claim any political relevance. Failing to engage deeper with possible meanings of asubjectivity, which implies an escape from established codes, hence assumes political relevance, Spivak rejects Deleuze and Foucault’s notions as unhelpful and turns to deconstructivist Jacques Derrida instead.

Derrida suggests that “thought is ... the blank part of the text.” In Spivak’s understanding, even if it is blank, it is still a thought and is still in the text. And this inaccessible blankness within interpretable text should be allocated to the Other (the subject) of history and should be the place of production of theory (Spivak 89).

As can be noticed, subject, self-formation, representation, and (critique of) ideology are crucial categories for Spivak in her engagement with

19 Ibid.

injustices and voicing of the unprivileged, silenced, and marginalized Other of Europe. Spivak refers to subaltern subjects within the context of colonial production, to “men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat” (78). What is at stake is to articulate the need for their representation by postcolonial intellectuals, on one side, and the need, logic, means and ways of their organization into groups, led by representatives, necessary to confront the imperialist system and colonial chain of production, on the other side. Deleuze and Foucault isolate the problem of struggle as an action, a revolutionary act against the existing power structures, whereby prisoners, women, conscripted soldiers, homosexuals, and hospital patients are listed as “those who act and struggle” and never as the oppressed ones. They also look into how workers’ struggle, while assuming that its clearer shape through representative bodies of syndicates and political parties allows for, borrowing Foucault’s words, “a new disposition of the same power” to settle in. This observation leads them to introduce the notion of desire, which, while informing new power structures, complicates the existing relationship between interest and power. Taking into account the three historically isolated upheavals mentioned earlier, they conclude that resistance against the dominating system now takes place in multiple centres, in the network of localized, counter-tactics, rather than in centralized hierarchical power structures.

All three scholars passionately argue for issues that prove equally pertinent for my engagement with post-war and post-Yugoslav societies. The dissolution of Yugoslavia, which resulted in several wars, was initiated by Milošević’s nationalist politics. An institutionalized call for the independence of seceding states and the self-determination of oppressed national and religious groups came as a necessary and understandable reaction to his way of governing the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the years that followed, however, an over-representation of the constituent ethnicities of each national state has taken place. As for Bosnians (Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Muslims), Croats and Serbs, their institutionalized over-representation and domination over other nationalities and ethnicities in various contexts has been, ever since the wars ended, in dire need of being toned down. Spivak’s notions prove helpful when addressing the first part of given historical experience (declarations of independence by the seceding states amid the Yugoslav wars). Deleuze and Foucault’s ideas are a necessary supplement when attending to the second part of historical experience (the rise of ethno-nationalism in a time of the absence of war, pervasive corruption in all post-Yugoslav states).

Deleuze, Foucault, Spivak, and Derrida's views on representation and non-representation are crucial for addressing the multi-faceted meaning of non-representational images.

Non-Representational Images

Non-representational images are ideas and affirmed differentialities in the Deleuzian sense. They cause disruption to existing representation, which always comes from within. Representation can be understood as a linear, straightforward film narrative.

If I restrict its use to mean only that, it is because post-Yugoslav cinema is mostly experienced or takes the form of a linear, conventional, stereotypical narrative. Otherwise, there are examples of realist, observational cinema that, to a degree, follow the same logic of a cause-and-effect sequencing of events. As I will demonstrate in the third chapter, the films *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* and *Underground* are informed by postmodern aesthetics, although the excess thematized in both films cannot be termed carnivalesque in Bakhtinian sense as it is not short-lived, episodic disruption, but presupposes narrative continuity. And this type of continuity proves concomitant and supportive of the division along ethno-religious lines. Rather than restricting representation to a sense of linear and causative storytelling, I suggest that it be associated with a sense of narrative continuity, which, as some films from the former Yugoslavia indicate, can be supportive of damaging ethno-religious stereotyping. In those instances, the narrative continuity proves to be aligned with exclusionary ethno-nationalist narratives, which rest on erasures of collective memories of living in the former multinational federal state of Yugoslavia. These narratives are best understood as historical memories, which flow into historiographies that are later captured by intellectual elites. The narrative continuity, which reflects and reinstates the convenient and useful historiography, implies doubt about the possibility of truthfully conveying collective trauma. The post-war condition is implicated in various forms of self-victimization, which are inseparable from daily political discourse in the former Yugoslavia. The self-serving, exclusionary ethno-nationalist narratives imply the notion of a resolvable past, the coherence of a narrative continuity, in need of being challenged.

Non-representational images express the simultaneous impossibilities of representing and obliterating war traumas. They present rather than represent war traumas in their belatedness. They provide a glimpse into the

agony of living in the permanent post-war condition. Non-representational images express reluctance to swing easily into film narrative, to connect with other images and produce clear-cut meanings that would corroborate official state narratives. By refusing to make up a coherent, self-evident film narrative, non-representational images open this narrative up to unassimilable heterogeneity. In the following chapters, by means of comparative analysis, I will detail specific strategies of non-representation in post-Yugoslav film. For the moment, I claim that in this operation non-representational images refer back to themselves, but at the same time require a specific type of spectatorial engagement.

To further ground the term non-representational image by providing details on film spectatorship, I make use of Bergson's understanding of the image. Laura U. Marks's book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* and Darlene Pursley's article "Moving in Time: Chantal Akerman's *Toute une nuit*" have inspired me to consider Bergson's notion of perception. Bergson perceives the image not "simply (as) the visual image, but the complex of all sense impressions that a perceived object conveys to a perceiver at a given context" (Marks 73). According to Bergson, perception is always partial and interested as it is located in a specific perceiver. It is multisensory, embodied, and contingent (Marks 73). Marks reminds us of two aspects, which were already implicit in Bergson, but were undervalued. The first being the carnality of memory, the second being the communal or cultural experience that feeds into embodied memory. They were undervalued because Bergson estimated that "pure memory" could be easily actualized or called upon in the body without taking into consideration individual and cultural prohibitions on the actualization of memory (Marks 73). Bergson defines "pure memory" by comparing it with perception or sensation; he sees it not as simply different in degree, as a "weakened perception," but as radically different in kind (Bergson 180). He describes the present as "my attitude with regard to the immediate future" (Bergson 181), as sensory-motor, as "a perception of the immediate past," hence a sensation, and as "determination of the immediate future," thus an action or a movement (Bergson 178). The past, on the contrary, is pure from sensations, unattached to the present, essentially powerless. It may, though, actualize in an image, subsequently a sensation, which can extend into an action, a movement, make itself useful and cease to be pure memory (Bergson 181). For the time being, Bergson's notion of pure memory should be taken into account as I will return to it later in the text.

Marks reminds us that phenomenology did in fact inherit and expand Bergson's implication of perception in the body and may act as a bridge

in explaining how a viewer experiences images. The matter of dispute between phenomenology and Deleuze's cinema theory arises over consciousness or subjectivity. Deleuze sees cinematic images emerging from action-reaction encounters rather than from a perceiving subject situated in the space, casting a light upon them. Inspired by Bergson's claim, "Yet, the brain is only an image among other images" (4), Deleuze famously declared that:

the brain is nothing but this—an interval, a gap between an action and a reaction. The brain is certainly not a center of images from which one could begin, but itself constitutes one special image among the others. It constitutes a center of indetermination in the acentred universe of images. (Deleuze, 2011, 65)

Consciousness, for Deleuze, is within images, which like other things are "luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them" (Deleuze, 2011, 62). Images constitute an "infinite set of images," which he calls a "plane of immanence," and perceives as an ongoing movement "between the parts of each system (of images) and between one system and another" (Deleuze, 2011, 61). By opting for movement and not for immobile and instantaneous sections while describing the plane of immanence, Deleuze expresses his preference for temporal categories, for affect and memory.

At this point a brief digression is needed. In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze reminds us that Bergson criticizes the cinema for the same reason that he criticizes perception, intellect, and language; that is, for misconceiving the movement, or in Bergson's words, for taking "snapshots, as it were, of passing reality" (Deleuze, 2011, 59). Furthermore, he claims that Bergson would not have criticized cinema if he had witnessed its evolution. If Bergson were to analyse the cinema, Deleuze asserts, he would have never used perception as a model, "rather a state of things which would constantly change, a flowing matter in which no point of anchorage nor centre of reference would be assignable" (Deleuze, 2011, 61).

Darlene Pursley points out that it is precisely here in the text that Deleuze forces his own reading of the cinema on Bergson to argue against the phenomenological approach (Pursley 1159). Bergson and Deleuze are certainly united in their remark that perception is subtractive for not revealing entirety, but only that which serves the interests of the perceiver (Bergson 35; Deleuze, 2010, 19). This commonly held view does not, however, validate Deleuze's claim that Bergson would not have chosen perception as a model if he had analysed the cinema. The following paragraph from *Matter and*

Memory reveals a somewhat different understanding of consciousness and perception:

But if consciousness is but the characteristic note of the present, that is to say of the actuality lived, in short of the active, then that which does not act may cease to belong to consciousness without therefore ceasing to exist in some manner. (Bergson 182)

As can be seen, consciousness is associated with the actuality lived. What's more, Bergson argues for the equal footing of that which is and which is not available to consciousness. If one carefully reads the beginning of the paragraph, "but if consciousness is but the characteristic note of the present," and recalls his earlier claim, "yet, the brain is only an image among other images," it becomes apparent that, for Bergson, consciousness is not only a feature of the actuality lived, but also an interval between perception and reaction. Consciousness, therefore, subsumes a duality of the spatial and temporal modes of existence, which is a point that Darlene Pursley brings up in her reading of Bergson. Bergson summarizes this view in the following way:

But we have to take into account the fact that our body is not a mathematical point in space, that its virtual actions are complicated by and impregnated with real actions, or, in other words, that there is no perception without affection. (Bergson 62)

With this claim in mind, Bergson's understanding of consciousness appears somewhat broader and more encompassing than what Deleuze's observation would have us believe. When compared, the latter sees consciousness emerging within images, within a constantly moving and changing plane of immanence.

By contrast, film scholar Vivian Sobchack, drawing on phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, perceives consciousness as anchored in the spectator's lived-body situation. Sobchack uses Merleau-Ponty's notion of "lived-body," built in part on Husserl's notion of "intentionality," to help her elaborate on the embodiment of film and spectator alike:

It is the lived-body that actualizes intentionality in the very gesture of being active in and present to the world and others. The lived-body

articulates intentionality as “flesh,” that is, as dynamic, concrete, situated and both materially and historically finite. (Sobchack, 1992, 39)

In addition to being embodied, cinema and spectatorship are clearly grounded in spatial terms:

It is not time, but space—the significant space lived as and through the objective body-subject, the historical space of situation—that grounds the response to those questions of cinematic signification in this present study. (Sobchack 31)

Perceiving cinema and spectatorship as embodied and spatially embedded enables Sobchack to criticize Deleuze for detaching consciousness from the anchoring of the subject and from the horizon of the world, thereby for risking the disembodiment of both the spectator and the film (Sobchack 31). Laura U. Marks is even more explicit in her critique, asserting that Deleuzian film philosophy is not a theory of spectatorship: “To talk about the states, histories and circumstances of the individual people experiencing cinema, we need a phenomenology of individual experience” (Marks 150).

In this context, Marks’s critique of phenomenology, that it posits all experience to be available to consciousness and the only requirement is to be present and perceiving, should not be overlooked either (151). On closer inspection, the past understood in Bergsonian terms is nowhere to be found in Sobchack’s *The Address of the Eye*. Sobchack’s key concept “the address of the eye” presupposes that film and a spectator manage to:

transcend the immanence of their immediate bodily experience, generalizing and using their lived-bodies and concrete situations in the world to imaginatively prospect the horizon for future projects and possible situations and to re-member experience retrospectively. (Sobchack 261)

Remembrance and future envisionment are enabled by the present bodily situations of film and spectator alike. The spatial situations of bodies, in Sobchack’s view, act as unifying, synchronizing centres for “discrete, discontinuous, and incoherent experiences of consciousness” (210) but also as origins of memories and future visions. Temporality, which Sobchack equates with the consciousness of experience, is derivative of its spatial pre-reflective embodiment. In other words, time appears to be internal to embodied subjects, as opposed to Deleuze’s view, inspired by Bergson,

which perceives time as “the interiority in which we move, live and change” (Deleuze, 2010, 80).

As suggested earlier, the most obvious difference between Deleuzian and phenomenological thought is their view of consciousness. Deleuze insists on a (temporal) plane of immanence, thereby risking the disembodiment of the film spectator, whereas Sobchack insists on (spatially) embodied experience, thereby risking disregarding what remains unavailable to the consciousness.

Leonard Lawlor’s article “The End of Phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty” proves helpful for enquiring whether Deleuzian and phenomenological thought can be reconciled on the basis of what they have in common. According to Lawlor, Deleuze poses a double challenge to phenomenology. The first is what he calls the challenge of immanence, and the second is the challenge of difference. The challenge of immanence implies that “there is no two-world ontology, that being is said in only one way, that essence does not lie outside of appearance; in short, the challenge of immanence eliminates transcendence: God is dead” (Lawlor, 1998, 15).

Lawlor reminds us that the challenge is the same as the one already taken by phenomenology to oppose traditional metaphysics. Anything transcendent is reduced to phenomena, it arrives at a plane of immanence, or, in other words, it comes to be located within an experience. The preposition *within* implies the so-called transcendental ground. In Deleuze’s view, the relation between the ground and what it grounds, or between the expression and what is expressed, should be paradoxical. This implies that the ground of experience must remain within experience, yet the ground should be different from what it grounds (Lawlor, 2012, 103). This brings us to what Lawlor refers to as the challenge of difference, which finds its inspiration in Heidegger’s ontological intuition, wherein difference “must be articulation and connection in itself; it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, analogous or the opposed” (Lawlor, 1998, 16).

Deleuze argues that the problem with phenomenology is that it “reinstates a dative: it relates the plane of immanence back to a subject that constitutes the given” (Lawlor, 1998, 15). By reinstating a dative, by turning immanence into immanence of a subject, phenomenology “wanted to renew our concepts by giving us perceptions and affections that would make us give birth to the world” (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 16). For Deleuze, the problem lies in formed opinions, which draw clichés from new perceptions and affections. A way to reclaim independence to immanence and preserve the difference between the ground and the grounded is to bring forward Sartre’s notion of

an “impersonal transcendental field,” which is expressed in “das Man,” the “they,” the “one,” and which, according to Deleuze, consists of singularities or anti-generalities (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 19). Deleuze makes use of Husserl’s notion of eidetic singularities to put forward that singularity equals the expressed in an expression or the perceived in a perception; to sum up, it is a sense (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 19). And expression is equal to his earlier introduced notion of “the plane of immanence.”

Lawlor argues that Merleau-Ponty respects Deleuze’s principle of difference between the ground and the grounded in two ways that correspond to two aspects of the transcendental field, one being “creative operation,” the other “facticity of the unreflective.” According to Lawlor, the creative process of sense-bestowal is, for Merleau-Ponty, “derivative and secondary in relation to the facticity of the unreflective” (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 22). Like Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty follows Sartre’s requirement and considers this passive aspect of the transcendental field to be prepersonal and anonymous. Unlike Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty perceives the field as consisting of generalities, which, on the one hand, differ from rule, law, and concept, and, on the other hand, cannot be abstracted from experience, and have what he calls a trace of an “originary past” (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 23). Lawlor reminds us that, for Merleau-Ponty, “originary past” equals the unreflective; it is “an origin” or the basis on which expression creates. Expression in Deleuze is regarded as actualization of the virtual, whereas Merleau-Ponty perceives it as effectuation (Lawlor, 1998, 26). According to Merleau-Ponty, the originary past is caused by the present, but not dependent on it, which makes the past appear as repetition without original. In this regard, it should be added that Lawlor argues at length that Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “the sense of the past” is equivalent to Bergson’s notion of “pure memory” as elaborated in his *Matter and Memory*. As previously mentioned, this conception sees the past as radically different from the present, as essentially independent from the present and perception. Following Lawlor’s remark, it can be concluded that Merleau-Ponty’s exposé on the originary past and his concept of “the sense of the past” feed well into Bergson’s idea of “pure memory,” which in turn is used by Deleuze to help him elaborate on his concept of “the plane of immanence.” However, it should not be neglected that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in *Phenomenology of Perception* is “a study of the appearance of being to consciousness” (as quoted in Lawlor, 1998, 17), which as such shaped Sobchack’s seminal book *The Address of the Eye*. As Lawlor points out, Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* does not free itself from subjectivity, but his latter writing, like *The Visible and the Invisible* can

answer the question of whether phenomenology can sustain the Deleuzian double challenge.

Considering the existing unresolvedness of the dispute over consciousness and subjectivity between Deleuzian and phenomenological thought (in its part), Bergson's notions on matter and memory seem worth reconsidering. Moreover, a return to Bergson's notion of attentive recognition proves rewarding when reflecting on non-representational images of war, especially while taking into account the shortcomings of both, Deleuze and Sobchack's, models of spectatorship. This concept implies that the "perceiver oscillates between seeing the object, recalling the virtual images that it brings to memory, and comparing the created object with the one before us" (Marks 48).

The Bergsonian model of spectatorship is participatory by default and has a political potential. It does not take place only in the phenomenological present, but also relies on engagement with individual and cultural memory. Importantly, as Darlene Pursley reminds us, it implies a dualism of spatial and temporal spectatorship. Certain "mental flexibility" is indeed required for a notion of the spectator oscillating between the spatial and temporal modes of spectatorship, between "space as narrative continuity and physical sensation and time as affect and memory" (Pursley 1192).

When reflecting on non-representational images and the implied spectator, I must add that I am not strictly following neither Deleuze's nor Sobchack's lead. For non-representational images of war, I find Bergson's notion of the image and attentive recognition more gratifying: first, due to his emphasis on visuality, not narration; second, due to the implied dualism of temporal and spatial engagement; and third, due to insistence on the embodied spectator that is culturally informed by memory. Historical experience is not simply ignored or bypassed but relevantly inscribed in the body of the spectator.

Non-representational images certainly share some of the features of Deleuze's time-image cinema, like the optical image or the optical situation. Nevertheless, they rarely constitute the time-image type of cinema. They appear mainly as an exception rather than the rule, as a trace rather than the whole, as a ghostly presence rather than the obvious. They emerge as interruptions within the narrative continuity. They question the logic of representation by acting within representation.

Now that I have elaborated on the difference between representation and non-representation, and introduced the term non-representational images, I will contextualize the conditions of their emergence within the contemporary, post-Yugoslav context. Post-Yugoslav cinema in the face of

post-war culture can be perceived in two ways: literally or chronologically, and metaphorically or critically.

Post-Yugoslav Cinema in the Post-War Culture

Croatian film critic and scholar Jurica Pavičić made a chronological overview of post-Yugoslav cinema in *Postjugoslovenski film: Stil i ideologija* (*Post-Yugoslav Film: Style and Ideology*). His categorization of films provides an insight into stylistic features, conditioned on the ruling ideologies following the disintegration of Yugoslavia and across its former states. His three categories are: films of self-victimization; films of self-Balkanization; and films of normalization. The first two relate to the immediate post-war period, to the 1990s, whereas the third indicates the period from the 2000s onwards. Films of self-victimization were produced mainly in Croatia, whereas films of self-Balkanization were made mainly in Serbia. Films of normalization were produced across all the former states of Yugoslavia; however, the most notable titles originate from Bosnia.

Drawing on Pavičić's categorization, and departing from his third model—films of normalization—I attempt to reflect on a critical stance that post-Yugoslav cinema takes on its surrounding culture, a post-war one. If Pavičić is more interested in the chronology of post-Yugoslav cinema, in the gradual change of stylistic paradigms in the post-war era—ranging from films of self-victimization, over films of self-Balkanization to films of normalization—then I am more interested in what post-Yugoslav cinema means despite the post-war condition—what happens when post-Yugoslav cinema no longer fits any of the categories suggested.

To the best of my understanding of Pavičić's categorization, films of self-victimization can be grouped around the following thought: we are victims, they are oppressors; whereas films of self-Balkanization share the motto: every side is to blame²⁰ or the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Finally, films of normalization offer a more nuanced view of the wartime past. The larger the distance from the war, the more critical and objective

20 In his book *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu* (*Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*), Pavle Levi writes in detail about the transformation of the discourse of responsibility in 1990s Serbia, which included a movement away from blaming the ethnic other (Slovenes, Croats, Muslims) to blaming everyone. In his view, this is "the specific form of simulation of a socio-cultural transformation in Serbia: the supposed movement away from the militant ethnochauvinism was achieved by means of an arrogant instant-relativization of war crimes" (Levi 104).

is the view over the past. In my view, in his categorization, Pavičić misses recognizing the pervasive sense of post-war apathy and disillusionment, which manages to generate interruptions into the somewhat stable narratives of what he calls films of normalization. And precisely this gap opens up a space for my research on the non-representational images of war.

Films of self-victimization are, according to Pavičić, grouped around a stylistic tendency characteristic for societies that, during the war, considered themselves victims. This prevailing sensation has constituted a film narrative that is characterized by propaganda, black-and-white characterization of characters, the use of ethno-stereotypes, hate speech, elements of epic and melodramatic storytelling, including a series of recognizable topoi (Pavičić, 2011, 21). The films of self-victimization, produced largely in Croatia, during the Tuđman era are considered wartime state-building films. Pavičić shares his belief that these films were not intended for the public, but for the state, ministries, and the imaginary outsider who should be informed about the “real” truth in Croatia (Pavičić 124). During the Tuđman era, these films were massively unpopular among the public in Croatia, and once the political system changed in Croatia, they were no longer produced, as there was no need for them. According to Pavičić, their drop in popularity had less to do with the propaganda they promoted or a lack of artistic achievement, and more to do with the departure from the norm of the classic narrative film whose imperative is an active protagonist. These films were especially unpopular among war veterans, whose expectations were bound to their experiences of western and Partisan films. To their despair, the passive characters that populate films of self-victimization are never shown as active heroes, revengeful combatants, even though the film narratives are premised on the warmongering rhetoric and irreconcilable differences between us and them. Unlike Partisan films, these films are confronted with a taboo. They must not show “our” side being active, resisting, or taking revenge. They must always represent Croatian people as suffering, helpless victims, but nevertheless moral heroes. Why did this stylistic paradigm not occur in Bosnian post-war cinema? As previously mentioned, the Bosnian 1992–95 war was by far the most ruinous of all the Yugoslav disintegration wars and resulted in the highest number of casualties. Pavičić provides one possible explanation: the Bosniak population, which experienced the biggest loss of all the former Yugoslav populations, was not interested in projecting a self-image of victimhood that would be predicated on the degradation of the ethnic other. In contrast, the Croatian and the Kosovo/Albanian ideologies centre on “the motif of perpetuated national martyrdom, there is a tacit understanding that ‘they have always oppressed us,’ that ‘they

are impossible to live with' and that is why we must part ways (even if this means using force)."²¹

This "motif of perpetuated national martyrdom," the impossibility of living next to the "other," in Pavičić's view, has never been at the core of Bosniak or the Unitary-Bosnian national programme. These belonged primarily to the secessionist Croat and Serb national programmes. Of all three ethno-national groups, Pavičić claims, Bosniaks have the greatest interest in the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They emphasize inter-religious harmony, a balanced life of togetherness. That is why films of self-victimization contradicted the ideology and the official self-image of Sarajevo. Pavičić concludes by saying that films that were premised on eternal hatred, irreconcilable differences, and the collective demonization of the ethnic other undermine the idea of a multi-ethnic Sarajevo. Apart from *Go West* (2005), Ahmed Imamović's feature debut film, there are no records of films of self-victimization produced in Bosnia. Later, I will return to a film that, according to Pavičić, shares all the major characteristics of films of self-victimization.

Pavičić makes a valid point to a certain degree. Sarajevo has cultivated a self-image based on multi-ethnicity and inter-confessional harmony. And the Bosniak political establishment has never propagated secessionism as a political programme. Alija Izetbegović favoured the idea of all three ethnicities living next to one another in the unified Bosnia. A major difference between the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, the president of former Yugoslavia, and Izetbegović is that for Tito, being a Yugoslav was an imperative, an overarching and unifying factor for all nationalities and ethnicities of the former Yugoslavia, a primary identity, whereas for Izetbegović, especially for the future followers and implementers of his politics, being a Bosniak is deemed more important than being a Bosnian.²² The DPA, which consolidated the advances of the Bosnian Serb army and acknowledged a division along ethnic lines, reinforced the idea of a strong belonging to an ethnicity. The DPA have facilitated the rise of ethno-nationalism by suggesting that

21 This is the English translation of Pavičić's text on the films of self-victimization and has been made by Nikolina Jovanović, supported by Croatian Audiovisual Centre, and can be found here: www.moveast.eu/103/post-yugoslav-film-style-and-ideology.

22 As of 1971 Muslims were recognised as a nation within the former Yugoslavia, alongside Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes. Albanians were considered a national minority, even though, by number they exceeded Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Slovenians in the former Yugoslavia. More information can be found in Bennett, 2016, 34. As of 1993, the term Bosniak, denoting Bosnian Muslim, has been officially adopted. Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats are the three constitutive peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

only a Bosniak, a Croat, and a Serb can be candidates for a three-member presidency.²³

The programme of Unitary Bosnia and multi-ethnic Sarajevo may have been the self-image the Bosniak political elite is inclined to, but this very image also presupposes a strong representation of one ethnicity, which is a contradiction in itself. The multi-ethnic self-image of Sarajevo has, however, prevailed up until today. For that reason, films of self-victimization have never really constituted a trend in Bosnia.

Films of self-Balkanization are, in Pavičić's view, based on grotesque caricature, and involve elements of slapstick and the logic of animated films. They interiorize the western view of the Balkans in the way that they include hyperbolic cultural stereotypes about the Balkans. This stylistic paradigm includes films by world-renowned authors such as Milčo Mančevski, Srđan Dragojević, and Emir Kusturica. According to Pavičić, these films culturalize war and social crisis and present it as an eternal and irreparable Balkan condition (Pavičić 21). He goes on to specify that these films negotiate war and political crisis by resorting to a postmodern play with quotation, self-reflexivity, anti-realism, reliance on exaggeration, elements of slapstick comedy, animation, etc. Other strategies include restating a trope of a full circle—as predestined repetitiveness—on a dramaturgical and a declarative level, and other totalizing, global metaphors (for instance, tunnel, basement, hole, etc.), around which these film narratives are mostly organized (Pavičić 174).

While portraying ecstatic, irrational characters, an overabundance of violence, and using hyperbole as a strategy, these films manage to cement the same colonial view about "Balkan wild men." By doing so, they succeed in redistributing guilt for committed war crimes away from concrete, historically specific political elites to a cycle of recurring violence, age-old ethnic feuds, as well as to an irreparable, corrupted Balkan soul or mind. By de-historicizing and de-politicizing the causes of war, these films endorse isolationism ("They all are crazy anyway, they better be left alone"), and by doing so become political acts of performativity (Pavičić 175).

Both the films of self-victimization and the films of self-Balkanization are made with the imaginary outside onlooker in mind. The first type, marked

23 A three-member presidency is made up of one Bosniak and one Croat, both elected from the Federation, and one Serb, elected from Republika Srpska. If at census one opts to declare oneself primarily as a Bosnian, secondarily as an atheist or a Muslim, thereby, rejects the existing tripartite, Bosniak-Croat-Serb representation, one's chances to run for presidency are non-existent. At census, a Bosnian is allocated as the "other."

by extensive use of explanatory rhetoric, claims to offer a real truth about Croatian suffering and necessitates a foreign stamp of authentication. The second type, marked by reliance on postmodern collage, slapstick comedy, animation and hyperbolic use of stereotypes, claims to play with the western notion of the Balkans as its underbelly, populated with wild, bloodthirsty, revengeful, and irrational people.

Balkanism, Balkanization, Self-Balkanization

At this point, a brief overview of the scholarship on Balkanism and Balkanization is needed. Historians Maria Todorova and Larry Wolff, religious studies scholar Milica Bakić-Hayden, and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek offer valuable interpretations of Eastern Europe and the Balkans as they engage with the complexity of the east/west dichotomy that grounded scholarship on Orientalism, a concept coined and developed by literary scholar Edward Said. As already known, Orientalism implies inventing the East (“the Orient”) as a different, exotic, backward, uncivilized, potentially dangerous, but nevertheless complimentary “other” half of the West by the West (Said 2003).

Wolff reminds us that the east-west division is the late invention of eighteenth-century philosophy—the Enlightenment. A new division with different overtones was borrowed from the belief in evolution and progress:

Because the geographic east of Europe and the world situated to the east was lagging behind Europe primarily in economic performance, East came to be identified more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious culture unmatched by Western Enlightenment. (Todorova 11)

For Wolff, the project *Inventing Eastern Europe*²⁴ converges with both Orientalism and Balkanism, but is effectively “an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization” (Wolff 7). Similarly, Bakić-Hayden sees Balkanism as a “variation on the Orientalist theme” (Bakić-Hayden 920), as a part of the larger Orientalist context, with which it shares inner logic and rhetoric. In her influential article “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” Bakić-Hayden addresses the problem of essentialism, by which

24 The project was thoroughly explored in Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*.

cultures and ideologies assume a valorized dichotomy between east and west and incorporate various “essences” into patterns of representation used to describe them. By essentialism it is implied that determinate natures inhere in and govern humans and their social and cultural institutions in the same way in which they are supposed to inhere in the entities of the natural world (Bakić-Hayden 917). Accordingly, Eastern Europe is reduced to “backwardness,” the Balkans is analogous with “violence,” and India associated with “mysticism,” whereas the west is self-described as “the civilized.” The Orient, as known from Said’s writing, is not physically locatable, and precisely due to its fleeting nature the Balkans acts as a prominent spot in the process of “the gradation of Orients” (Bakić-Hayden 918). In this pattern of reproducing the original binary upon which Orientalism was premised: “Asia is more ‘East’ or ‘other’ than Eastern Europe; within Eastern Europe itself, this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most ‘eastern’; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies” (Bakić-Hayden 918).

Žižek similarly argues that very indeterminate and shifting geographies limitations assume the spectral status of the Balkans. They appear to be always somewhere else, a little bit more towards the southeast:

For Serbs, they begin *down there*, in Kosovo or in Bosnia, and they defend the Christian civilization against this Europe’s Other; for the Croats, they begin in orthodox, despotic and Byzantine Serbia, against which Croatia safeguards Western democratic values; for Slovenes they begin in Croatia, and we are the last bulwark of the peaceful *Mitteleuropa*; for many Italians and Austrians they begin in Slovenia, the Western outpost of the Slavic hordes; for many Germans, Austria itself, because of its historical links, is already tainted with Balkan corruption and inefficiency; for many North Germans, Bavaria, with its provincial *flair*, is not free of a Balkan contamination; many arrogant Frenchmen associate Germany itself with an Eastern Balkan brutality entirely foreign to French *finesse*, and this brings us to the last link in this chain: to some conservative British opponents of the European Union, for whom—implicitly, at least—the whole of continental Europe functions today as a new version of the Balkan Turkish Empire, with Brussels as the new Istanbul, a voracious despotic centre which threatens British freedom and sovereignty. (Žižek 1)

In contrast to Bakić-Hayden and Wolff, Todorova sees “Balkanism” as an autonomous and particular rhetorical paradigm, not “merely a sub-species

of orientalism" (Todorova 7). As elaborated in her seminal book *Imagining the Balkans*, Orientalism and Balkanism are only seemingly identical. The Balkans are said to imply unimaginative historical and geographical concreteness, savagery that is rooted in masculinity, unlike the Orient, which suggests intangibility, femininity, and sensuality (Todorova 10). A total lack of wealth, a straightforward attitude, mostly negative, hardly nuanced, characterizes the Balkans, whereas the Orient implies an escape from civilization, an imaginary realm, home of legends and fairy tales. Todorova claims that in practically all descriptions of the Balkans, their transitory status was a central characteristic. The Balkans evoke the image of a bridge or crossroads where the west and the east, usually incompatible, yet completed entities, two "antiworlds" meet (Todorova 15).

Todorova shares her conviction that Balkanism evolved independently from Orientalism and in part even against it. The first reason is geopolitics—the Balkans as a strategic sphere were treated differently from the Near or Middle East within the complex history of the Eastern question. The second is the absence of colonial legacy. The third point of divergence is that Balkanism emerged as a response to the disappointments of the western Europeans' classical expectations in the Balkans. Disappointments were, however, within its paradigm, hence separate from the Oriental. The final distinction is to be recognized in the Balkans' predominantly Christian character, which "fed for a long time the crusading potential of Christianity against Islam" (Todorova 19). Even though there were numerous attempts to classify (Orthodox) Christianity under the label of "Oriental despotism," thus inherently non-European or non-western, the existing boundary between Islam and Christianity continued to be the central one (Todorova 20).

While the creation of Europe was premised on the binary opposition between the civilized west and the uncivilized east, the rhetoric on Balkanism was additionally infused with the idea of inevitable violence, a stereotype that, according to Todorova, set its ground in the twentieth century. "Balkanization," mainly used to signify "the process of nationalist fragmentation of former geographic and political units into new and problematically viable small states" (Todorova 32), entered the vocabulary of journalists and politicians at the end of the First World War, "when the disintegration of the Habsburg and Romanov Empires into a proliferation of small states reminded them of the secession of the Balkan countries from the Ottoman polity that had begun much earlier" (Todorova 34). At that time, the Balkans attained their political, utterly negative connotation implying a "break up (of) (a region, a group, etc.) into smaller and hostile

units.”²⁵ A second round of popular, derogatory use of the term Balkanization coincided with the beginning of decolonization after the Second World War (Todorova 34) and the third wave of its use came at the end of the Cold War (Todorova 136).

The Balkans, understood either as imagined or concrete geography, have a predominantly pejorative meaning. They denote the embarrassing, impulsive, and savage other, distinct and further from the rational, spirited, and calm European. Film historian Dina Iordanova suggests that many of the stereotypes about the Balkans are uncritically and willingly adopted, repeated and perpetuated by many Balkan intellectuals (Iordanova 56). In her view, the so-called Orientalization of the Balkans cannot be declared a purely western project as “it is a process that has been embraced, internalized and partially carried out by many consenting Balkan intellectuals” (Iordanova 56). The result is a specific, intentional self-exoticism, which is the preferred mode of self-representation for many Balkan filmmakers.

A travelogue as a type of narrative structure is characteristic of a large number of “Balkan” films. In Iordanova’s view, most Balkan filmmakers submissively accept instead of “challenging a narrative structure which inevitably positions and constructs them as objects of the Western traveller’s gaze” (56). While addressing the current troubles of the region, most of these films cater to traditional stereotypes. Balkan individuals in this type of film travelogues “are represented as flamboyant and excitingly dismissive of the restrictive norms of Western civilisation” (Iordanova 60). In Iordanova’s view, one way to approach messy historical affairs in the Balkans is either through a particular national narrative or through narratives that acknowledge the conditionality of all narratives. And the reconciliation of all these different narratives is possible only if built on relativity. An intentionally fragmented and often frivolous picture of history appears as a result (Iordanova 89). According to Iordanova, a way to tell history as a post-modern collage, by superimposing multiple stories and times, makes Balkan history a dynamic entity. Her major points of reference are films made by Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Lordan Zafranović, and Theo Angelopoulos. In the following chapter, Iordanova’s references include Kusturica’s and Dragojević’s 1990s films. Later in the text I will return to why, in the given context of the relation between history and post-modern collage, I find this ordering of film references problematic.

25 This definition is offered in the Meriam-Webster Online Dictionary: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/balkanize. Accessed Apr. 17, 2025.

One way to express Balkan history as a dynamic entity is through the use of postmodern collage, as Iordanova reminds us. The Balkan history has always been messy, and consensus over numerous historical narratives is anyway impossible. Based on this assumption, Iordanova argues for postmodern pastiche as a way to preserve historical affairs as messy as they are.

What Iordanova fails to recognize, and what Pavičić emphasizes in his writing, is that self-exoticism has been elaborated in even more complex structures than linear travelogues, in postmodern collage films such as Kusturica's *Underground* (1995) and Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996). And the postmodern character of these films, as well as hyperbole that both films cater to, do not exempt them from self-exoticism nor from their engagement with political propaganda. True, the propaganda may not be as straightforward and obvious as in Pavičić's films of self-victimization, and may have been overlooked by foreign film reception, but it does not mean that the ideological underpinning of both films is simply bypassed by way of expressing politically complex history in the form of intriguing, highly aesthetic, and self-reflexive postmodern pastiche.

Exaggerated self-exoticism or self-Balkanization expressed through postmodern collage as a preferred film structure may be the reason why both films were so well received internationally. I am not sure how the deployment of hyperbole can prevent *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* from championing derogatory stereotypes about Balkan wild men and from further perpetuating nesting Orientalisms, Balkanism, and self-Balkanism.

In the third chapter I will return to this matter and reflect on both the values and limitations of both films that received critical acclaim, had successful circulation at film festivals, and had theatrical releases abroad.

Normalization

Pavičić's third category—films of normalization—relates to films produced from 2000 onwards that denote a period following the end of the Yugoslav wars and changes in the political regimes of Serbia and Croatia. Films of normalization or consolidation are characterized by a significant shift from the style of films of self-Balkanization. According to Pavičić, minimalist realism takes over the grotesque, a type of hero capable of catharsis and change replaces the type of the "Balkan wild man" that is characteristic for films of self-Balkanization. A dramaturgy of the passive hero of films

of self-victimization is replaced by a dramaturgy of the active hero. This return to classic narrative style includes heroes who actively solve problems (Pavičić 22).

One of the main characteristics of films of normalization, according to Pavičić, is the change in the representation of war. From the 2000s, the war in post-Yugoslav film is no longer portrayed as exotic and culturally specific. The war becomes less of a spectacle characterized by large-scale unmotivated, irrational killings. Instead, it is depicted as an anonymous, emotionally detached activity, almost industrial. The war loses its local colour, its supposed Balkan specificity. As films of normalization favour minimalist realism, the ambience loses its cultural specificity and is usually rendered as a depressive, everyday space of the socialist legacy, the unfinished modernization. Film protagonists are neither portrayed as exceptionally passive victims, nor as erratic, combative, and peculiar individuals. They appear as resolute individuals, ready to confront their past and restore their damaged lives. Protagonists' confrontations with burdening pasts, with private or family traumas, imply their readiness to find solutions, but also to change and evolve if necessary. The way to solve a problem finds its dramaturgical expression in a classic three-act narrative. Films of normalization, in Pavičić's understanding, imply a return to this model. The classic narrative, with occasional excursions into genre filmmaking, the active hero, ready for catharsis, are symptomatic of the new values of a newly dominant ideology of liberal capitalism (Pavičić 212). Entrepreneurship, activism and gender emancipation are values embodied by many characters in the films of normalization. The problem with Pavičić's categorization is that some of the films he regards as films of normalization, such as Vladimir Perišić's *Ordinary People* (2009) or Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić's *The Blacks* (2009), have neither self-determined characters nor are organized in a classic three-act film structure.

Drawing on actual war crimes committed by Serb and Croat forces in the former Yugoslavia, *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks* take "ordinary people" as their protagonists, who, once drafted into the army or special squads, end up killing male civilians. In both films, the action takes place outside towns, in remote, abandoned premises, in the narrow, direct surrounding of the protagonists, within a twenty-four-hour time frame. Minimalist in their expressions, characterized by long takes, both films reveal the war in its dullness. Exposing soldiers' boredom and endless waiting for orders, revealing their killings in a mechanically repetitive fashion, *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks* aim at breaking away from the glorification of the war and war heroism in general.

Ordinary People and *The Blacks* certainly suggest a major shift from the way that war was represented in films of self-Balkanization. However, the protagonists, ready to confront their traumas, past burdens, obstacles and change, do not populate these film worlds. The characters in both films are caught in wartime situations and neither have the willingness, power nor real opportunities to confront the system, as embodied by their superior army officials. They do not cast doubt upon actions they take part in. They do not produce a needed change. Blind acceptance of military duties makes their actions devoid of any emotional engagement, unlike heroes of films of self-Balkanization, who are full of temperament, rage, and at any time ready to enter bloody confrontations. The characters of *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks* suggest a doubt in the world of resolute protagonists, capable of removing obstacles that they come across and determinedly embracing their futures.

These problems of Pavičić's third category—films of normalization—as well as of some other film titles, which in my view in no way fit this category, drove me to come up with another possible categorization, according to which post-Yugoslav films could be grouped.

Post-Yugoslav Cinema Despite the Post-War Culture

Instead of looking into how an ideology dictates a style within post-Yugoslav cinema I propose a categorization based on the degree of representation of war and post-war realities that post-Yugoslav cinema submits to. Instead of constantly re-affirming post-war status to post-Yugoslav cinema, I ask: what is post-Yugoslav cinema in spite of the post-war condition? I suggest thinking in slightly different terms and call for considering three other categories: films of representation; films of over-representation; and films of non-representation.

Films of representation would be the closest to what Pavičić terms films of normalization. Rejection of the Balkan stereotypes or de-exoticism, a preference for minimalist realism over grotesque, a type of self-determined hero, ready to face challenges, find closure and evolve if necessary, would find expression in the dramaturgy of a linear, cause-and-effect, three-act classical or genre filmmaking, more often than not with a happy ending.

Films of over-representation would encompass films of self-victimization and films of self-Balkanization. The first could be grouped around the motto "we are victims, they are perpetrators," and the second around the maxim "the truth is somewhere in the middle or all sides are guilty." One

characteristic that these two stylistic paradigms have in common is the inclination towards excess and overabundance.

As previously mentioned, films of self-victimization are characterized by propaganda, black-and-white characterization, oversimplification, and passive heroes, who stand in contradiction with the narrative that presupposes revenge and action, as well as recurring ethno-stereotypes and motifs. And films of self-Balkanization, generally better-crafted films, imply a conscious adoption and exaggeration of existing westerners' stereotypes about the Balkans. In either case, stereotypes of passive victims or erratic perpetrators dominate the film narratives, which often result in kitschy antirealism, as opposed to observational realism. The major difference is that the overabundance in films of self-victimization is mostly a result of unfortunate binary oppositions between good victims and bad perpetrators, and more often than not poor execution, whereas the overabundance in films of self-Balkanization is a conscious, self-reflective choice, a goal in itself. One could say films of self-Balkanization are marked by a higher degree of self-reflection and irony. With films of self-victimization, viewers are exposed to war films with both epic and melodramatic elements, many recognizable topoi, while with films of self-Balkanization, viewers mainly engage with postmodern pastiche and anachronistic structures. Exceptionally passive victims inhabit one setting and extremely energetic perpetrators populate the other. The passivity of the characters in films of self-victimization stems from a strong moral imperative, from defending the right to a victim status, premised on degrading the ethnic other, an eternally cruel perpetrator. The vigorous behaviour of the characters in the films of self-Balkanization finds its premise in rejecting official narratives that either celebrate or condemn war heroes, depending on what side of the war is being discussed. The unfortunate logic derived from the latter films is relativism: it does not matter who committed what crimes, war is an ugly thing; hence, all sides are equally guilty. Their view of an equal share of guilt, accompanied by exaggerated self-exoticism, which is elaborated through derogatory stereotypes in their depiction of war violence, makes these films politically problematic.

Finally, films of non-representation comprise a separate category that does not entirely match any of Pavičić's three categories; nevertheless, it includes some of elements of the films of normalization. Their style is closer to minimalist realism than to melodrama or burlesque, though characters are not active and self-confident as are Pavičić's characters in the films of normalization. Instead, they appear as anxious, doubtful, withdrawn, and most of the time double traumatized, first by their war past and second

by their post-war present. Films of non-representation do not presuppose a straightforward, linear, three-act arc, premised on strong characters, integrated around their beliefs, words and actions, which reflect one another. They are characterized by an atmosphere of long takes, observational style, the use of shaky camera, reliance on other sources of footage, archival and private, as well as on an exploration of various possibilities of image and sound, experienced through contradiction within their relationship. As I will demonstrate in my comparative analysis of seventeen films in the following three chapters, non-representational images affect, shock, and incite disbelief. They encourage the viewer to detach from his/her preconceived ideas about the typically passive victims in films of self-victimization or the predictably erratic heroes in films of self-Balkanization. What is more, they cast suspicion upon the self-assured and determined agents in films of normalization. The withdrawn and reluctant characters in films of non-representation elicit the viewer's doubt in any of the existing representations. Like Deleuzian differentialities, many of the characters appear as ideas that keep returning with a degree of difference; they question the viewer's preconceived notions about characters in post-Yugoslav cinema. They question stereotypical appearances in what I term films of over-representation as much as they bring suspicion upon resolute and goal-oriented characters that populate films of representation.

Prior to embarking on the analysis of the selected films, it is relevant to reiterate that the corpus comprises fourteen films that, to a certain degree, follow non-representational logic. As specified in the Introduction, the earliest production is from 2007 and the latest from 2018. Comparisons will be made with three other films, which were added at a later stage of the research and date from the middle and end of the 1990s. All selected films engage with the historical experience of the Yugoslav disintegration wars and were made by filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia.

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II Beyond Self-Victimization

Abstract: Chapter II revolves around the portrayal of a victim, which varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation each film submits to. The emphasis is placed on the shift from representation to non-representational strategies. Non-representational images of war can deviate from the cause-and-effect narrative but remain supportive of the film's overarching optimism. They can appear as inserted home videos or news footage and challenge the coherence of the narrative. Alternatively, the cause-and-effect narrative can be left behind and new temporalities can emerge with new sound/image arrangements. The objectification of victims and escaping the convention of representation in order to restore dignity to victims are questions that are addressed here. Limits of representation are carefully analysed.

Keywords: victim, objectification, dignity, home videos, news footage, limits of representation

The distinction between the post-war and the post-Yugoslav condition, as outlined in the first chapter, justifies the imperative to move beyond the post-war condition. In the context of filmmaking, uplifting the post-war status assumes finding aesthetic means to convey memories of war while avoiding the traps of representation. A closer look into problems of representation, as Gilles Deleuze explores it, helped me to ground the concept of non-representational images. Contextualizing the conditions of the emergence of non-representational images showed that post-Yugoslav cinema in the face of post-war culture can be perceived literally, chronologically, metaphorically, or critically. The chronological approach reaffirms time and again the post-war status of post-Yugoslav cinema, whereas the critical approach asks what post-Yugoslav cinema *is* beyond the post-war condition. Drawing on the latter approach, I suggest a different kind of categorization of films that is based on varying degrees of representation of war memories/trauma and includes films of representation, films of over-representation, and films of

non-representation. Instead of exploring the particularities of each model chapter by chapter, I have decided to build the chapters differently. This chapter revolves around the portrayal of a victim that varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each film selected submits to. Emphasis is placed on the shift from representation to non-representational strategies. And this shift is partly reflected in the change of register within the oeuvre of the same filmmaker. My hope is that, by placing emphasis on the shift from one type of filmmaking to another rather than elaborating on a single type, my analysis will reflect a dynamic relationship between the past and the present, between individual and collective memories, as they are approached and treated in each film discussed. The objectification of victims, on one side, and escaping the convention of representation in order to restore dignity to victims, on the other, are questions that are addressed here. The second chapter includes a selection of films of over-representation, films of representation and films of non-representation, most of which were shown at the Sarajevo Film Festival. The films analysed are as follows: Neven Hitrec's *Bogorodica/Madonna* (1999), Aida Begić's *Snijeg/Snow* (2008) and *Djeca/Children of Sarajevo* (2012), Jasmila Žbanić's *Grbavica/Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams* or *Esmā's Secret*¹ (2006) and *Za one koji ne mogu da govore/For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* (2013), Ognjen Glavonić's *Dubina dva/Depth Two* (2016), and Šejla Kamerić's *1395 dana bez crvene/1395 Days Without Red* (2011).

Madonna: Over-Representation of War

Neven Hitrec's film *Madonna* is a film that illustrates all the key elements of Pavičić's stylistic model films of self-victimization. As elaborated earlier, these film narratives are characterized by propaganda, black-and-white characterization, the use of ethno-stereotypes, hate speech, elements of epic and melodramatic storytelling, including a series of recognizable topoi (Pavičić 21). Before I detail how propaganda is particularized in this film, I will provide a short plot summary.

Neven Hitrec's *Madonna* is framed as a revenge story. It starts with a meeting of two dispirited men in a dark church. One offers a gun to the other, who refuses, saying he has his own.

The action moves back in time, to a typical Slavonian² sun-drenched village, depicted with yellow wheat, rows of houses, a flock of geese, horses,

1 There are two English translations of the title of Žbanić's film.

2 Slavonia is Croatia's northeast province, bordering Serbia.

a river, and a church. The bright colours of the exterior shots appear in stark contrast to the setting in the framing scene. At the beginning, it appears as if it would be yet another film about a love triangle. The young, violent Đuka and the mature amateur sculptor Kuzma Glavan compete for the attention of Ana, a young schoolteacher. Ana opts for Kuzma, and they start a family. These events coincide with the rise of political tensions in what appears to be an ethnically mixed village: a schoolboy refuses to write in Latin script; a couple of Serb villagers prevent Kuzma and his friend, Croat co-villagers, from bringing a hurt boy to a doctor in a nearby town; a Serb officer furiously spits at the local celebration of Croatian independence. Tensions deteriorate into war and mass violence. The bookkeeper Rade, a Serb employed at Kuzma's carpentry shop, takes Ana's child away and rapes Ana.

After the climax of mass destruction and suffering, the film returns to the opening scene. The war is over, and the former contenders in the love story have become co-combatants and now allies. Kuzma searches for Rade to take revenge for having destroyed his family. He finds him in a Serbian village, across the Danube River, settled with his pregnant wife. Kuzma captures Rade in the shed, ties him to a table, and places a booby trap, without a clear indication of what might happen. This is where *Madonna* ends.

Even though the film is clearly framed as a revenge story, revenge never takes place. A revenge story presupposes an active protagonist, resolute in carrying out his mission. However, the film's protagonist does not display the required determination, instead embodying passivity. Pavičić provides a possible explanation for the apparent illogic. The imperative of the film's dramatic structure seems to be in contradiction with the imperative of dominant ideology in Croatia at the end of the 1990s. By the time the film was made, Pavičić asserts, Croats generally perceived themselves as the sole victims of Serb aggression. As one way to convey this perception abroad, to authenticate the truth about their suffering, the film implied that Croats should not be depicted as active combatants, as the ones carrying out offensive actions against perpetrators. This self-imposed taboo can also be seen prominently in Croatian television in the 1990s (Pavičić 111). Nenad Puhovski, a renowned documentary filmmaker, claims that "a demagogic interpretation ... of victimized groups or the whole community ... seen as the victim in their entirety is one of the essential characteristics of post-Yugoslav war propaganda" (quoted in Pavičić 111).

Pavičić recognizes that propagandistic lecturing, understood according to Puhovski's terms, is a characteristic of films of self-victimization and occurs on three levels: black-and-white characterization; explanatory discourse; and the repetition of typical motifs and dramatic structures (109).

If we take *Madonna* as an example, the black-and-white characterization firmly establishes a division along ethnic lines. Croat villagers are shown as goodhearted, tolerant, and somewhat naïve. The schoolteacher Vanja Lukač, whom Pavičić sees as a “kind of ideologue of the nationally awakened Croats” (119), brags about how he taught a Serb schoolboy to write in Cyrillic script. Kuzma employs and provides a living for Rade, who later turns out to be the destroyer of his family. Even the erratic and violent Đuka, only depicted negatively, goes through a transformation after joining the Croat army, thereby erasing the earlier disparities in character between himself and Kuzma.

Serbs by contrast are seen as treacherous, unscrupulous, dirty, and greasy, ready to betray and slaughter at any time, all the while drinking *schnapps*. At the beginning of the film, Rade is shown as a loyal worker. Later, he appears to mediate between two warring sides, even as he is essentially setting Kuzma and his friends up. The subsequent war turns him into a rapist. Another example involves a Serb police officer who at first appears to be loyal to the new police forces. When the opportunity presents itself, however, he slits the throat of his Croat colleague on duty and lets his Serb co-villagers know that the Croat police are on their way. Another ethno-stereotype shows a Serb father teaching his teenage son to hate Croats. All other Serb characters in the film are depicted as evil without any redeeming qualities.

Explanatory discourse, which Pavičić refers to as the second level on which propaganda occurs, is symptomatic of these earlier films of self-victimization. In *Madonna*, it manifests itself when Rade explains to Kuzma and to the viewer alike that the murder of the schoolteacher Lukač is a part of a bigger plan, and there is little Rade and Kuzma can do to change that. A local, isolated event is deprived of its specificity and consigned to the domain of a greater conspiracy.

Film motifs, which tend to explain the origin and development of the conflict, kept reoccurring in Croatian cinema throughout the 1990s. Pavičić singles out seven motifs: “Serb duplicity,” “Croat naiveté,” “wise Croats warn,” “denial of reality,” “military attack,” “refugee life,” and “religious rites” (111). Pavičić argues that in *Madonna*, these motifs reappear unchanged. The motif of “Serb duplicity” manifests itself through scenes that revolve around Rade’s treachery. There is a scene revealing that Rade had published an advertisement for Kuzma’s carpentry shop in Cyrillic script; another scene discloses that he no longer reads the Croatian newspaper, rather now the Serbian one; and another in which he only pretends to mediate between two warring sides. The motif of “Croat naiveté” occurs when Kuzma mentions that the Kosovo crisis has nothing to do with them, as Kosovo is far away.

There are few other scenes in which “wise Croats warn,” like the one in which Lukač comments on the political situation while watching television at an inn, or one in which Kuzma’s mother reminisces about the events of the Second World War and mentions that Kuzma’s father was killed by the same people who are now invading. She warns about the impending destruction by relegating contemporary events to the cycle of Serbs’ perpetual violence against Croats. When Rade disappears from the village, Ana dismisses a political explanation for his disappearance, supposing that he may have found the love of his life. The given example of the Croat “denial of reality” dramaturgically anticipates a well-orchestrated “military attack.” The way the attack is directed, with dynamic camera movement, the use of various angles and fast-paced editing combined with slow-motion imply a level of technical mastery that previously produced films of self-victimization did not have. *Madonna* lacks the motif of “refugee life.”

Further illustration of self-victimization occurs, however, in the form of “religious rites.” This is first seen during the “military attack” of the funeral site, then during what appears as the crucifixion of Ana and her child in the church. Pavičić reminds us that by the time the film was made, the dominant ideology with its major features—anti-communism and clericalism—had been firmly grounded, and also “much clearer dramaturgical links between institutionalized Roman Catholicism and the nation” had been established (120). On a closer look, the renewal of the church parallels not only the national renewal but also the creation of Kuzma’s family. Kuzma’s son is born on the eve of the local celebration of Croatian independence. Kuzma sculpts a statue of the *Madonna*, modelled on his wife Ana, for the newly refurbished church. Pavičić emphasizes that Serb aggression of the Croatian state leads to the inevitable desecration of the village/church/family (121).

At the beginning of the film, Kuzma and Đuka are depicted as diametrically opposite in nature. Following the war, under the sign of national and religious awakening, disparities between the former rivals diminish. They become united in their hatred of the ethnic other. This hatred never actualizes in revenge, even though the dramatic structure of the film is premised on revenge. Instead, following the ideological, self-imposed taboo of never presenting the Croat side as the active, combative one, the film finishes with an open ending. It remains unknown whether Kuzma took revenge or not. Throughout the film, the only undertaking he appears committed to is sculpting the statue of the *Madonna*. As Pavičić emphasizes, his investment in symbolic and religious acts prevails over his partaking in social, political, or any other issues (121). As could be seen, the passivity of Kuzma and other characters on the righteous side of the spectrum stems from a

strong moral imperative, from defending the right to victim status, premised on the degradation of the ethnic other, an eternally cruel perpetrator. The unchangeable passivity of characters is enabled and built upon the presumed and fixed aggressiveness of the ethnic other.

The unfortunate binary opposition between poor victims and cruel perpetrators does not allow for more complex characters to evolve, nor for experimentation with narrative structure and imagery to occur. This opposition allows for imagined categories, based on ethnic belonging, to take on mythic proportions more than it enables the construction of characters who are capable of furthering or actualizing the plot. The film motifs, black-and-white characterization, topoi, and related hate speech lead to an overabundance of elements of melodrama, which allow me to allocate *Madonna* to the category of films of over-representation. The term *melodrama* as used here draws on the definition provided by literary critic Peter Brooks in his book *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*:

The connotations of the word are probably similar for us all. They include: the indulgence of strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety. (Brooks 11)

Brooks's observations are significant for highlighting how common understanding of melodrama as a soap opera "need not decrease its usefulness" as there is a range from high to low examples in any literary field (11). As in any art with high and low examples, "the low is attempting less, risking less, is more conventional and less self-conscious" (Brooks 12). Brooks claims that attending to the most successful melodrama as a coherent mode, be it in its literal or "extrapolated" form, rewards our attention. He suggests that readers should not be deceived into looking for the psychological structures of melodrama's characters, their interior depth, because melodrama exteriorizes psychological conflict and turns binaries into pure integral concepts (Brooks 35). Melodrama's typical figures are hyperbole, antithesis, and oxymoron "that evidence a refusal of nuance and the insistence on dealing in pure, integral concepts" (Brooks 40). One can certainly accept Brooks's invitation and approach characters in *Madonna* as the ones typifying good and bad, virtue and evil, thereby avoiding looking for their interior depth and psychological complexity. It proves difficult, however, to accept that

the film's antagonists, with associated hyperbole, are a result of a conscious refusal of nuance and insistence to deal in pure, integral concepts. Their excessiveness comes across more as an effect of failure to accomplish a well-plotted revenge story with an active protagonist due to the film's submission to the ideological self-imposed taboo of never showing the Croat side as the aggressive one in the war. Regardless of the intention, the resulting stark moral polarization positions the film firmly in the domain of films of over-representation. One way to bring this category closer to understanding is by comparing films of over-representation with what I refer to as films of representation. Before I outline the key features of the latter category, I believe an analysis of Aida Begić's debut feature film *Snow* would serve as an appropriate contrast.

***Snow*—Beyond Over-Representation**

Snow follows a week in the lives of returnees to the eastern Bosnian village Slavno in 1997. The returnees are composed of several women and girls, an elderly man and a boy. Early in the film, it becomes clear that most of the characters' (male) family members have either been killed or gone missing. The genocide in Srebrenica in 1995 is clearly evoked. The film's protagonist is the young widow Alma, determined to contribute to the survival of her community by selling homemade plum jam and other fruit and vegetable produce. One day, she and Nadija, a woman who helps her produce and sell the products, meet the young lorry-driver Hamza, who offers to come on Wednesday, buy their goods and sell them at a market in a nearby city. He does not show up as agreed. The village is remote and, with the first snow, it risks complete isolation from the outer world. Miro, a local Serb, and Marc, a foreign businessman, unexpectedly visit the village and propose to buy the whole area for 70,000 Bosnian marks. The villagers face a dilemma: should they accept the offer and leave the village for good, or should they stay and try to rebuild their lives against all odds? A sudden storm traps the men in Slavno. Miro gets injured and reveals to the villagers that the bodies of their lost family members are hidden in the nearby Blue Cave. The villagers go to the cave to find the remains. The following day the first snow falls, and Hamza's car drives into the village. One year later, a cluster of graves is visible right outside the village. *Snow* ends on a hopeful note. In the final shot, Hamza's car is seen parked outside the houses, next to construction material, where a couple of children are seen playing.

As can be seen in the summary, the film centres on a young woman's efforts to rebuild her village in the immediate post-war period. Her experience of wartime loss did not make her an embittered, self-pitying and passive widow, the way that Kuzma's tragedy shaped his character in *Madonna*. Alma is an active protagonist, her beliefs, words, and actions are highly integrated, with one reflected in the other. In an interview,³ Begić explains why she finds this particular profile of women interesting. In their twenties, women like Alma found themselves torn between their wishes to start families and the circumstances that prevented them from doing so. They spent what Begić regards as their best years mourning in an environment that was not supportive of their development. The given constraints gave birth to their particular strength and determination, traits clearly embodied in Alma's character.

Alma's religiousness, set against a patriarchal environment—in which most patriarchs have gone missing or are dead—adds to the complexity of her character. Her choice to wear a headscarf has provoked a range of interpretations. Film critic Mima Simić criticizes the film's "re-patriarchalization" through the protagonist's choice to wear a headscarf (quoted in Jelača 97). Film scholar Dijana Jelača finds this critique problematic because the headscarf in *Snow* cannot be perceived "inherently and inalienably, (as) a tool of women's submission under patriarchy, an external sign that she has internalized her oppression" (98). Jelača's observation is plausible considering that most other female characters do not wear a headscarf, which implies that they have the freedom to decide between covering and not covering their heads. Jelača perceives Alma's headscarf as her "externalized and self-imposed mechanism of coping, most pronounced in her recurring dream" (98). According to film scholars Faruk Lončarević and Jurica Pavičić, the visualization of Alma's dream bears the influence of Iranian cinema (Lončarević 173; Pavičić 197). Drawing on the films of Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makmalbaf, and Majid Majidi, Pavičić goes on to equate the lyrical aestheticization of Islamic spirituality with that of a simple rural life in *Snow* (Pavičić 197).

I must add that the suggested equation does not entirely convince me. Islamic spirituality, as embraced by Alma and externalized through her wearing of a headscarf, is visually highlighted in the scenes with a recurring dream, wherein the colourful headscarf playfully reveals and disguises Alma's face. To the best of my understanding, these scenes convey

3 Begić's words are paraphrased from the interview I conducted with her for the December 2008 edition of the INB&H Airlines magazine.

a sense of comfort that Alma finds in religion more than they support the idealization of simple village life. The viewer gets to see Alma alone, at ease, moving at a slower pace than usual, being calmed by the ritual washing of body parts (*abdest*) ahead of the morning prayer, where she joins a man, possibly her deceased husband. The recurring scene of a dream exemplifies a change within the narrative, a shift from representational to non-representational logic by introducing dynamic camera movement that intermittently alternates with slow motion, by emphasizing the colours of the protagonist's headscarf in close-up, by showing Alma's ritual in detail and by introducing music where an explanation or dialogue is expected. This change helps move the viewer away from the everyday to a place of solace, where wartime trauma loses its sharp edges. The act of ritual preparation for religious practice as visualized here appears to shield Alma from her traumatic loss and everyday struggle. As the film reveals, Alma's struggle derives not only from habitual, hard work, but also from sharing the same household with her mother-in-law Safija. Safija's bitter comments aim to discourage Alma from doing household chores, from meeting and setting up a business with Hamza, from gaining control over her life. Safija's role can be conceptualized under the following: she acts as a pillar of the patriarchal order. In line with this insight, I find it hard to agree with Mima Simić's critique of re-patriarchalization in the film based on the protagonist's choice to wear a headscarf. Alma's expressed religiousness, in my view, is not merely concomitant with the patriarchal order. Dino Murtić's observation in *Post-Yugoslav Cinema: Towards a Cosmopolitan Imagining* grounds my point:

Perhaps, in *Snow*, Begić successfully shows Islamic feminism whose objective is, according to Balibar (2011 19), to challenge from the inside the cultural structures of patriarchal domination within this particular form of monotheism. The gender-liberating aspect of Begić's film is an example showing that the spiritual (religious) is not always opposed to the secular. The struggle for dignity and equality for the other may have several paths. (Murtić 169)

Patriarchal domination in *Snow* is undoubtedly challenged, first by the ironical turn of events that left most patriarchs dead or missing, and second by what Murtić calls Islamic feminism, or what I would refer to as Alma's way of being. As insinuated earlier, the complexity of her character rests on contradictions: she is young and in charge, religious, but against patriarchal order, traumatized, yet determined, widowed, still ready to embrace life and love. What adds to the complexity of her character is her inclination

towards entrepreneurship against the film's pronounced criticism of capitalist culture. By the end of the film, Alma and other villagers reject foreign investors and choose to rebuild their community by making it financially sustainable. They assume entrepreneurial roles amid expressed disapproval of entrepreneurship. Pavičić draws attention to this contradiction by claiming that the "former Serbian soldier is an agent of capital that in *Snow* produces an unusual chimeric other: west with the face of an ethnically opposed neighbour" (197). The film's antagonist is certainly represented by both, in the former Serbian soldier Miro and the foreign investor Marc. Compared to Alma and most other female characters, Miro and Marc are composed with less detail, which, on the narrative level, allows for easier integration of their characters into the film's linear plot. Both characters generate obstacles that need to be overcome for the plot to progress. Miro's character creates an obstacle to finding the truth about the missing family members of Slavno. Even though the film reveals that Miro did not execute the male villagers of Slavno, it is widely assumed that, as a Serb soldier from a nearby village, he had to know what had happened to them. Several women in the film do not see past his ethnic identity as they come to associate him with an entire ethno-religious group, which by default "must be" in possession of valuable knowledge about the missing villagers of Slavno. The underlying assumption moulds him into a character, comparable to the black-and-white characters of *Madonna*. Marc, as a source of money and power, generates an obstacle to the future life of the village. Once the truth is revealed and the sale of the land rejected, it is possible to bury the past and anticipate the future. The film's goal can be realized.

This conclusion resonates well with Jelača's remarks about the film's "attainable optimism" that "marks the possibility of resolving melancholia into mourning" (90). A way to resolve melancholia into mourning translates into keeping the distinction between absence and loss as opposed to conflating or contrasting one with another, as historian Dominick LaCapra would suggest. Absence is rooted in melancholia, a pathological state of mourning for an abstraction, while the loss is rooted in the process of mourning for something concrete. Absence implies an unresolvable state and is associated with the process of acting-out, wherein "the past is performatively regenerated or relieved as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription" (LaCapra, 716). Loss is historically specific, determinable and associated with the process of working-through. In other words, its relation to the past "involves recognizing its difference from the present—simultaneously remembering and taking leave or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgement and a reinvestment in life" (LaCapra 716).

Resolving melancholia into mourning in the context of *Snow* translates into obtaining knowledge about missing relatives, assigning a location to their remains, thus enabling their burial. In this regard, it is useful to draw on two additional remarks that LaCapra makes in his writing. The first is that locating a specific object of anxiety creates a hope that anxiety can be overcome (LaCapra 707), the second is that the process of mourning, accompanied by a symbolic burial, may assist in restoring dignity to victims that was previously taken by their victimizers (LaCapra 700). Learning about what happened to the missing family members of Slavno aids in resolving communally shared anxiety. Subsequent mourning over concrete losses helps to restore dignity to survivors. Both are necessary preconditions for reinvesting life with all the social demands and responsibilities it requires.

Jelača points out that the film “does not approach representation of trauma through a decidedly realist register the way that *Grbavica* does, and it contains several notable instances of magical realism” (91). Later in the text I will return to Jasmila Žbanić’s feature debut *Grbavica*, at this point I would add that instances of magical realism in *Snow* give rise to non-representational images of war that act as digressions and meanderings within the linear narrative. Jelača singles out two instances of magical realism. The first involves the orphaned boy Ali’s growing hair (Jelača 91) and the second includes a rug, made by the old grandma Fatima (Jelača 94). Ali’s hair starts to grow every time he gets frightened. In one scene in the film, Ali’s eyes meet Miro’s eyes, which triggers him to run away in the field. The non-representational image introduces a change within the narrative. Static shots are replaced with dynamic ones, capturing the boy while running, his hair growing and weather changing with clouds turning into rain. Narrative details of his past trauma are left out.

His recurring condition does not leave villagers shocked nor surprised, which allows Jelača to call the scene an instance of magical realism. To the villagers, his growing hair is merely a sign that Ali got frightened again. One way to understand the origin of his fear is, as Jelača suggests, by connecting his growing hair with the fact of his survival, that he was not taken by Bosnian Serb soldiers because he was mistaken for a girl. In an interview, Begić herself reveals that the “motif of gender misidentification as a way of survival was inspired by the real-life story of her friend who survived precisely because of his long hair” (as quoted in Jelača 92). Ali’s hair implies, as Jelača suggests, that trauma is lodged in Ali’s body. It could be added that his hair acts as the material extension of his trauma. And his trauma derives not only from the fact of his survival, but also from the sense of leaving others, who could not be rescued, behind.

The second instance of magical realism includes the hand-made rug. Near the end of the film, there is a scene in which Fatima is shown at night, sparsely lit, spreading her woven rug over the stream. Her rug makes a little bridge for unsurprised villagers to the Blue Cave. In the given context, their way of facing loss is rendered as fantastical, thereby enabling non-representation. The viewer's subsequent access to the Blue Cave is deliberately denied, indicating the film's resolution not to capitalize on explicit images of atrocities.

The rug made me consider several other objects that reappear in the film, such as a broken pair of glasses, an old, used razor, photographs showing Alma with her husband or the missing sons of one of the women. These objects come to materialize the unbearable absence. On the narrative level, they provide cues by insinuating the particularities of missing family members, but also by indicating how characters in the film may be related to another. They function as material substitutes, which counter the gaps in the narrative about the missing father, the husband, and children.

The recurring scenes of Alma's dream, Ali's growing hair, or Fatima's rug do not necessarily advance the plot. As non-representational images, they delineate from the linear narrative, nevertheless remaining supportive of the narrative's overarching optimism. In their recurrence, the absence of the villagers of Slavno is more strongly felt, yet the viewer is reminded of the film's optimistic goal, which is rebuilding community life in the post-war reality of rural Bosnia against all odds. The film's optimism is made possible or attainable, as Jelača would propose, on the condition that melancholia is resolved into mourning and absence distinguished from loss, as LaCapra would suggest.

Based on the analyses of *Madonna* and *Snow*, several conclusions can be drawn. The unfortunate binary opposition between poor victims and cruel perpetrators in *Madonna* allows for imagined categories, based on ethnic belonging, to gain mythic proportions more than enabling a construction of characters, capable of furthering or actualizing the plot. Stated film motifs, black-and-white characterization, topoi, and related hate speech lead to an overabundance of melodramatic elements, which allow me to allocate *Madonna* to a category films of over-representation. By comparison, *Snow* revolves around a resolute, yet complex protagonist, ready to face her loss and restore her and her community's damaged lives. Her confrontation with her patriarchal surroundings and the present-day challenges concerning the sale of the land implies her readiness to find solutions. The way to solve a problem finds its dramaturgical expression in the three-act narrative filmmaking, which allows Pavičić to label the film as a film of

normalization. The goal-oriented protagonist and the linear plot prove to be constitutive of each other. Indicated, recurring non-representational images delineate from the linear narrative, nevertheless remain supportive of the narrative's overarching optimism. With the hindsight of drawn conclusions and problems of over-representation as exemplified in *Madonna*, *Snow* can be categorized as a film of representation.

Another way to bring this category closer to understanding is by comparing *Snow* with Begić's second feature film *Children of Sarajevo*, and by outlining the shift from representational to non-representational logic, from the former to the latter film. In an interview,⁴ Begić made it explicit that *Snow* evolved out of an idea about the Bosnian dream. The action of the film takes place in 1996, right after the war, when belief in the reconstruction of the state system was still palpable and collectively shared. However cruel the past may have been, the viewer of the film gets a sense there is a bright future awaiting the characters. Begić reveals that when she started developing her second feature film, she asked herself what happened to the Bosnian dream. She realized that people's dreams had been replaced by memories. The ongoing transition from one political system to the next has eradicated a sense of hope in reconstructing the system. I argue that, by extension of this reasoning, the indication of a loss of belief in the system is well reflected through the emergence of non-representational images of war, which happens to challenge the narrative structure of *Children of Sarajevo*.

Children of Sarajevo: Towards Non-Representation

Children of Sarajevo deals with the topic of orphans of the war, young adults, abandoned by the state, who rely on themselves only. The film follows Rahima, who struggles to make ends meet while taking care of her delinquent teenage brother Hamza. Rahima works as a cook in a restaurant, and her hectic, daily routine is divided between the spaces of her work and her home. A series of problems unfold when Hamza is accused of assaulting his schoolmate, the son of a crooked local minister Melić, and breaking his iPhone. Rahima gradually discovers that Hamza has drifted back into trouble and is now involved in various criminal activities. She tries to solve the mounting problems not only by confronting the criminals, who introduced Hamza to their dodgy schemes, but also by confronting Melić. Rahima

4 The interview is available here: "Cineuropa: Interview with Aida Begić: Children of Sarajevo." *Cineuropa*, www.cineuropa.org/en/video/223729/. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

refuses to buy his son a new iPhone, the cost of which is three of her monthly salaries. This confrontation does not end well for her, as Melić sends police officers to search her and Hamza's apartment.

The conflict addresses new class configurations that came about in the aftermath of war. As an affluent, high-ranking politician, Melić is deeply embedded in the institutionalized structures of power; hence, he is firmly positioned on top of the new social hierarchy. As orphans, Rahima and Hamza are at its lower end. In addition to Rahima's encounter with Melić, other encounters with a social worker, the school headmaster, and police officers do not produce the necessary solutions. The failure of these encounters is best perceived in light of the institutionalized structures of power that these characters represent. Diligence and determination are features that Rahima shares with Alma's character in *Snow*. The existing milieu of *Children of Sarajevo*, however, proves less responsive to her proactive, solution-driven approach. Her failed attempts to change the situation for the better attests to the newly formed class she speaks and acts from and is consistently reminded of. The impression of hopelessness and entrapment is best conveyed by the film's camerawork. A shoulder-mounted camera follows Rahima a short distance away in her hectic, yet repetitive and somewhat monotonous moving from one place to another, back and forth, resulting in a series of continuous tracking shots.

The linear progression of the narrative is challenged by the futility of the protagonists' attempts to resolve situations, which in effect creates a gulf between the protagonist and her surroundings. Borrowing from Begić, the unfulfilled dreams and unreached goals make room for wartime memories, and by extension, enable a shift from representation to non-representational strategies.

Before I single out non-representational strategies, by which fragments from the wartime past are incorporated into the film's fabric, I should mention that Rahima and Hamza's past remains virtually unknown to the viewer. A few exchanges, like the one between Rahima and police officers, or the one between Rahima and the social worker, who regularly comes to check whether Rahima is taking good care of her brother, merely reveal that Rahima had a problematic youth and that most of it changed for Hamza and her when she became old enough to start working, when she adopted the veil and when they left the orphanage.

Regardless of the scarcity of information about Rahima and Hamza's childhood, the narrative of *Children of Sarajevo* is interspersed with non-representational images of war, which take the form of home videos and news footage. The home videos are composed of predominantly static shots and

portray children at play, whereas news footage, shot on hand-held cameras, deliver blurry images, snippets of life-threatening situations. Both types of footage document daily life in the besieged city of Sarajevo.

Jelača and Begić both regard these shots as Rahima's flashbacks (Jelača 214; Begić).⁵ I am reluctant to make the same reference due to my understanding of what constitutes a protagonist's flashback. I make use of three different interpretations of flashback to ground my argument.

The first, broader definition is taken from the glossary of Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Waller's *Film: A Critical Introduction* and sees flashback as "the non-chronological insertion of events from the past into the present day of the story world" (Pramaggiore 453). The second definition, provided by Ruth Leys, a historian of trauma studies, is more elaborate:

In recent years the term flashback has come to be used to describe the daytime reexperiences or reenactments of the traumatic event, reexperiences that are held to be a characteristic symptom of PTSD. The flashback takes the form of recurrent, intrusive images or sensations associated with the traumatic event, or of a sudden feeling that the traumatic event is literally happening all over again. The victim feels as if he has returned to the perceptual reality of the traumatic situation, and it has become orthodox to interpret such flashback experience as the literal return of dissociated memories of the event. The term flashback implies the cinematic possibility of literally reproducing or cutting back to a scene from the past and hence expresses the idea that the trauma victim's experiences are exact "reruns" or "replays" of the traumatic incident. (Leys, 2000, 241)

As can be seen, the first definition sees the flashback as a past event inserted into the present-day narrative, as opposed to the second, which regards it as an experience of moving back in time, from the present to the past. The latter definition stresses the visual potential of a flashback, wherein the flashback is regarded as an image or a sensation related to the past traumatic event. Non-representational images of war are shots inserted in the narrative of *Children of Sarajevo* without prior indication or latter narrative explanation. They leave an impression of immediacy and emergency, and in that sense are closer to the definition of a flashback provided by Leys.

5 Begić refers to Rahima's flashbacks in the same, earlier referenced interview, "Cineuropa: Interview with Aida Begić: Children of Sarajevo."

The opening VHS shot offers a view of a children's performance in the relative safety of the building's stairways. The second one shows a little girl making mud cakes in a dugout trench used by civilians as their sheltered passage from one safe spot to another. In the final shot, a children's choir performs a lullaby to an audience of children in front of a ruined building. Inserted fragments of news footage deliver snippets of life-threatening situations. The first shows the interior of a bus, with blood spilled on the floor, a few moments after shelling. The second offers a view of civilians under gunfire, crossing streets in panic.

All these shots, particularly the fragmented news footage, make no direct connection to other non-representational images, or to the narrative in general. They strongly communicate the notion of a flashback as a cinematic possibility of literally reproducing an event from the past. Their literalness is underlined by the use of documentary material in an otherwise fictional film. The definition offered by Leys appears fitting at first, but it does not help answer the question of who re-experiences trauma in *Children of Sarajevo*. Jelača and Begić's assertion that the subject in question was Rahima proves simplistic. Most non-representational images are framed in a way in which they suggest that these were indeed Rahima's reminiscences. They are introduced through the use of ambiguous, diegetic sounds. In a couple of scenes, the sound of fireworks from Rahima's present-day situation transforms into the sound of gunfire from the past, seconds before the viewer gets to see images corresponding to the latter. It appears as if the sound of fireworks has triggered Rahima's wartime memories. The tension of living in the present-day, war-scarred city of Sarajevo is certainly underlined by this strategy. Nevertheless, documentary type footage prevents the viewer from identifying the experiences as Rahima's. As much as it is challenging to recognize the point of view offered here as her subjective one, it is equally impossible to identify Rahima or Hamza as children in any of the non-representational images of war.

A closer look into Deleuze's notions of flashback and recollection-image helped me realize this and reassess my previous assumption:

But we know very well that the flashback is a conventional, extrinsic device: it is generally indicated by a dissolve-link, and the images that it introduces are often superimposed or meshed. It is like a sign with the words: "Watch out, recollection!" It can, therefore, indicate, by convention, a causality, which is psychological, but still analogous to a sensory-motor determinism, and, despite its circuits, only confirms the progression of a linear narration. The question of flashback is this: it has to be justified

from elsewhere, just as recollection-images must be given the internal mark of the past from elsewhere. (Deleuze, 2010, 46)⁶

According to Deleuze, the flashback comes to the fore as the so-called recollection-image, a closed circuit between the actual or perception image and its virtual image.

At this point it is useful to touch briefly upon Bergson's actual/virtual distinction, which inspired much of Deleuze's writing. The difference between the actual and the virtual is a difference in time. The present that passes defines the actual, whereas the virtual is defined by the past that conserves itself. According to Bergson, memory is a virtual image, which co-exists with the actual perception of the object. Memory is a "virtual image contemporary with the actual object, its double, its 'mirror image'" (Deleuze and Parnet 150).

An actual image does not extend into generic movement, but connects with a virtual image, with which it forms a circuit. The circuit goes from the present to the past and back to the present. And the recollection-image occupies this circuit (Deleuze 45). Even though the past in flashback appears as contrasted with the present, Deleuze regards it as "former present" rather than the pure past in the Bergsonian sense (52). The flashback is, therefore, analogous with sensory-motor schema. Despite its interruption of the narrative flow, it adds to the progression of linear narration.

Non-representational images of war in *Children of Sarajevo* are not introduced by a dissolve-link. They are neither superimposed nor meshed images. Borrowing Deleuze's terminology, the actual images do not extend into the narrative of *Children of Sarajevo*, but neither do they connect with their virtual counterparts. None of the children performing the theatre play or singing a lullaby can firmly be identified as Rahima and Hamza, nor can it be said to represent the children remembered by Rahima. For the reasons stated above, the inserted shots cannot be regarded merely as Rahima's flashbacks or recollection-images in the Deleuzian sense. Rather, they convey free indirect vision, which is a concept Pier Paolo Pasolini grounded on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of free indirect discourse. As Deleuze reminds us, the latter is "an assemblage of enunciation, carrying out two inseparable acts of subjectivation simultaneously, one of which constitutes

6 Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* was reprinted in 2010, but the existing English edition, published by Continuum, was available already in 2005. I reference the year of reprinting to distinguish it from *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, which was likewise published by Continuum in 2005, and reprinted in 2011.

a character in the first person, but the other which is present at his birth and brings him on the scene" (Deleuze, 2011, 75).

Free indirect vision is summarized in the following way:

A character acts on the screen, and is assumed to see his world, from another point of view, which thinks, reflects and transforms the viewpoint of the character ... But the camera does not simply give us the vision of the character and of the world; it imposes another vision in which the first is transformed and reflected. This subdivision is what Pasolini calls a "free indirect subjective." (Deleuze, 2011, 75)

This subdivision establishes a new correlation between an actual or perception-image and what Deleuze regards as camera-consciousness, which transforms the image and acquires "a taste for 'making the camera felt'" (Deleuze, 2011, 76).

With this hindsight on Bakhtin's and Pasolini's concepts, the VHS shots of children at play in *Children of Sarajevo* may be said to convey a kind of semi-subjectivity. They produce free indirect vision in a way in which the protagonist observes a childhood version of herself. Rahima's past appears as foreign to the spectator as it is foreign to her, as if Rahima were the spectator of a past that has been estranged from her. Her past is observed through other, VHS lenses. The "haptic"⁷ quality of grainy images attests to camera-self-consciousness. Another way to explain the insertion of documentary news footage and home videos into the narrative is to claim that they are used in place of more adequate, nevertheless missing images of personal memories. Consequentially, prosthetic memories resurface. According to memory studies scholar Allison Landsberg, prosthetic memories "originate outside a person's lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memories" (Landsberg 19). By definition, prosthetic memories are "transportable and hence not susceptible to biological and ethnic claims of ownership" (Landsberg 19). Wartime memories in *Children of Sarajevo* therefore serve a prosthetic function through their form of mass media footage from during the war. Materialized as partly alien to Rahima, these memories call for an active

7 The term used here draws on Laura U. Marks's notion of "haptic visuality" that privileges the material presence of the image rather than its representational power. This type of visuality implies a closer engagement on the side of the viewer, who is encouraged to contemplate rather than just rationalize images. A more elaborate account of the concept can be found in Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 127–93.



Fig. 1. *Children of Sarajevo* [Djeca], directed by Aida Begić, 2012.

participation on the side of the viewer, who may have directly or indirectly experienced the war.

Inserted documentary footage, especially home videos, composed of mostly static shots, appear staged, whereas the fictional, narrative part, which is conveyed by long shots, taken with a shoulder-mounted camera, leaves an impression of *cinéma vérité*. Due to the dizzying camera movement, the narrative part is perceived as messy and chaotic. In contrast, static shots of home videos make the factual part appear as more peaceful and contemplative. Paradoxically and as compared to some wartime memories, Rahima's present-day struggles occur as the more unsettling ones. This observation resonates with Begić's earlier statement that the future and hope in the reconstruction of the system has been gradually replaced by memories.

If the attainable optimism of the narrative of *Snow* corresponds with LaCapra's therapeutic memory model of working through, distinguishing absence from loss, then the restlessness expressed by *Children of Sarajevo* is associated with Cathy Caruth's antimimetic model of trauma. In her writings on the genealogy of trauma, historian Ruth Leys differentiates the mimetic model of trauma from its parallel and concurrent, antimimetic one.

The mimetic model owes its name to *mimesis*, "an experience of hypnotic imitation or identification" (Leys 8), which suggests that trauma is internal to a victim, as opposed to the antimimetic model, wherein a victim is "essentially aloof from the traumatic experience, in the sense that she remains a spectator of the traumatic scene, which she can therefore see and represent to herself and others" (Leys 299).

The antimimetic model sees trauma as external to a victim, thereby avoiding the Freudian concept of the unconscious. Notions taken from cognitively oriented scientists are used instead, such as Bessel Van der Kolk, who theorizes the mind in neurophysiological terms (Leys 244). Cathy Caruth conceptualizes trauma as inaccessible and essentially non-representable (Caruth 91). Her insistence on trauma's inherent latency, where the trauma is experienced only after the traumatic event, when it returns to haunt the survivor, makes no promise of resolution or therapeutic closure in the LaCaprian sense. Deferrals, repetition and anti-closure, features of the antimimetic model of trauma, can be found in Begić's films. These features are more strongly articulated in *Children of Sarajevo*, where the non-representational images of war challenge the narrative structure, as compared to *Snow*, where their occurrence is harmonized with the narrative's overarching optimism and goal orientation.

Jasmila Žbanić's work is similarly marked by the shift from representational to non-representational strategies, from her feature debut film *Grbavica* to her later film *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. Both films engage with the after-effects of rape as a war crime.⁸ The first revolves around attempts to keep an individual traumatic experience a secret, whereas the latter thematizes systematic denial of rape as a wartime atrocity.

***Grbavica*: Beyond Self-Victimization and Limits of Representation**

Set in Sarajevo's district of Grbavica, the film centres on Esma and her daughter Sara, whose father was killed while defending Sarajevo and is therefore considered a martyr (*shaheed*). The price of Sara's school trip could be considerably discounted if she could provide a certificate that would confirm that her father had died as a martyr. Esma finds a job as a

8 The United Nations Security Resolution 820 from 1993 states that the use of rape in Bosnia was "massive, organized and systematic" (2). From then on, as Dino Murtić reminds us, the public debate led to the conclusion that the rape of Bosnian women was planned by Serbian leadership as a way to humiliate the whole Bosnian nation. Parallel to the attempts to document these crimes for legal and humanitarian purposes, the estimated number served political purposes as well. The European Union, for instance, estimated that 20,000 women were raped, whereas the Bosnian Ministry of the Interior claimed the figure was 50,000. Victims and perpetrators came from all sides in the conflict; however, "most reports underline the fact that the majority of perpetrators were members of Serb regular and irregular forces and that most of victims were Bosnian-Muslim women" (as quoted in Murtić 104).

waitress in a nightclub, owned by a local criminal, and looks for ways to scrape together €200 to cover the total cost of Sara's trip. Running out of excuses as to why she has not obtained the certificate yet, she gets into a quarrel with Sara, who demands to know the circumstances of her father's death. In a climactic scene near the end of the film, Esma reveals that she was interned in a camp and that Sara's father was not a heroic defender of Sarajevo but rather an unknown Bosnian Serb soldier, one of many who raped her. The film ends with Sara leaving for the longed-for school trip and waving at Esma, who replies with a smile.

The film addresses the consequences of wartime trauma that are of equal concern for Esma and Sara. The original title of the film denotes a district of Sarajevo that was controlled by Bosnian Serb forces between 1992–95. The etymology of *grbavica* is "a woman with a hump." As the title insinuates and the film discloses, the post-war fates of the city district and the film's protagonist intertwine in many ways.

Grbavica shares similarities with Aida Begić's film *Snow* in its focus on a woman, a survivor of the war, and its linear, three-act narrative. In both films, protagonists are surrounded by a group of women, engaged in mutual support. In *Snow*, these women are the villagers of Slavno; in *Grbavica*, they are members of a support group for war-traumatized victims and shoe-factory workers. Both films postulate that coping with past trauma is a way to anticipate the future, regardless of its bleak prospects.

The major difference between the two films is that *Grbavica*'s register is decidedly realist, whereas *Snow* has instances of magical realism, which in turn makes non-representational images of war easier to isolate and describe. The opening sequence in *Grbavica* is a panning shot, which glides over traditional, colourful Bosnian carpet, women's faces and bodies leaning on each other, before it arrives at Esma's face. This visual journey exposes women reflecting in silence, and is accompanied by the seemingly extra-diegetic sound of *Ilahi songs*.⁹ The sequence ends with Esma opening her eyes, looking directly into the camera, before the screen turns white. This shot contains the previously detailed characteristics of non-representational images of war: visibility emphasized at the expense of narrative coherence, and quietism in obvious and stark contrast with the rest of the narrative with its numerous exchanges. Borrowing Deleuze's terminology, the sequence could be said to carry out a temporalization of the image. Only later in the film

9 *Ilahi* (or in Bosnian: *ilahija*) is "a Muslim religious song which content primarily magnifies the power of God. *Ilahi* lyrics also offer the unconditional love for God on behalf of the performer/singer" (as quoted in Murtić 182)

does the viewer learn that these women are survivors of the war, who gather in group-counselling sessions to share and listen to each other's traumatic accounts. The opening shot is abruptly cut with a scene introducing the seedy nightclub, a space of highly sexualized group dancing to loud beats of turbo folk¹⁰ music, but also Esma's future workplace. The latter scene adopts a more conventional mode of storytelling that continues throughout the film. *Grbavica*'s decidedly realist register is interlaced with non-representational images of war that prove more difficult to isolate than was the case with the opening sequence. These images are not as differentiated from the narrative as the scenes of Alma's recurring dream in *Snow* or as sequences, inserted fragments of wartime footage in *Children of Sarajevo*. They do not divide the past from the present the way that flashback does, but rather assimilate the past into the present. Literary and film scholar Gordana Crnković regards them as "visual echoes" or reminders of Esma's past (Crnković 148–49) and Jelača perceives them as "disorienting breaks in the narrative flow" (81). Both serve as accurate descriptions of non-representational images of war, which materialize in the following scenes.

One of the introductory scenes shows Sara joyously playing with Esma in their apartment. After a pillow fight, the daughter sits on top of her mother and holds her hands down on the floor. Esma reacts by forcibly pushing Sara aside. In another scene, Esma travels on a crowded bus, when an unknown man with a hairy chest and golden necklace comes near her. At first, she freezes in panic, then quickly gets off the bus. More obvious examples include a scene in the nightclub, in which a drunken German soldier, a member of the peacekeeping forces, is seen dancing with the Ukrainian "animator" Jabolka. She lets him pour beer over her breasts, which he licks, she shrieks and together they move in a way as to suggest they are having sex in the middle of the cheering crowd. Esma reacts by running away. Her traumatic past is visibly echoed in these scenes, with the difference that in the present she can do something to change the flow of events resembling the past ones. Specified non-representational images of war in *Grbavica* are neither scenes in their totality nor sequence-shots, but rather shots of

10 Turbo folk music combines traditional folk songs from the Western Balkans and fast, computer-produced beats. "Its popularity peaked during the 1990s, when it came to represent a lifestyle that many envied but few could attain ... Amid conflict, inflation and international sanctions, turbo-folk gave Serbs a vision of untainted love and unbridled luxury." (Andrić, "Turbo Folk Keeps Pace with New Rivals," *Balkaninsight*, Jun. 15, 2011, www.balkaninsight.com/2011/06/15/turbo-folk-keeps-pace-with-new-rivals. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025). Turbo folk music is commonly associated with the 1990s Yugoslav wars, machismo, and criminals. It is equally and presently popular in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

past behaviour superimposed on the present context. By integrating the past into the present in the way indicated, non-representational images do not challenge the narrative (as was the case with *Children of Sarajevo*) but slightly deviate from its linear progression (as in *Snow*).

In addition to the opening sequence and specified shots, another dramaturgically relevant scene in the film functions as a non-representational image of war. The climactic encounter between Esma and Sara, in which the daughter points a gun at her mother and demands that she reveal the truth about her father, dramaturgically anticipates the scene, which takes place at the women's support centre, where Esma opens up about the details of Sara's coming into the world. The latter scene is intercut with another, in which Sara is seen shaving her head. The cause for this action is to be found in an earlier scene, in which Sara asks her mother which parts of her body resemble her father the most; to which Esma replies, her hair. As Jelača points out, Sara's act of shaving her head can be perceived in two ways. First, as a rebellious act of cutting ties with the violent act of her conception, and second, as a visual counterpart to the missing fragments of Esma's account (Jelača 86).

With regard to the first point, an intertextual parallel can be drawn between growing/cutting hair in *Snow* and *Grbavica*. If Ali's hair was a material extension of his trauma, then Sara's hair could be seen as an extension of her postmemory. Coined by memory studies scholar Marianne Hirsch, postmemory "characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" (Hirsch 22). Postmemories are derivative of traumatic experiences of the previous generation, in this case Esma's generation, which was directly shaped by the war. The act of cutting hair equals cutting off traumatic injury, while also rejecting what Jelača describes as "a coherent personal history inscribed in the normative ethno-national frameworks of fathers as war heroes" (88).

Regarding the second point and on closer inspection of the scene in the women's support centre, it becomes clear that Esma's account begins and ends with Sara. As the film unfolds, Esma's personal trauma remains largely inaccessible to the viewer and recurs occasionally, in the form of non-representational images. In the given dramaturgical sequencing, the scene with Sara shaving her head also functions as a visual counterpart to the absence in Esma's narrative about her experience as a detainee in one of the camps. In that sense, it qualifies as the non-representational image of war.

Interestingly, in his text "Paradoxes and Parapraxes: On (the Limits of) Cinematic Representation in Post-Conflict Situations," film scholar Thomas Elsaesser references the same scene as a "media image of human suffering."

Media images of human suffering especially have a way of being appropriated by either side, in order to solicit our attention, or even to traumatize us by their shocking immediacy. Such appropriation can generate a different kind of agency, a new potency in which an image is like a palimpsest, letting us see other images, either intended or unintended, either fitting or inappropriate: an effect also subsumable under the term “parapractic.” The sequence in *Grbavica* of Sara shaving her head, for instance, cannot but recall the images of French women who collaborated during with German troops being publicly shaven as a mark of shame after the liberation in 1945. When Sara subsequently wears a headscarf, she invariably recalls the “girl” with the headscarf in the boxcar headed for Auschwitz, from the Westerbook footage used in *Night and Fog / Nuit et brouillard* (Alain Resnais, 1955, Fr., 32 min.), and properly identified by Aad Wagenaar only in 1992. One can also cite the photos of emaciated Bosnian men behind barbed wire, supposedly held by Serb militia, which were meant to recall Nazi concentration camp. The pictures’ wide circulation was said to have persuaded the Clinton administration to intervene and bomb Milošević’s Serbia into submission, but they were later claimed to have been a staged fake, until a counter-claim reasserted their veracity ... If we cast back our minds to these and other images that came to us from the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, then much of what happened, or rather, what we were given to see as happening, stood under the sign of this third gaze, for whose benefit, however this ‘benefit’ might be defined, the various competing image-narratives were being fashioned, reconstructed or orchestrated by the warring sides and factions. (Elsaesser, 2016, 20)

This paragraph contains a few problems that I find relevant to address. The most glaring problem is that the scene is referred to as an example of a “media image of human suffering” despite the fact that the film does not rely on the use of flashback, avoids visualizing and narrativizing Esma’s rape and avoids representing her rapists. The less obvious, but more problematic point derives from the description of the third media image, evoked by the scene with Sara shaving her head, acting as a “palimpsest” image. Elsaesser’s description lacks details of the context of making the image, of the parties involved in the dispute over its veracity in the aftermath of its publishing. It also contains a few speculations and inaccuracies.

The image in question shows Fikret Alić and other non-Serb prisoners of a camp, located in the Trnopolje region of northwest Bosnia, opened and held by the Bosnian Serb wartime regime. As photography scholar David Campbell emphasizes, the image did not exist in isolation, but was a still

image taken from two longer items of news coverage on the Omarska and Trnopolje concentration camps¹¹ made by journalists Penny Marshall and Ian Williams for Britain's Independent Television News (ITN) in August 1992 (Campbell 145). The still was adopted and broadcast by numerous media outlets and stirred international political outrage. As Campbell summarizes:

it evidenced the Bosnian Serb authorities' ethnic-cleansing strategy that lay at the heart of the war. The image of Alić also drew the ire of those who saw it as an example of the demonization of the entire Serbian people by the Western media, for the purposes of making US military intervention necessary and inevitable. (143)

At the forefront of the latter group was Thomas Deichmann, who wrote an article "The Picture that Fooled the World," which was published by *LM* (formerly known as *Living Marxism*) in 1997, and in which he maintained that Marshall and Williams had fabricated the image so as to link the situation in Bosnia with the Nazi Holocaust.¹² In the article, Deichmann asserted that there was no barbed wire around Trnopolje, which was a collection centre for refugees, not a prison, certainly not a concentration camp, and that the barbed wire was around the ITN news crew who were filming from a compound close to Trnopolje. ITN sued *LM* for libel and won the

11 Omarska, Trnopolje, Keraterm, and Manjača were concentration camps in the Prijedor region. The term "concentration camp" used here follows the logic of its deployment by the *Guardian* journalist Ed Vulliamy, who joined the ITN crew on their visits of Omarska and Trnopolje camps, and the photography scholar David Campbell. Vulliamy and Campbell refer to the original meaning of the word dating from the Boer wars in Africa when, as Vulliamy suggests, concentration camps meant "places where civilians, not prisoners of war, were concentrated on the basis of their ethnic background, and where many were killed, tortured, raped and then forcibly deported" (Vulliamy 13). "As the indictments for genocide issued against the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadžić, Momčilo Krajišnik and Ratko Mladić by the ICTY prosecutors make clear, the operation of 'camps and detention facilities,' in which 'tens of thousands' of Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats were held, was integral to the strategy of creating 'impossible conditions of life, involving persecution and terror tactics, that would have the effect of encouraging non-Serbs to leave ... the deportation of those who were reluctant to leave; and the liquidation of others' (ICTY 2000a,b 25)" (Campbell 155). The camps mentioned were certainly not industrial death camps with gas chambers attached, like those during Nazi regime, but they did form a network, a system, which enforced the clear political and military strategy mentioned above. More about a related discussion on the functioning and naming of the Bosnian camps in the Prijedor region can be found in Campbell 143–72, and in Vulliamy book *The War is Dead, Long Live the War*, originally published by Vintage, 2013.

12 Deichmann's article "The Picture that Fooled the World" is available here: www.slobodan-milosevic.org/fooled.htm.

case in March 2000 (Campbell 143). At the end of the two-week trial, the London-based High Court jury found that Deichmann's article "was wrong to claim that the image of Mr Alic was deliberately misrepresented by the reporters."¹³ This decision, however, did not prevent supporters of *LM* and its argument from continuing to propagate the view that the ITN reports were incorrect.¹⁴

The wide broadcast of the image pressured the Bosnian Serb forces to step back, which led to the closure of the two camps in November 1992. Taking into account the chronology of the Bosnian and the Kosovo war, however, it is naïve to claim that the image could have played a role in persuading the United States to intervene and bomb Serbia into submission, given that the NATO bombing of Bosnian Serb military positions took place in August and September 1995, three years after the publication of the image, a month after the Srebrenica massacres, and two days after the bombing of Markale, Sarajevo's central market place. The NATO bombardment of Serbia took place from March to June 1999, two months after the massacre of Kosovo Albanians in the village of Račak, and seven years after the publication of the image of Alić.

The omissions in Elsaesser's description of the context surrounding the Alić image leave an impression that for a western viewer, the third gaze implied that it is quite hard to tell, to envisage what exactly happened in Bosnia during the war, given that "the various competing image-narratives were being fashioned, reconstructed or orchestrated by the warring sides and factions" (Elsaesser, 2016, 20). Interestingly, competing narratives in the given example do not belong to the warring sides in Bosnia, but to *LM*, which is implicated in the form of historical negationism for doubting the existence of the Trnopolje concentration camp and propagating this view despite numerous, contrary pieces of evidence available, and ITN, which tried to reclaim the veracity of the images and to win back damaged trust. At the core of this conflict is the conflict over the definition of war. For the former, the Bosnian war is defined as a civil war, with shared culpability between warring sides. In this version, the atrocities committed were

13 For more details about *ITN vs. LM*, see Hartley-Brewer, "ITN in £375,000 Libel Victory." *The Guardian*, Mar. 15, 2000, www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/mar/15/medialaw.media2. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

14 More about the prominent intellectuals who signed the statement in support of *LM* that was issued by the magazine *Novo*, edited by Thomas Deichmann, under the banner of freedom of speech, and those who continued propagating the *LM*'s defamatory claims can be found in Campbell 143–72, and in Vulliamy 172–79 (in Bosnian translation, the chapter "Laž," in the original "Lie").

horrific, but since they were committed in equal measure by both sides, they are rendered as less distinctive. For the latter, the Bosnian Serb authorities' ethnic-cleansing strategy lies at the core of the Bosnian war.

Another problem within the paragraph is a hurried conflation of the fictional image of Sara's shaven head, readily perceived as the example of a media image of human suffering, with the factual image of the imprisoned Alić that the former image evokes. The non-representational image associative of Esmā's trauma and Sara's postmemory is blended with the factual image of Alić's imprisonment for having the same, post-Yugoslav country of origin, and for being targeted at the imaginary outsider.

Elsaesser's assertion that the sequence of Sara shaving her head is an example of a "media image of human suffering" can also be read as a continuation of his earlier claim that the film itself is an example of melodrama, the preferred territory of which is victimhood, "long recognized as a strong subject position" (17).

At this point, a brief digression is needed. In his 1991 essay "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," Elsaesser developed the concept of "sophisticated family melodrama," based on an analysis of selected 1940s and 1950s films by Douglas Sirk, Nicholas Ray, and Vincente Minnelli. As film historian Barbara Klinger summarizes, "this label defined the potential of some melodramas to surpass the genre's cathartic aims and reactionary tendencies to achieve aesthetic complexities and social commentary" (Klinger 8).

The key features of "sophisticated family melodrama" include "heightened visual expressiveness, the psychic and social foundations of its *mise en scène* and its 'double-levelled' meaning" (Klinger 16). The social and sexual repression of the 1950s Eisenhower era, with the frame of decency so sharply defined, were referred to as posing limitations to a range of characters' strong actions:

The tellingly impotent gesture, the social gaffe, the hysterical outburst replaces any more directly liberating or self-annihilating action, and the cathartic violence of a shoot-out or a chase becomes an inner violence, often the one which the characters turn against themselves. The dramatic configuration, the pattern of the plot makes them, regardless of attempts to break free, constantly look inwards, at each other and themselves. (Elsaesser, 1991, 79)

Characters in "sophisticated family melodrama" are regarded as victims, as being acted upon, essentially incapable of shaping the future flow of events,

of influencing their emotional environment or changing the existing milieu. Similar to Peter Brooks, Elsaesser saw melodrama's polarization as an already accomplished exteriorization of inner conflict, which is why one should not be tempted to look for psychological complexity within characters:

One of the characteristic features of melodrama in general is that they concentrate on the point of view of the victim: what makes the films mentioned above exceptional is the way they manage to present *all* the characters convincingly as victims. The critique—the questions of “evil,” of responsibility—is firmly placed on a social and existential level, away from the arbitrary and finally obtuse logic of private motives and individualised psychology. That is why the melodrama, at its most accomplished, seems capable of reproducing more directly than other genres the patterns of domination and exploitation existing in a given society, especially the relation between psychology, morality and class-consciousness, by emphasizing so clearly an emotional dynamic whose social correlative is a network of external forces directed oppressively inward, and with which the characters themselves unwittingly collude to become their agents. (Elsaesser, 1991, 86)

As could be read from this paragraph, and with a degree of difference when compared to Brooks's notions, “evil” is referred to as the question of (personal) responsibility allocated to a social and existential level. Protagonists of melodrama are victims of external repressive forces with which they conspire, hence ending up being their agents.

If we turn back to the film *Madonna*, we may notice that a way to approach Serb and Croat characters as black and white, evil and virtue, corresponds well with Brooks's notions about melodramatic polarization and the lack of interior depth, irrespective of those intentions that led to such a stark polarization in the first place. But, while keeping in mind Elsaesser's contribution to the topic, to extend the same logic and apply it to the characters of *Grbavica* would mean to take an argument to its extreme. This is chiefly because the film's protagonists, Esma and Sara, are neither virtuous nor helpless victims, as are, for instance, Kuzma and all other Croats in *Madonna*. Sara is fascinated with the gun of the boy with whom she once fought and then become a friend, she likes to throw snowballs at a cat and, when necessary, lies to her teacher about her mother having cancer to avoid answering for why Esma has not brought the certificate yet. Esma shows up at meetings of war-traumatized women on the days when the women receive financial support.

The characters' inner complexities are not listed here to support the claim that *Grbavica* does not submit to the melodramatic mode at any cost. Quite the contrary, there are elements of melodrama, like the climactic scene involving the mother, the daughter, and the gun, followed by Esma's emotionally charged account at the women's centre or the overall use of diegetic music to heighten the emotions. I would certainly argue that these elements are in service of the film's schematism. Esma tries to keep her secret, while Sara strives to unveil it. The daughter searches for a certificate as material validation that her father died as a martyr. She wishes to turn her father's absence into a concrete loss, to make up a coherent narrative, assimilable to hetero-normative, ethno-national narratives about fathers as fallen war heroes. For the linear plot to unfold, Esma's secret must be exposed and Sara's desired narrative must collapse. The film reviewer Ed Gonzalez observes that despite the lack of pretence in the film's style, which is analogous with Esma's emotional state, "*Grbavica* lacks for the poetry that has made Vittorio de Sica's great *Two Women* a cornerstone of neorealism."¹⁵ In that sense, Gonzalez makes a valid point for perceiving Žbanić's approach as more televisual than cinematic. Pavičić sees *Grbavica* as a film of normalization *par excellence*, while I classify it as a film of representation.

As in *Children of Sarajevo*, the antagonists and villains in *Grbavica* are not former Bosnian Serb soldiers, perpetrators of war crimes, but representatives of the new wealthy elite in the aftermath of war. Šaran, the former war profiteer and present nightclub owner, and Puška ("rifle" in translation), the former Bosnian army commander and the present mafia guy in *Grbavica*, Rizo, the restaurant owner, and Melić, the crooked politician, in *Children of Sarajevo*. Šaran, Puška, and Rizo are equally loud, aggressive, irrational, they like to show money in public and are always surrounded by shady men. All three are drawn with less detail and precision compared to Esma, Rahima, and the other female characters in both films. It could be argued that the explicit critique of corrupted society associated with this, dependant on self-serving narratives about former war heroes, puts Esma in a far more humiliating, unfavourable, and victimizing situation than her past trauma, which remains hidden. Despite the bleak prospects, Esma manages to save enough money for Sara's excursion and influence the future flow of events. Likewise, in a rebellious act, Sara gives up on a desired hetero-normative

15 See Ed Gonzalez "Review: Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams." *Slant Magazine*, edited by Ed Gonzalez. Jan. 28, 2007, www.slantmagazine.com/film/grbavica-the-land-of-my-dreams/. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

narrative about fathers as fallen heroes. For all these reasons, one can argue that, as a film of representation, *Grbavica* has elements of melodrama. However, the characters' agencies and non-representational images should not be overlooked. Especially as the latter occasionally enable unspoken and un-shown war trauma to resurface.

Following Elsaesser's line of argument, the role of a victim (Sara or Esma?) in *Grbavica*, which he classifies as melodrama, resembles a victim in the media sphere (a television show). The latter's role is to produce affect and emotion, abstain from having an opinion and promote a political cause. Elsaesser assigns power as a negative agency to a victim in the media sphere, for "filling the slot of 'authenticity,' of righteousness and subjective truth" (Elsaesser, 2016, 17). In Elsaesser's view, this combination of victimhood and power makes post-conflict situations topical and of general interest, which is why they become topics fit for film. I agree with the point that the role of a victim in the media sphere is to elicit affect and emotion, and that it assumes abstaining from engaging in political thought. However, I am not sure how a survivor, restrained from having an opinion and reduced to the role of a victim, to an essentially powerless version of herself, can be attributed with power or negative agency. The only power one can relate to is the power by the implicated, a powerful other, ready to extend help to the one in need. This power is conditioned on the relationship between a dependant and a caregiver that grounds the state of dependency. It is certainly not an attribute of the victim, deprived of agency. Elsaesser makes a valid point for noticing that the victim discourse is typical of post-conflict situations where every side claims to be a victim. Victimhood narratives indeed complicate everyone's understanding of the historical context of conflicts. But for that reason, contextualizing—detailing and naming forms of oppression, historicizing and setting them apart from self-victimizing narratives, differentiating the factual from the fictional for that matter, telling a victim apart from its oppressor—is a prerequisite for our further dealings with image, memory and politics. This is preferable to collapsing all co-dependent categories together because they are indicative of post-conflict contexts, which happen to be remote, complex, and perceived through already framed media image-narratives.

Compared to Begić's films and as I have already noted, a similar tendency, a shift from representation to non-representation, marks Jasmila Žbanić's oeuvre, from *Grbavica* to *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. Both films thematize the after-effects of rape as a war crime. The first revolves around attempts to keep an individual traumatic experience a secret, whereas the latter thematizes the systematic denial of rape as a wartime atrocity.

The denial of atrocities comes into focus in Ognjen Glavonić's *Depth Two*, which is why I have decided to analyse it by drawing a comparison with *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. Relevant to this point is that *Depth Two* and Šejla Kamerić's *1395 Days Without Red* are included as objects of research because they, of all the films discussed here, demonstrate a comparably higher degree of non-representation regarding the portrayal of victim and victimhood, which is also why I analyse them at the end of this chapter.

Non-Representational Strategies in *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* and *Depth Two*

Both films engage with the subject of denying atrocities that took place more than twenty years ago. The process of excavation, digging through layers and layers of systematic erasures and silences, appears in both films not only with distance in time, but also and particularly with distance or a shift away from a conventional representation of trauma. I believe that these two distances are not coincidental and argue that proximity to the subject of denial is predicated on the distance from the conventional representation of war trauma in film. Now I will demonstrate how a shift from convention in terms of narrative and character construction, genre, chronology, and sound-image arrangement gives rise to non-representational images of war.

For Those Who Can Tell No Tales

For Those Who Can Tell No Tales starts by following Kym Vercoe, an Australian performance artist, on her first summer holiday in Bosnia. Inspired by the book *The Bridge on the Drina* by Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, she visits the town of Višegrad in eastern Bosnia. She stays at the Vilina Vlas hotel as recommended in her guidebook. She spends a sleepless night in the hotel and upon returning home to Australia, she discovers that the hotel was used as a rape camp during the Bosnian 1992–95 war. Questions around the region's atrocities begin to trouble her, as does the question of why the guidebook, or the town itself, made no mention of the event. The ICTY testimonies that she later finds online oblige her to return to Višegrad and investigate this hidden history¹⁶ for herself. *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* is

¹⁶ For more details about the present and recent past of Vilina Vlas hotel and Višegrad, see Emma Graham-Harrison, "Back on the Tourist Trail: the Hotel where Women were Raped and Tortured," *The Observer: Guardian*, Jan. 28, 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/28/bosnia-hotel-rape-murder-war-crimes. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025. See also Julian Borger, "War is

a hybrid documentary fiction, based on a theatre play *Seven Kilometers North-East*, written and performed by Vercoe. The play itself was modelled on the impressions Vercoe recorded of her journey in Bosnia. The film was initially planned to be a documentary,¹⁷ but only later it was decided that it should be a scripted film with professional actors.

The travelogue as a type of narrative structure is characteristic of a large number of “Balkan” films, claims film historian Dina Iordanova. In her view, most Balkan filmmakers submissively accept rather than “challeng[e] a narrative structure which inevitably positions and constructs them as objects of the Western traveller’s gaze” (Iordanova, 2010, 56). While addressing the current troubles of the region, most of these films cater to traditional stereotypes. A typical plot, in Iordanova’s view, involves a well-balanced Westerner, who ventures into the Balkans, longing for some kind of exposure to its madness. As the Balkans provide precisely what the visitor looks for, he/she gets rewarded. Most of the Balkan directors who engage in self-exoticism prefer to “present the events from a foreigner’s point of view (seen as the only possible objective one), thus relegating the people whose lives they want to explain to the position of being watched (and judged) by strangers” (Iordanova 61).

Kym Vercoe’s character embodies a shift away from this type of representation. Even though it is not clear whether she comes to Bosnia because she is attracted to the Balkans as to a faraway and exotic destination, her visit has little to do with her being attracted to the war past of the region or to the Balkan “madness.”

Vercoe’s first visit takes place in the sun-lit, crowded streets of Sarajevo and Višegrad. The light and optimistic soundtrack emphasizes her naivety and the excitement of a curious traveller. She spends most of the time on her own. Her return to a grey, cold, wintery Bosnia six months later colours her mature knowledge about the hidden history of Višegrad that urges her to pay tribute to the war’s victims. Despite being interrogated by police officers about the motives for her stay in Višegrad, she takes a risk, revisits Vilina Vlas and leaves 200 dandelions for the 200 rape victims on a bed in one of the hotel rooms. Prior to that, she confronts the author of the

Over—Now Serbs and Bosniaks Fight to Win Control of a Brutal History,” *The Guardian*, Mar. 23, 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/23/war-serbs-bosniaks-history-visegrad. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

¹⁷ More information about the genesis of the film can be found in Andreas Wiseman, “Interview with Jasmila Žbanić: For Those Who Can Tell No Tales,” *Screendaily*, Sept. 7, 2013, www.screendaily.com/interviews/jasmila-zbanic-for-those-who-can-tell-no-tales/5060158.article. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

travel guidebook asking for clarification of why he had omitted information about the rape camp in his book. Her character in the film does not cater to “self-exoticism,” which Iordanova refers to when she writes about the conventional representation of a Westerner, looking for amusement, getting rewarded, and then leaving the place unchanged. Instead, the role of a visitor allows for a sober, yet direct confrontation with the subject of denial. Furthermore, it leaves little space for any sort of engagement in ethno-nationalist categorizations and representations.

Coming from afar, Kym is permitted to raise questions that otherwise would have remained unaddressed. As a tourist, she makes a video diary of her journey. “The camera is like a buffer between me and Višegrad. Seeing Višegrad through the lens makes it digestible,” she says at one point. The camera lens as a protective shield facilitates her distance from the horrific history of Višegrad. Curiously, at the same time, it provides proximity to the denied war crimes. Her video recordings introduce a different quality of the image in the film. Blurry images of the Vilina Vlas hotel, as well as of the famous Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge over the Drina River, appear over and over again. These images appear where flashbacks would have otherwise explained the history, where images of torture and mutilated bodies would have sufficed, where survivors’ testimonies or accounts could have clarified the context. They appear against the predictable representation. Metonymically, Kym’s personal video recordings of present-day Višegrad, the famous bridge over the Drina, the Vilina Vlas hotel, stand in for systematic erasures, for all those omitted images of massive atrocities in the area. At the same time, they commemorate places without plaques, places that still emanate trauma and affect their visitors. They embody a dynamic relationship between the present, marked by denial, and the past, in which atrocities took place. The “haptic” qualities of Kym’s footage invite the viewer to engage differently, to stop for a moment and contemplate. Engaged in reconstructing bits and pieces of the hidden history of a place, based on the information provided by the film, the viewer is now encouraged to invest his or her resources of memory, knowledge and imagination to finalize these images. By doing so, the viewer takes one step away from rationalizing the narrative and one step closer to the “unexplained” images that one is supposed to assign meanings to. It could be said that Vilina Vlas and the bridge over the Drina are justly commemorated in the film. However, a ruined three-storey house¹⁸ in the

18 A ruined three-storey house in the film is the house in Pionirska Street, “where 59 Muslim women, children and pensioners were locked into a single room and incinerated on 14 June 1992” (as quoted from Borger, “War is Over”). This information is not specified in the

opening scene does not connect so easily with other images in the narrative, nor does it connect with the viewer's knowledge or the viewer's repertoire of virtual images, as Deleuze might argue.

Faced with the lack of cues about the history of a ruined house in Višegrad, the viewer is invited to look up their own virtual images to make emotional sense of this image. Our inability to connect this with other images in the narrative establishes what is closest to Deleuze's notion of optical image.

Deleuze relates the period after the Second World War to the appearance of "any-spaces-whatever" and "situations, which we no longer know how to react to." The emergence of these situations is connected with the loosening of the sensory-motor schema, which led to the rise of "pure optical and sound situations" and a "new race of characters," whom he calls "seers," "wanderers," and "a kind of mutants" (Deleuze, 2010, xi).

The optical image is characteristic of time-image cinema and, as such, contrasted with the sensory-motor image of movement-image cinema, which, according to Deleuze, characterizes classical Hollywood cinema. A linear unfolding of events, a firm narrative structure and goal-oriented character behaviour are implicated in the movement-image. A non-linear, fragmented structure with reflexive wanderers as characters marks the time-image cinema.

Bergson's actual-virtual distinction paved the way for Deleuze's distinction between the movement-image and the time-image type of cinema. I am not suggesting that *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* should be classified as a time-image, but it certainly shares some of the features of this type of cinema, like the optical image or the optical situation. Non-representational images in this film appear as optical images in the Deleuzian sense. Nevertheless, they do not constitute the time-image type of cinema. They appear as an exception rather than a rule, as a trace rather than the whole, as a ghostly presence rather than the obvious. They emerge as interruptions within the narrative continuity. They question the logic of representation by acting from within the representation.

The act of connecting the optical with the virtual or the recollection-image is an act of Bergsonian attentive recognition.¹⁹ The inability to connect the optical image of the three-story house in Višegrad with either a sensory-motor

film, but was revealed by Kym Vercoe at the press conference at San Sebastian Film Festival 2013. For more information, see "Press Conference 'For Those Who Can Tell No Tales' (Official Selection)." *YouTube*, uploaded by sansebastianfestival, Sept. 12, 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWdXMygMXYA&ab_channel=sansebastianfestival. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

19 Deleuze reinforces Bergson's notion of "attentive recognition." His elaboration on the concept can be found in Deleuze, 2010, 42–65.

image in the narrative or the viewer's virtual image informs the viewer about disruptions of memory and the failure in recognition.

It could be said that the viewer of *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* succeeds more than fails in the process of attentive recognition or in making emotional sense of optical situations they come across. The viewer of *Depth Two* is, however, confronted with greater challenges.

Depth Two

Depth Two begins with a recounting of dredging a lorry full of corpses from the Danube River in Serbia, at the border with Romania. No investigations were carried out. The year is 1999, the time of the NATO bombing of Serbia. Previously, in Suva Reka, Kosovo, the Serbian police committed mass atrocities against villagers, ethnic Albanians. Bodies ended up in remote mass graves near a police facility at Batajnica, in a suburb of Belgrade. One woman discloses the details of her survival. This documentary draws on thriller conventions to engage the viewer in reconstructing war crimes and cover-ups, which take place at several locations across Kosovo and Serbia. Testimonies of eyewitnesses, perpetrators and a victim are in fact audio recordings from the ICTY trials. Given in voice-over seventeen years after the initial crimes were committed, they are juxtaposed with the present-day images of desolate landscapes, some of which are the former sites of atrocities.

In *Depth Two*, as in *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, the proximity to the subject of denial is predicated upon the distance from the conventional representation of war trauma. The film makes use of testimonies, archival footage, and official state documents. At the same time, documentary-film conventions, such as static shots of interview-based talking heads, are carefully avoided. Information about crimes and cover-ups are offered in fragments. Former sites of crimes re-appear throughout the film. All these elements add up to create a suspense thriller. Yet, over the course of the film, characters' faces are never revealed, and no direct confrontation between the characters is made possible, which in effect moves the viewer outside the conventions of a thriller film. In this hybrid documentary thriller, the only convention that is not betrayed is the film's immanent logic, grounded in the rule of non-representational images that open the film up to experimental cinema.

Testimonies appear as recorded, emotionless accounts of tragic events, given in achronological order. They belong to perpetrators of crimes and cover-ups, bystanders, and a victim. For the whole duration of the film, these testimonies never match the faces they belong to. Disengaged from

faces and bodies, testimonies block the viewer's moral judgement ("he looks like a perpetrator," "oh, look at her, poor victim") as they enable closer attention to each individual experience. Testimonies in voice-over are juxtaposed with images of abandoned premises or desolate landscapes, some of which bear memories of atrocities, like a destroyed pizzeria in Suva Reka, or to devastating findings, like the calm waters of the Danube or the mass grave in Batajnica,²⁰ and some not. The strategy of divorcing audio statements from facial appearances, followed by re-attaching them to sequences of desolate landscapes, where war crimes took place, leads to the creation of non-representational images. In this set-up, occurring optical and audio images retain their relative independence. At times they refer one to another, by way of comment or association, at times they are completely detached from one another. Audio images inform about atrocities, as they were executed and experienced in the past. Optical images partly expose former sites of atrocities that attest to erasures of war crimes and a failure of remembrance. The audio layer has a factual or documentarian grounding, whereas the optical layer is less indicative. The spectator is invited to engage in reconstructing crimes he/she hears about, in chronologizing the narrative on one side, and in colouring the images of deserted places with their own memories, knowledge, and imagination, on the other. In her book *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, film scholar Vivian Sobchack reflects on consciousness as anchored in the spectator's lived-body situation. By doing so, she roots cinema and spectatorship in its spatial terms. Deleuze, in contrast, sees cinematic images emerging from action-reaction encounters, rather than from a perceiving subject situated in space. For Deleuze, consciousness is within images and primacy is given to the sensation of time; hence, to affect and memory. As for *Depth Two*, it could be said that the spectator is encouraged to move between the spatial and temporal mode of spectatorship, between experiencing narrative continuity and physical sensation, and experiencing affect and memory.²¹

20 "Forty-eight residents of the Kosovo town of Suhareka/Suva Reka were killed on March 26, 1999 by Serbian forces" as stated in Ivana Nikolić, "Activists March to Kosovo Mass Grave in Belgrade." *Balkaninsight*, Mar. 26, 2016, www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-activists-remember-suhareka-victims-03-26-2016. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025. Testimonies in the film revealed that a) fifty-three (mostly) intact corpses and three heads were found in the lorry in the Danube River and were later transferred to Belgrade; and b) more than 700 bodies were relocated and buried in Batajnica, the mass grave discovered in 2001 and 2002.

21 Darlene Pursley's analysis "Moving in Time: Chantal Akerman's *Toute une nuit*" was insightful for summarizing similarities and accentuating differences between Sobchack's and Deleuze's mode of spectatorship and for introducing a possibility of engaging both modes within a single film. More detailed account of this discussion is available in the previous chapter.



Fig. 2. *Depth Two* [Dubina dva], directed by Ognjen Glavonić, 2016.

The temporal mode of spectatorship complements, rather than excludes the spatial mode of spectatorship.

In his book *The Future of the Image*, Jacques Rancière refers to problems of representation as to the triple constraint of resemblances. The first constraint is a visibility of the speech act; the second is a relation between knowledge-effect and pathos-effect or the causal relation between not knowing and knowing; and the third is the regime of rationality, which subjects its speech acts to intrinsic criteria of verisimilitude and appropriateness (Rancière, 2009, 120).

The first constraint, according to Rancière, the visibility of the speech act, is contested in *Depth Two*. As already elaborated, the film offers two regimes of truth, the audio and the visual, which do not necessarily corroborate one another and are further entangled with two layers of time—the past and the present. The second constraint is defied by having the effect ahead of the cause, by which the viewer of *Depth Two* learns first about the lorry with bodies plunged into the river, and then about the massive killings, which preceded its discovery.

With the opening scene, which offers a view on the peaceful Danube while the accompanying audio recounts the discovery of a lorry with corpses, the topic of denial of mass atrocities is decidedly addressed. The massive killing of Kosovars poses one type of problem. A network of people of different ranks, engaged in cover-ups, from digging out, transporting to re-burying or setting 700 corpses on fire, is a problem of another kind. Silences and systematic erasures of war crimes get problematized with the elaborate mechanism of cover-ups. The film itself disguises many details about the

atrocities by offering optical images that seek to connect with the viewer's virtual images. This clearly establishes the film's relation to the outside—by outside, I mean outside of the film's apparent internal frame of reference. According to Deleuze, its relation to the outside constitutes one of the four principles of nomadism. Nomadism is a framework of thinking that involves artistic experimentation and has a political relevance for rendering the escape from established codes.²²

The first principle, mixing of codes, has already been discussed in terms of combining different genres into making a new style—an experimental documentary thriller. The second principle, the relation with the outside has been created through the film's reduced style in dealing with the topic of denial. Interestingly, the relation to the outside opens up intensity, the third principle. Intensity, bound to the virtual, is contrasted with representation. The fourth principle is humour or laughter, which is the only principle that cannot be found in this film.

The political relevance of non-representational strategies in *Depth Two* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* lies in showing how the denial of past atrocities can be approached in the present without reinforcing divisions across ethno-nationalist lines that keep post-Yugoslav society locked in its post-war condition.

The last film to be analysed in this chapter is Šejla Kamerić's *1395 Days Without Red*, which displays the highest degree of non-representation compared to the films previously discussed.

1395 Days Without Red: Non-Representation of War

The title of the film *1395 Days Without Red*²³ refers to the days of the siege, in which the citizens of Sarajevo were advised not to wear bright colours when leaving their homes. This was a precautionary measure against getting shot by snipers from the surrounding hills.

Before I explore its non-representational strategies, here is a brief summary of the film:

²² More about nomadic thought in Gilles Deleuze's "Nomadic Thought," in *Desert Island and Other Texts: 1953–1974*, 252–62, and in Patricia Pisters's *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*, "Divine Intervention: Micropolitics and Resistance," 243–70.

²³ *1395 Days Without Red* was initiated, developed, and filmed as a collaborative project by Šejla Kamerić and Anri Sala, an Albanian visual artist. The project has given life to two separate films. In this chapter I reflect on Kamerić's film.

An elegant young woman makes her way through an empty city. At every crossing she stops, looks and listens. Should she wait or should she run? Should she wait for others or take the risk on her own?

The city is Sarajevo, and the route the woman takes became known as Sniper Alley during the siege of the city endured by its citizens for 1395 days between 1992 and 1996. The woman, played by Spanish actress Maribel Verdú, is reliving the experience of the trauma of the siege. It is her individual journey through the collective memory of the city.²⁴

Elsewhere in the city, Sarajevo's Symphonic Orchestra rehearses passages from Tchaikovsky's 6th Symphony, *Pathétique*. The woman walks, stops, and runs in the same manner in which the musicians play, pause, and rehearse different sections of the symphony. The music resounds in her head, encouraging her to carry on with her daily route.

The film attempts to reconstruct a daily life experience in besieged Sarajevo. It offers a view on an individual journey from the present perspective into the collective past. *1395 Days Without Red* is an artistic articulation of an individualized collective memory.

During the course of the film, the viewer follows the protagonist crossing one junction after another in geographical order. But, as Douglas Brennan, an art critic, suggests in his review, her journey does not progress in a chronologically linear fashion, it "jumps forwards and backwards in time."²⁵ He adds that our understanding of how time passes in the film is not shaped through the use of dialogue, because there is none. Instead, the film oscillates between the crossing and the rehearsal scenes:

with the chronological position of the crossing relative to the part of Tchaikovsky's piece the orchestra are currently playing ... whether they are rehearsing a part that comes before or after the last in the previous scene dictates whether we have pro-/regressed in time.²⁶

The music therefore plays a crucial role in structuring the film's chronology. The relevance of Tchaikovsky's piece goes beyond organizing the time in 1395

24 The summary of the film is quoted from the Artangel's official website. See "Art Angel: Project Description: 1395 Days without Red." *Artangel.org.uk*, www.artangel.org.uk/project/1395-days-without-red/. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

25 See Douglas Brennan, "Review 1395 Days Without Red." *Ceasefire Magazine*, edited by Hicham Yezza, Oct. 19, 2011, www.ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/new-in-ceasefire/review-1395-days-red. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

26 As quoted from the same Douglas Brennan review.

Days Without Red. The music sets the pace, mood and emotion within the film. Besides, as Brennan further suggests, “each (film) event has its musical counterpart, with the sentiment of one mirrored in the other.”²⁷ Essentially, as he adds, rehearsed music segments are not always simultaneous to the “crossing streets” events, but function as an alternative to them. There is therefore a notion of a dialogue, an exchange between the “crossing streets” scenes and the “music rehearsal” scenes. These artistic strategies are significant because they position the film on the opposite end from a conventional, linear film narrative, the one that is, according to Laura U. Marks, aligned with official history (Marks, 2000, 26).

Non-representational strategies deployed in the film are the following: the non-linearity of film events mentioned above, the previously discussed “disagreement” between sound and visual image and the complete absence of dialogue. The last choice is politically significant, if we follow Marks’ writing about intercultural cinema. It implies a certain doubt about the use of language. It is as if words cannot “truthfully” convey collective trauma from an individualized perspective. And quietism can. Suspicion may arise from all known, mass-mediated people’s testimonies about their life in besieged Sarajevo. This type of official, historical representation easily establishes a notion of a victim in a politically destructive sense. In his text “Sarajevo, mon amour,” art historian Anselm Wagner notes that Kamberić works against current clichés about victims (poor, desperate, submissively seeking help, etc.). These clichés “only serve to produce a permanent condition of dependency, so that the ‘helpers’ can extend their position of power” (Two Words 28).

Instead of offering a melodramatic portrayal of a victim in a condition of dependency, *1395 Days Without Red* confronts the viewer with a series of visual and sound images reduced to the protagonist’s walking or running, accompanied by her breathing heavily or humming bits of music from the 6th Symphony. This strategy proves to be a rather simple, precise and effective way of reconstructing the protagonist’s experience of crossing Sniper Alley. It isolates and magnifies her feeling of being under constant threat, of being exposed and observed. Kamberić’s insistence on making a dialogue-free film, with the use of Tchaikovsky’s music, the protagonist’s accentuated humming and breathing, defamiliarizes the cliché about the victim. Throughout the film, the viewer is exposed to present-day Sarajevo, its empty streets without traffic jams. Present-day Sarajevo looks quite different from the way besieged Sarajevo looked. There are no large, protective

²⁷ Ibid.



Fig. 3. *1395 Days without Red* [1395 dana bez crvene], directed by Šejla Kamerić, 2011.

sandbags, plastic folium-covered windows, sounds of gunfire, and screams of wounded people. None of the haunting news images from television and newspaper coverage from the 1990s that many people are more or less familiar with. Instead, *1395 Days Without Red* depicts citizens of Sarajevo (actual survivors of the war!), and the protagonist, crossing one junction after another. They are running, stopping, walking—crossing the city's junctions in a repetitive mode. This somewhat odd behaviour of the citizens is superimposed on the present-day image of the city. Again, the viewer is exposed to a type of non-representational image, which, like the Deleuzian optical image, forces him/her to draw upon his/her "subjective resources in order to complete the image" (Marks 42); in other words, to engage in Bergsonian attentive recognition. The film does not leave many cues for the viewer to connect its image with a private or mediated memory of the war.

1395 Days Without Red focuses on the non-representation of one single aspect of life in besieged Sarajevo. "The bigger picture is replaced by a snapshot, and the siege becomes more tangible," claims Brennan.²⁸ He adds that a viewer, "forced to focus on the minute details that comprise a simple and singular aspect of quotidian routine,"²⁹ is encouraged to draw parallels between the protagonist's feelings and their own. A parallel between the protagonist's and the viewer's daily routine potentially makes the film communicate well with its audience elsewhere. Paradoxically, the focus on a single aspect, a strange citizen's behaviour, makes the siege experience

²⁸ As quoted from the same Douglas Brennan review.

²⁹ Ibid.

graspable for today's audience. The viewer is not distracted by what, otherwise, might be an official, more "appropriate" representation of life in besieged Sarajevo. The viewer does not need to verify the legitimacy and "truthfulness" of depicted events, according to what they know about the siege of Sarajevo. Compared to *Depth Two*, this film leaves fewer cues for the viewer to connect its images with any accessible memory of the war. Nevertheless, by leaving the perpetrator and human suffering out of sight and sound, the film recuperates the dignity of survivors of the war that was previously eventually lost to conventionalized and mass mediated images of suffering.

Conclusion

This chapter traces the movement from over-representation and representation to diverse—and more or less strong, or sustained—forms of non-representation in post-Yugoslav film. This movement is partly reflected in the change of register within the oeuvre of the same filmmaker. As could be seen, non-representational images of war can deviate from the linear, cause-and-effect narrative, but remain supportive of the film's overarching optimism and related goals, as in *Grbavica* and *Snow*. They can appear as inserted home videos or news footage and thereby challenge the coherence of the narrative structure, as in *Children of Sarajevo* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. Alternatively, the cause-and-effect narrative can be left behind, and new temporalities can emerge with new sound/image arrangements, as in the fully fledged films of non-representation *Depth Two* and *1395 Days without Red*.

An evoked traumatic past can be successfully mastered and integrated into the films' present, as the films of representation show. Alternatively, its assimilation into the film's narrative, which is marked by its predisposed goal orientation and overarching optimism, can be challenged, as evident in the films featuring a higher degree of non-representation. The inserted home videos and archival footage challenge the linearity of the film narrative while accounting for the persistence of trauma. As could be seen, this anti-mimetic form of trauma is associated with the process of belatedly acting out as opposed to working through. Its unresolvedness is implicated in the enduring post-war condition and its associated state of apathy. Given such prospects: under what circumstances does the non-representational image unfold its potential as a means of creating more sustainable forms of understanding and "doing" post-Yugoslav history and society, and creating productive forms of future thinking? The political relevance of non-representational

strategies analysed in this chapter lies in approaching the denial of past atrocities without reinforcing divisions across ethno-religious lines that keep post-Yugoslav society locked in its post-war condition, and in restoring the dignity of a survivor of the war that was potentially previously lost to mass media images of human suffering. A shift away from objectifying victims, on one side, and towards escaping the convention of representation in order to restore dignity to victims, on the other, are issues of political relevance that were addressed in this chapter.

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III Limitations of Non-Representation

Abstract: Chapter III revolves around the portrayal of a perpetrator that varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each film submits to. While a few films resort to the strategies of over-representation, the use of the grotesque and hyperbole, other films shift away from such forms and focus on dead time in warfare or the paratactic ordering of an unconnected narrative. Finally, films of non-representation attest to a failure to remember the commission of war crimes and the silent complicity in their cover-ups. By introducing LaCapra's notion of "perpetrator trauma" and its relation to a narrative, a discussion about the possible drawbacks of non-representation can be initiated. The treatment of guilt and accountability come under careful scrutiny.

Keywords: perpetrator trauma, over-representation, hyperbole, parataxis, complicity, limits of non-representation

The third chapter acts as a mirror-image to the second chapter. It revolves around the portrayal of a perpetrator, which varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each selected film submits to. Dominick LaCapra's notion of perpetrator trauma will be of importance with regard to a discussion about the possible drawbacks of non-representational strategies. The treatment of individual and collective guilt and accountability in films featuring non-representational strategies will come under careful scrutiny. The third chapter includes a selection of films of representation, films of over-representation and films of non-representation, most of which were shown at the Sarajevo Film Festival. The films that are analysed include Emir Kusturica's *Underground* (1995), Srđan Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996), Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić's *The Blacks* (2009), Vladimir Perišić's *Ordinary People* (2009), Igor Drljača's *Krivina* (2012), and Ognjen Glavonić's *The Load* (2018).

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how self-victimization in the film *Madonna*, exemplified through propagandistic lecturing in Pavičić's

sense, enables the emergence of an unfortunate binary opposition between poor victims and cruel perpetrators, preventing the evolution of complex characters, capable of furthering or actualizing the plot. The film motifs that I analysed, black-and-white characterization, topoi, and related hate speech lead to an overabundance of elements of melodrama, which allow me to allocate *Madonna* to the category of films of over-representation. I indicated that it is possible to approach characters in *Madonna* as typifying good and bad, virtue and evil, and thereby to avoid looking for their interior depth and psychological complexity, as Peter Brooks would suggest. However, it has proven difficult to accept that the film's antagonists, with their associated hyperbole, are a result of a conscious refusal of nuance and insistence to deal in pure, integral concepts. Their excessiveness comes across more as an effect of failure to accomplish a well-plotted revenge story with an active protagonist due to the film's submission to the self-imposed ideological taboo of never showing the Croat side as the aggressive one in the war. Regardless of the intention, the resulting stark moral polarization positions the film firmly in the domain of films of over-representation.

In the first chapter, I suggested that films of over-representation encompass what Jurica Pavičić defines as films of self-victimization and films of self-Balkanization. I find films of self-victimization to be concomitant with films of self-Balkanization based on their common inclination towards excess. The first could be grouped around the motto *we are victims, they are perpetrators*, and the second around the maxim *the truth is somewhere in the middle or all sides are guilty*. As previously elaborated, and as can be seen in *Madonna*, films of self-victimization are characterized by propaganda, black-and-white characterization, oversimplification, passive heroes who stand in contradiction with the narrative that presupposes revenge and action, as well as recurring ethno-stereotypes and motifs. And films of self-Balkanization—as is the case in general with better-crafted films, and as I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*—imply a conscious adoption and exaggeration of the existing westerners' stereotypes about the Balkans. The Yugoslav disintegration wars were broadcast practically live on TV and, in that sense, were inserted into the viewer's disposition of memory. The stereotypes by western media in their coverage of the wars were internalized and amplified in the films *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* to persuade the audience to adopt a certain reading of the wars. The resulting excessiveness reflects, among other things, a media perception of the conflict at the time. The multitude evokes the media *dispositif*; the fact that the viewer of the film enters a hyperactive field of narratives.

Stereotypes of passive victims or erratic perpetrators dominate the film narratives, which often result in antirealism, as opposed to observational realism. The fundamental difference is that the overabundance in films of self-victimization is mostly a result of unfortunate binary oppositions between good victims and bad perpetrators, and more often than not poor execution, whereas the overabundance in films of self-Balkanization is a conscious, self-reflective choice, a goal in itself. One could say that films of self-Balkanization are marked by a higher degree of self-reflection and wit. With films of self-victimization, viewers are exposed to war films with both epic and melodramatic elements, many recognizable topoi, whereas with films of self-Balkanization, viewers mainly engage with postmodern pastiche and anachronistic structures. Exceptionally passive victims inhabit one setting and extremely energetic perpetrators populate the other. The passivity of the characters in the films of self-victimization stems from a strong moral imperative, from defending the right to victim status, premised on the degrading the ethnic other, an eternally cruel perpetrator. The vigorous behaviour of characters in the films of self-Balkanization finds its premise in rejecting official narratives that either celebrate or condemn former or present combatants, depending on which side of the war is being discussed. The unfortunate logic derived from the latter films is relativism: it does not matter who committed what crimes, war is an ugly thing; hence, all sides are equally guilty. Their view of an equal share of guilt, accompanied by exaggerated self-exoticism, which is elaborated through derogatory stereotypes in their depiction of (wartime) violence and its causes, makes these films politically problematic. In the following pages, I will provide evidence for this claim and for attributing *Underground* and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* to a category films of over-representation.

***Underground*—Pastiche, Parody, Over-Representation**

Underground is divided into a prologue, three chapters: “War,” “Cold War” and “War,” and an epilogue. The three chapters cover a fifty-year period: the Second World War, the Cold War, and the war following the break-up of Yugoslavia. Marko and Blacky, two friends and criminals, and Natalija, an attractive actress and their love interest, are followed through different stages of their lives coinciding with different stages of the rise and fall of the Federal State of Yugoslavia.

The prologue opens with a scene with Marko and Blacky on a horse carriage, followed by a brass band, ecstatically celebrating Blacky’s admission

into the Communist Party. Heavy drinking, accompanied by wild dancing and shooting to the never-ending music of a brass band, is a recurring motif of *Underground*.

The first chapter unfolds with the bombing of Belgrade in April 1941, which marks the onset of the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia. Marko and Blacky see in the unfolding war a chance to start profiteering by smuggling arms to the resistance movement. Marko decides to keep Natalija for himself and, under the pretence of safety, sends Blacky, his friends, and parts of his family to an underground cellar, equipped with an air-raid shelter.

The events in the film's second chapter take place in 1961. In post-Second World War Yugoslavia, Marko is married to Natalija and has become a famed poet and a powerful Communist official, close to President Tito. Blacky is cherished as a courageous martyr, who lost his life on the front line. A feature film titled *Spring Comes on a White Horse* is about to record Blacky and Marko's glorious moments in the resistance fight. Marko and Natalija continue the pretence of war and keep hiding Blacky and the others in the cellar. The people underground are used as slave labour to manufacture weapons, which Marko and Natalija export internationally. One day, the couple descends to the cellar to join the wedding of Blacky's son Jovan. The ecstatic celebration ends in fighting, the walls of the cellar crumble, revealing a network of tunnels from East to West carrying a group of migrants. The formerly enslaved inhabitants of the cellar disperse. Blacky and Ivan appear above ground, on the set of *Spring Comes on a White Horse*, where they mistake the extras for German soldiers and kill them all. Soon after, Jovan, unfit for life outside the cellar, drowns in the Danube River, and the police catch Blacky.

The third chapter is set in the 1990s, somewhere at the frontline, possibly in Slavonija, Croatia.¹ Marko, now a mature man, bound to a wheelchair, and Natalija, older and still attractive, have become internationally known arms dealers, wanted by Interpol. Blacky commands a paramilitary unit. Marko's brother Ivan, one of the former inhabitants of the cellar, realizes the full extent of Marko's deception. Overwhelmed by rage, he beats his brother to death and hangs himself at a nearby church. Blacky's soldiers shoot Natalija, who dies in Marko's lap. Their corpses are set on fire, and the flaming wheelchair is made to circulate around the erected cross in the vicinity of the church.

In the film's epilogue, all the dead protagonists are brought back to life for Jovan's wedding celebration, which presumably takes place on the shores

1 Jurica Pavičić was the first to emphasize this, based on the landscape and urbanistic elements of the set design in the third chapter of the narrative. For more information, read Pavičić 156.

of the Danube River. As they once again dance to the music of a brass band, they fail to notice a patch of land breaking apart from the mainland and floating away, carrying them in an unknown direction.

Underground is one of the most widely discussed post-Yugoslav films, hypothetically due to its rich visual style and the fifty years of Yugoslav history that its story covers. Visually predominantly dark, the film was largely shot from unusual angles and leaves the viewers with a claustrophobic, unsettling sensation for most of its duration. The film contains lengthy scenes of wedding and other festivities, accompanied by excessive drinking, shooting, and dancing to the brass band, which is established early on in the film as emblematic of the whole film. As Jelača points out, “the film’s formal, stylistic, and narrative aspects are all about various forms of excess—be it visual and auditory oversaturation, abundance of affect, or the absurdist refashioning or exaggeration of certain aspects of history” (Jelača 166).

Having various forms of excess in mind, it comes as no surprise that *Underground* has been intertextually referenced with the work of Francois Rabelais, Hieronymus Bosch, Terry Gilliam, and Federico Fellini (Iordanova 112). Elsaesser saw in *Underground* “a combination of the Italian operatic mode of Visconti, Fellini and Sergio Leone (with characters larger than life, viscerally driven by the demands and needs of the body) and the inverted operatic, melodramatic mode of Fassbinder” (Elsaesser 26).

The film certainly opts for exaggeration, excessiveness of bodily sensations, from eating, drinking, and fornicating to committing acts of violence. As Slavoj Žižek notes, the film reinforces a myth of the true Balkan man, who, even when bombs are falling around him, calmly finishes his meal. Hyperbole, antithesis, and oxymoron, as elements of melodrama (in its inverted mode), attest to *Underground*’s conscious refusal of nuance and insistence on dealing in pure, integral concepts, as Peter Brooks would posit and as contrasted with *Madonna*’s use of melodrama. Žižek notes that the film:

is full of references to the history of cinema, up to Vigo’s *Atalanta*, and to cinema as such (when the “underground” war hero, who is presumed dead, emerges from his hiding-place, he encounters cineastes shooting a film about his heroic death), as well as other forms of postmodern self-referentiality (recourse to the perspective of fairy-tales: “There was once a land called ...”; the passage from realism to pure fantasy: the idea of a network of underground tunnels beneath Europe, one of them leading directly from Berlin to Athens ...). (Žižek 80)

Quotation, self-reflexivity, anti-realism, self-distance, refusal of nuance, reliance on exaggeration, black-and-white characters, elements of slapstick comedy, and animation characterize the universe of *Underground*. International scholarship, critics, film festivals, and audiences alike responded mostly well to these postmodern elements.² The historical propositions upon which *Underground* was built went mainly unnoticed abroad, while locally, in the former Yugoslav states, they stirred ire.³ Subsequently, a line of division has been created between those admiring the film's style over politics, and those that are well aware of the film's political propositions and hence less enthused by its aesthetic properties. Both readings have proven informative, yet inadequate to stand alone, since each reading covers the full range of qualities and difficulties implied in *Underground*. Looking closely into both interpretations helps raise the question of whether style can be informed by critical reflections on history and ideology in an exemplary postmodern narrative.

In her book *Cinema of Flames*, Dina Iordanova suggests that:

If one leaves aside the visual particularities, *Underground* is a historical film which offers a framework for interpreting current violent state of affairs in the Balkans. The film is set in clearly defined historical time, with the linear narrative that spans five decades, highlighting particular moments that take place in 1940s, 1960s and 1990s. Real events are called by their actual names, along with fictional historical encounters and occurrences. (Iordanova 112)

Iordanova asserts that *Underground* contests the prevalent argument about ethnic feuds as a credible cause for the Yugoslav conflicts in the 1990s. In her view and divergent from Kusturica's claim, the film also suggests that the Communist system was not accountable for the conflicts of the 1990s. Low morals were already inherent to the protagonists of *Underground* in the early 1940s, prior to Communism. The Communist system may well have boosted their immorality, but it does not appear that it created it. The film offers a refined version of the *primordialist argument*—it is not cyclically recurring ethnic feuds but “impaired standards innate in the

2 As it is detailed in Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and Media*, in the chapter “Kusturica's *Underground*: Historical Allegory or Propaganda?”; and in Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory*, in the chapter “Post-Yugoslav Heritage Cinema and the Futurity of Nostalgia.”

3 This is best reflected in Stanko Cerović, “Canned Lies.” Aug. 1995, www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/caned.html, and in Slavoj Žižek's collection of essays *The Plague of Fantasies*, in the essay “Love Thy Neighbour? No, Thanks.”

Balkan social character” that are accountable for the Balkan wars in the 1990s (Iordanova 118). In his account of the chronological developments covered by *Underground*, Elsaesser resorts to phrasing: “the palimpsest nature of Balkan history, where every site, every sentence, every emotion is doubly and triply occupied by incarnations of the self and of the other” (Elsaesser 26).

Notwithstanding degrees of difference, formulations like “the palimpsest nature of Balkan history” and “Byzantine mentality” (Iordanova 119) function in a similar way. They suggest a defeated position: wars in Yugoslavia and the Balkans are inevitable, the history of the area is complicated; hence, a more detailed look into causes of the wars is impossible in any way, and Balkan social character is irreparable. The reinstatement of essentialisms about Yugoslav or Balkan history or temperament, even when discussing how causes of conflicts in the 1990s are addressed in *Underground*, cannot but perpetuate Balkanism and/or self-Balkanization. Žižek’s reflection on Kusturica’s interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, in which he famously compared war to natural catastrophe, an earthquake, which explodes from time to time, substantiates this point:

What we find here, of course, is an exemplary case of “Balkanism,” functioning in a similar way to Edward Said’s “Orientalism”: the Balkans as the timeless space on to which the West projects its phantasmic content. For that reason, one should avoid the trap of “trying to understand”; what one should do is *precisely the opposite*; with regard to the post-Yugoslav war, one should accomplish a kind of inverted phenomenological reduction and put in parenthesis the multitude of *meanings*, the wealth of the spectres of the past which allow us to “understand” the situation. One should resist the temptation to “understand,” and accomplish a gesture analogous to turning off the sound of a TV: all of a sudden, the movements of the people on screen, deprived of their vocal support, look like meaningless, ridiculous gesticulations. It is only such a suspension of “comprehension” that renders possible the analysis of what is at stake—economically, politically, ideologically—in the post-Yugoslav crisis: of the *political* calculuses and strategic decisions which lead to the war. (Žižek 78)

Suspension of comprehension, based on the rejection of the political, economic, and ideological causes of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, naturally extends in a narrative that aims at Orientalizing or self-exoticizing the Balkans. Pavičić is similarly critical of films of self-Balkanization for redistributing guilt for committed war crimes away from the concrete,

historically specific political elites to a cycle of recurring violence, age-old ethnic feuds as well as to an irreparable, corrupted Balkan soul or mind. By de-historicizing and de-politicizing the causes of war, these films endorse isolationism: “they all are crazy anyway, they better be left alone,” and by doing so become political acts of performativity (Pavičić 175).

Iordanova presumes that one way to approach the “messy historical affairs” in the Balkans is either through a particular national narrative or through narratives that acknowledge the conditionality of all narratives. And the reconciliation of all these different narratives is possible only if built on relativity. An intentionally fragmented and often frivolous picture of history appears as a result. According to Iordanova, a way to tell history as a post-modern collage, by superimposing multiple stories and times, makes a Balkan history a dynamic entity. Her points of reference are films made by Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Lordan Zafranović, and Theo Angelopoulos. In the following chapter of her book *Cinema of Flames*, references include Kusturica’s and Dragojević’s 1990s films. This order of referencing suggests an equation between those films of the Yugoslav New Wave or Black Wave, on one side, and Kusturica’s and Dragojević’s films from the 1990s, on the other, based on the filmmakers’ critical stance towards historical metanarratives in the form of postmodern collage. The crucial difference, as Dino Murtić suggests, is that the former films did not constitute “a liberal attempt to break the Yugoslav political order. Rather, it was a harsh criticism of the Yugoslav version of Communism from a leftist position” (Murtić 57).

And *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, as I will demonstrate later, invalidate and largely blame Titoist Communism for the outburst of violence in the 1990s. Both films centre on criminals and perpetrators and succeed in portraying them as victims, deceived by what they identify as a hypocritical Socialist system. The denunciation of the Titoist model of governing Yugoslavia provides the necessary background for appreciating the excess and postmodern play that both films resort to as ideologically transgressive. Barbara Klinger’s writing on the reception of melodrama in Hollywood films from the 1950s and Jurica Pavičić’s observations on the reception of films of self-Balkanization in the 1990s help elucidate this point.

In her writing on the reception of 1950s melodramas by Sirk, Ray and Minnelli in academic circles in the 1970s, Klinger points out: “Critics’ characterization of the 1950s as a socially and sexually repressive decade, a necessary backdrop for appreciating the excesses of Sirk, Ray and Minnelli, does not do justice to the era’s complex ideological character” (Klinger 36).

As Klinger emphasizes, critics’ understanding of the Eisenhower era as socially and sexually repressive was necessary for 1950s films by Sirk, Ray,

and Minnelli to be aesthetically appreciated in the 1970s. An analogy can be drawn with a wider perception of Tito's Communism as a clear-cut oppressive regime shared by mostly western scholars and critics. This view is grounded in the critics' vague interest in the history addressed in *Underground* and serves as a prerequisite for identifying different aspects of excess in the film as ideologically transgressive. The perception of Yugoslavia's state of affairs is also comparable to fantasies that diasporic filmmakers project onto Yugoslavia. The same imaginary quality connects both types of projection, with the difference that the latter is grounded in diasporic lived and embodied experience, which is a point that I will return to in the third and fourth chapters.

Pavičić notices that a large number of western critics interpret Kusturica's film in light of his polemics with socialist realism and Communist propaganda. This interpretation, in his view, derives from a stereotypical understanding of Eastern European film through the dichotomy of socialist realism plus a dictatorship/anti-establishment author. As he rightly points out, the implications of *Underground* are much wider. Socialist realism was abandoned early enough to have any visible trace on Kusturica's generation. And on several occasions, Kusturica positioned himself as a Communist, even a Bolshevik (Pavičić 160). In that sense, the film does not simply polemicize with Tito's Communism. As Pavičić emphasizes, *Underground* criticizes any cultural model that implies westernization and the wilful acceptance of foreign and colonial influence, including Tito's "compromising" Communist model of governing Yugoslavia. The target of the film's criticism is bourgeois and upper class for adopting various foreign cultural models and betraying "authentic" people, for keeping them locked away in a cellar. As diverse elements as German repertoire theatre, socialist realist poetry, the bourgeois furniture in Marko and Natalija's apartment, and the pop songs they listen to, are equally and unreservedly denigrated as products of the colonial other (Pavičić 160). The spectator is encouraged to approach two sequences of archival footage in the same key (Pavičić 160). The first one shows the arrival of Nazi troops in Ljubljana and Zagreb in 1941 and their welcome by cheering crowds. It finishes with their entering the empty streets of previously bombarded Belgrade. The second sequence is the televisual footage of Tito's funeral. Both sequences are edited with the sound of "Lili Marlene," the unofficial Nazi anthem. By means of associative montage, Slovenes and Croats are regarded as Nazi supporters, and Tito as a dictator. Due to this intervention, two opposing ideologies, Nazism and Socialism, are equated. Such a simple equation naturally provokes discomfort among viewers in the former Yugoslavia. Unease morphs into

criticism once it becomes clear what went missing in this postmodern ordering of markers of different ideologies. Journalist Stanko Cerović was the first to note that a visual sequence documenting the bombardment of Vukovar in Croatia or the destruction of Sarajevo in Bosnia in the 1990s is, for instance, nowhere to be found in *Underground*.⁴ A sequence of “the triumphalist farewell given in Belgrade to the Yugoslav army and its tanks as they went to wage war in Croatia and Bosnia against literally unarmed people”⁵ is similarly absent. In other words, Milošević’s nationalist ideology as the most sound and credible cause of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s is not suggested in any way. In the third part of the film, a UN soldier appears briefly and Marko, now the head of a paramilitary unit somewhere in Croatia, calls him a fascist. Slovenes and Croats welcoming Nazi troops, Tito, and the UN soldier are unambiguously associated with fascism and belong to the same group of colonial others, threatening to invade or betray the true and “authentic” people of Yugoslavia. These political considerations rarely come into the focus of scholars and critics championing *Underground*’s rich visual style. The closest most of their analyses get to political considerations are various forms of excess in *Underground* understood as “carnavalesque” in Bakhtinian terms:

The excessive hedonism that functions as the driving force behind much of *Underground* is far from being a device of detached escapism. It can be read as a political intervention in and of itself, particularly if viewed through the prism of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, as several critics have done. (Jelača 170; Keene 2001; Kosmidou 2013; Ravetto-Biagioli 2012; Skrodzka 2012; Yovanovich 2011)

“Carnavalesque” is referred to as political intervention, as a practice of exposing attempts of offering “one-sided meaning to a complicated history of violence as utterly inadequate and insufficient” (Jelača 169). Elsaesser sees excessive hedonism as “carnavalesque” and as the only logical answer to the post-Tito despair over the loss of national and personal identity. Opting for disproportionate sensuousness, in his view, helps de-historicize the Serbian point of view in this film (Elsaesser 27): “Gocić goes on to claim that ‘since (*Underground*) is an explicit pastiche, one should not jump at the opportunity to read any of its historical ‘propositions’ literally’” (29) (as quoted in Jelača 170).

4 Cerović, “Canned Lies.”

5 Ibid.

As could be read from the above examples, excess, hyperbole, “carnivalesque” and postmodern pastiche are reiterated as arguments against reading Kusturica’s *Underground* as ideologically informed and historically problematic in the hope of keeping the film resilient to any outside criticism. These recurring claims made me consider looking closely into Mikhael Bakhtin’s understanding of the carnivalesque, Fredric Jameson’s criticism of postmodern pastiche, and Linda Hutcheon’s view on postmodern parody.

Bakhtin suggests that the primary characteristic of the medieval carnival was a mock crowning and de-crowning of the carnival king. It “celebrates the shift itself, the very process of replaceability and not the precise item that is replaced” (Bakhtin, 2017, 125). He suggests that if:

carnivalistic ambivalence should happen to be extinguished in these images of de-crowning, they degenerated into a purely negative expose of a moral or socio-political sort, they became single-leveled, lost their artistic character, and were transformed into naked journalism. (Bakhtin, 2017, 126)

As carnival presupposes the temporal suspension of hierarchical orders, its definite aim is to rejuvenate existing orders. On closer inspection and contrary to Bakhtin’s understanding of the carnivalesque, *Underground* opts for exaggeration, excessiveness of bodily sensations, from eating, drinking, and fornicating to committing acts of violence. Its insistence on hyperbole, from the beginning until the end of the film, extinguishes carnival ambivalence. The overrepresentation of overindulgence leaves out of consideration any type of behaviour that does not entail oversaturating all the senses at all times. In this regard, excessiveness establishes itself as a norm, as a dominant mode of representation, and not as an exception to the rule. *Underground* does not mock the one-sided meaning of the “complicated history of violence” as insufficient and inadequate in a “carnivalesque” way. It discards the meaning by replacing it with its negation. As Žižek points out, the film “falls into the cynical trap of presenting this obscene ‘underground’ from a benevolent distance” (81).

Admirers of *Underground* largely diminish the historical and political significance of audio/visual collage while arguing for the artistic freedom in mixing genres, styles, etc. implied in their understanding of what constitutes postmodern pastiche. Concomitant with this belief is Jameson’s famous critique of postmodern pastiche as a “blank parody,” value-free, decorative, de-historicized quotation of a past form (Jameson, 1998, 3). At the other end, staunch critics of *Underground* mainly focus on the archival sequences as

important historical signposts of how to assess the sociopolitical implications of the film. These implications go largely unrecognized outside the former Yugoslavia, possibly due the Balkanism that the film and its audience submit to. Literary scholar Linda Hutcheon contrasts Jameson's notion of pastiche with her concept of postmodern parody. As double coded, it is complicit and subversive towards the values it installs and later criticizes. She defends a historical and political awareness that, in her view, is suggested by parody:

Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations—its images and stories—are anything but neutral, however “aestheticized” they may appear to be in their self-reflexivity. While the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political action, it does work to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalizing critique. (Hutcheon 3)

Hutcheon concludes that parody tends to de-doxify, to unsettle all doxa, accepted beliefs, and ideologies. Considering the viewpoint of the film's critics, it could be argued that postmodern parody characterizes the inserted, archival, freely mixed audio-visual sequences in *Underground*. They attest to the film's complicity and subversion towards the ideological grounding of concrete episodes in Yugoslav history (Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia, Tito's funeral) that the film installs and later criticizes.

The inserted sequences of archival footage edited with the sound of “Lili Marlene” disrupt the coherence previously established by the mode of exaggeration, which I have already identified as the film's mode of representation. In that sense, these sequences act as non-representational images. They help viewers reorient themselves historically. And in this intervention they help situate *Underground* a few steps away from value-free postmodern pastiche and a bit closer to historically informed postmodern parody. Following Deleuze's Bergson-inspired writing, it could be said that these audio-visual arrangements help the viewer to rearrange their existing virtual repertoire with regard to their prior knowledge about the history of Yugoslavia and its demise. Their function is comparable to:

paratextual insertion of actual historical documents into historiographic metafiction (which) can be related to Brecht's alienation effect: like the songs in his plays, the historical documents dropped into the fictions have the potential effect of interrupting any illusion, by making the reader into an active collaborator, not a passive consumer. (Hutcheon 84)

Examined separately, the two sequences are certainly characterized by postmodern ambiguity and suspicion of metanarratives, as suggested by Hutcheon. However, the film as a whole does not take up the chance to install and subvert all dominant ideologies or to de-doxify all doxa related to the history of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As suggested earlier, Milošević's nationalist ideology is nowhere referenced as the most credible cause of the demise of Yugoslavia and its follow-up wars. *Underground* appears to be a visually rich metaphor of messy *Yugoslav affairs*, yet, due to this omission, it is more conveniently a literal realization of the well-known metaphor *Yugoslavia is the prison of nations*. Seemingly above ideology and history in its postmodern referencing of different markers of different ideologies, the film dismisses the most relevant one for understanding the demise of Yugoslavia. The ambiguity of Bakhtinian carnivalesque and Hutcheonian postmodern parody is thereby invalidated by Baudrillardian hyperreality. Postmodernism, according to Hutcheon, "is not a degeneration into 'hyperreality' but a questioning of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it" (32).

Questioning what reality can mean and how we can come to know it is of lesser concern for *Underground*, which is deeply invested in showing that reality is nothing but the simulacrum.⁶ As film scholar Sanjin Pejčović highlights, the film engages in "fabricating history through the very critique of fabricating history" (Pejčović 60). The film-within-a-film segment acting as *pars pro toto* of *Underground* illustrates Pejčović's point, which is shared by Jelača and Elsaesser in the following passages, respectively:

With that, *Underground* calls attention to its own artifice, by winking at the spectator and inviting him/her to understand that this propaganda film-within-a-film is but a version of *Underground* itself, as both trade in manufacturing fictive truths than supporting historical facts. (Jelača 173)

But the director also allegorises the cinematic *dispositif* of Plato's cave, except that above ground, of course, his characters are still inside the cave. Kusturica's film within the film metaphor (often called upon by other Balkan filmmakers to support the simulacrum) is almost contemporaneous with Barry Levinson's *Wag the Dog* (1997, US, 97 min.), and anticipates Ben Affleck's *Argo* (2012, US, 120 min.). (Elsaesser 26)

6 An identical copy without an original is a simulacrum. Simulation, according to Baudrillard, is "the generation by models of a real without origins or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 2). For Baudrillard, a characteristic mode of postmodernity is hyperreality.

The fabrication of history, manufacturing of fictive truths, simulacrum, cellar as a habitat, and lies permeating the narrative all characterize the universe of *Underground*. Questioning what reality can mean and how we can know it is dissolved into rejecting meaning, while ironical ambiguity is diminished by cynicism. Seen as a whole, *Underground* cannot be regarded as a postmodern parody. It appears to be a value-free pastiche as it is not a straightforward, linear, propaganda narrative. Due to the omission suggested earlier, the film's postmodern collage serves, however, narrow, nationalistic ends, which see the history of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans and its peoples as inevitably complicated, violent and conflict-driven. *Underground* does not do much to implant a seed of doubt in such essentialism and provoke any other kind of thinking. Its style is informed by critical reflections on history and selected ideologies and yet is made to serve a certain vision of history and ideology.

Exaggerated self-exoticism is a feature that *Underground* shares with Srđan Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*. In the first chapter, I made a reference to Iordanova's notion of self-exoticism. In her view, many of the stereotypes about the Balkans are uncritically and willingly adopted, repeated and perpetuated by many Balkan intellectuals (Iordanova 56). The so-called Orientalization of the Balkans cannot be declared a purely western project as "it is a process that has been embraced, internalized and partially carried out by many consenting Balkan intellectuals" (Iordanova 56). The result is a specific, intentional self-exoticism, which is the preferred mode of self-representation for many Balkan filmmakers. I would add that the exaggerated self-exoticism implies two concomitant operations: internal Orientalism, as observed by Iordanova, and the commodification aimed at international consumption. Stereotypes by western media in their coverage of the wars were internalized and amplified in *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* in order to persuade the audience to adopt a certain reading of the wars. Exaggerated self-exoticism is inseparable from the way in which the causes of the Yugoslav wars are addressed in *Underground*. In *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, this mode of representation is elaborated through the recurring scenes of wartime violence.

***Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*: Over-Representation of War and Overarching Cynicism**

Pretty Village, Pretty Flame is based on war reportage, which Vanja Bulić, the film's co-screenwriter, wrote for the 1992 issue of *Duga*, a magazine

sympathetic to Milošević. The narrative is conveyed through a series of flashbacks by Milan, a hospitalized Bosnian Serb soldier, and by soldiers from his squad. The chronology of events could be summarized in the following way: Milan's squad is first seen burning down villages in Bosnia in 1992. Having survived a sudden attack by Bosnian soldiers at night, the squad is now forced into an abandoned tunnel. The trapped soldiers cannot leave the tunnel, and their enemies cannot enter. A ten-day deadlock for all involved. *Pretty Village's* flashbacks encompass sequences of Milan's childhood and early adulthood spent with his best friend, Halil, who is Muslim. The two former friends find themselves on opposite warring sides.

Pretty Village's opening sequence sets the tone of the film. Made in mockumentary mode, it depicts the opening of a "Tunnel of Brotherhood and Unity" in 1971. It announces what is elaborated throughout the film: a derision of the Socialist modernization process. As Pavičić notes, the film's introduction shows that twenty years following the ceremony, the train has never made it through the village, the local children believe in the existence of an ogre lurking in the unfinished tunnel, and the whole area appears not to have been affected by Socialist modernism whatsoever. It is rather an ambience of mud, kitsch, devoid of culture (Pavičić 147). Pavičić observes that the war is introduced with a scene of the exodus of Muslim villagers, presented in a highly grotesque manner. The family is depicted in a small, packed Fiat car, with Tito's portrait installed on top. Once the violence unfolds, the film curiously examines the contrasts between the war destruction and the kitschy culture of Titoism by focusing on details like the burning of an Eiffel tower, made of matches, or plastic flowers on windowsills in a demolished house. Pavičić observes that the war is depicted through aesthetic qualities, compared to peace, which appears aesthetically repulsive, vulgar, and provincial. Poetic qualities underlie sequences depicting the soldiers' rampage through Bosnian villages, as the title *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* indicates. Characters end up in a literal and metaphorical tunnel for taking various propaganda discourses for granted. Titoist ideals, Milošević TV propaganda and kitschy Chetnik memorabilia bought from stands are lined side by side. Compared to *Underground*, the postmodern referencing of various markers of different ideologies is more consistently elaborated in *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*. Subsequently, an all-sides-are-guilty approach is evenly pursued through the film's thematization and depiction of wartime violence.

With the beginning of the war, the protagonists adopt iconography borrowed from Vietnam War and action movies, and start wearing scarves and sunglasses. Pop-culturally informed soldiers constantly crack jokes.

In one sequence, which depicts the rampage through a village, a soldier Velja is seen playing a Game Boy next to a burning house. A moment later, he is seen dancing to the sound of “Igra rock and roll, cela Jugoslavija” by the famous band Električni orgazam. As Pavičić indicates, the onset of war enables the protagonists to enter a world with a different logic, made of quotes and references, without any consequences attached. In this realm, governed by grotesque and animation-based logic, they seem to overcome their pre-war, miserable existence by becoming quotations from other films, puzzle pieces of Vietnam films and films made by Hajrudin Šiba Krvavac, John Carpenter, or Walter Hill (Pavičić 149).

As in *Underground*, the universe of *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* is characterized by postmodern elements like hyperbole, the grotesque, self-reflexivity, and the intertextual referencing of various traditions:

The camerawork is dynamic, showing preference for non-traditional angles and shots taken from above. Stylistically, the film ranks alongside Wajda's *Kanal* (1957), Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), Wolfgang Peterson's *Das Boot/The Boat* (1982), Josef Vilmayer's *Stalingrad* (1993) and John Woo's *Broken Arrow* (1996), in all of which a claustrophobic confine endangers the sanity of the protagonists. (Iordanova 144)

Film scholar Pavle Levi notes that the film's representational strategy is inspired by John Carpenter's film *Assault on Precinct 13*, particularly by its model of an invisible enemy. Other references include Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* and films by Howard Hawks (Levi 143).

The film's events are conveyed as a series of flashbacks from the life of Milan and other soldiers trapped inside the tunnel. Milan's flashbacks cover fragments of three periods from his past: his childhood and adulthood spent with Halil and his service in the Serb army during the Bosnian war.

The longest flashback in the film belongs to Milan and covers moments of agony for the soldiers trapped inside the tunnel. Legend has it that an ogre lives in the tunnel, which, as Jelača asserts, is a “source of fear” for young Milan and Halil, a “site of the uncanny.” The place of literal confrontation between grown-up Milan and Halil is at the same time the place of the symbolic countdown between grown-up Milan and what becomes a failing idea of the Yugoslav motto of brotherhood and unity (Jelača 70). According to Levi, the tunnel in *Pretty Village* could be perceived as the “black hole” that stored everything that was repressed from the sociopolitical reality, so that Yugoslavia could maintain the self-image of inter-ethnic solidarity. The ogre is subsequently a “timeless and transhistorical interethnic animosity”

that was growing underneath the surface of multi-ethnic happiness, only to explode in the most violent way with the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Levi 141). Only the soldiers, trapped inside the tunnel, are entitled to remember. Others, their Muslim enemies and women, are deprived of this prospect. The protagonists' memories are conveyed as partial, highly selective and fragmented:

Perhaps the most important aspect of *Pretty Village's* representational ideology is its persistent exclusion, from both the visual and the audio registers, of the most disturbing effects of the Serb army's campaign in Bosnia: the massive killing of civilians. Until the point when its protagonists—the soldiers trapped inside the tunnel—begin to get killed, the film hardly addresses death at all as the principle outcome of war. A destruction of Bosnia is depicted through the violent rampage of these soldiers, villages are burnt, property is stolen, but no killing seems to take place, and no one seems to die. Although one is led to assume that death abounds wherever the soldiers go, it in fact remains invisible. (Levi 146)

Jelača postulates that civilian casualties, as direct consequences of the perpetrators' assaults, were absent from the narrative due to the elusive nature of perpetrator trauma. Most of the events in the film are derived from "a highly subjective point of view of a character grappling with the burden of his perpetrator trauma" (Jelača 70). It should be made clear that Jelača's notion of "perpetrator trauma," marked by "un/representability and ineloquence" (Jelača 73), is owed to Cathy Caruth's concept of trauma as inaccessible and essentially non-representable (Caruth 91). Caruth's insistence on trauma's inherent latency, where the trauma is experienced only after the traumatic event, when it returns to haunt the traumatized, makes no promise of resolution or therapeutic closure in a LaCaprian sense. It is relevant to add at this point that Dominick LaCapra was the first to outline the prospect of "perpetrator trauma," which:

must itself be acknowledged and in some sense worked through if perpetrators are to distance themselves from an earlier implication in deadly ideologies and practices. Such trauma does not, however, entail the equation or identification of the perpetrator and the victim. (LaCapra 723)

Pretty Village, Pretty Flame is certainly not a film in which perpetrators distance themselves from earlier wrongdoings or in which any distinction between the perpetrator and the victim is made obvious, as LaCapra would

suggest. The sequence showing the soldiers' rampage through the village is complemented with the sound of rock music or with the soldiers' quick and witty remarks. Perpetrators are portrayed primarily as victims, first of the ideologies they took for granted, second of literal attacks carried out by their enemies. Their suffering inside the tunnel comes to the fore, as the casualties of their assaults remain absent from the narrative.

Grotesque, hyperbole, intertextual reflexivity, and the use of flashbacks, marked by a taboo on representing the act of killing and/or dead civilians in the war scenes, characterize the mode of representation in *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame*.

Deleuze's understanding of a flashback, as elaborated in the previous chapter, proves helpful when addressing the mode of representation of *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame*. According to Deleuze, the flashback is a conventional device. It can indicate psychological causality; but nevertheless remains analogous to sensory-motor determinism. It comes to the fore as the so-called recollection-image, as a closed circuit between the actual or perception image and its virtual image. An actual image does not extend into generic movement, but connects with a virtual image, with which it forms a circuit. The circuit goes from the present to the past and back to the present. And the recollection-image occupies this circuit (Deleuze, 2010, 45). Even though the past in flashback appears to be contrasted with the present, Deleuze regards it as "former present" rather than as the pure past in the Bergsonian sense (Deleuze, 2010, 52). Despite its interruption of the narrative flow, it adds to the progression of linear narration.

On closer inspection, Milan and other soldiers' flashbacks could be perceived as Deleuzian recollection-images. Episodes from different times in their respective pasts appear to be disorienting and in contrast with the film's present. In fact, they are analogous to the film's sensory-motor schema. Despite their circuits, the soldiers' flashbacks add to the progression of linear narration.

The film's mode of representation, marked by the prohibition of showing any killing performed by the protagonists and/or dead civilians, is disrupted by strategies of non-representation on four occasions. Levi's analysis of the three following examples greatly informs my reading. First is a scene at the beginning of the film in which soldiers enter an empty, demolished house. The phone rings, and a soldier answers. A woman in distress is heard insisting on speaking to Ćamil. Another soldier takes the phone receiver and looks around. Through the broken window, a dead man's body, probably Ćamil's, is briefly seen lying outside the house. A quick shot of the man's dead body acts as a non-representational image of war. It disrupts the narrative's previously

established coherence based on the self-imposed taboo on representing the killing performed by the protagonists. In Levi's view, it is a "singular case of transgression" for pointing out what otherwise remains the film's "missing content" (Levi 148). A few seconds later, as the soldier comes into view again, the broken coherence is re-established. The second example is the scene in which Milan enters a demolished house and approaches a wooden wardrobe damaged by machine-gun fire. Hanging clothes block Milan's view of the interior. Only a line of blood is seen at the bottom of the wardrobe. The scene ends with a gaze from the wardrobe piercing through the clothes back at Milan. The relevance of the second scene for my discussion on non-representation lies in the difficulty on the viewer's part to locate the source of the piercing look through the clothes, as has already been analysed in great detail by Levi. Since the scene ends with a shot of this piercing look, the gaze cannot be assigned to the hiding ethnic other. It appears to be aligned with the dead. Given that the actual presence of a body is never visually confirmed, the status of the shot cannot be a dead person's look either, rather an "autonomous, bodiless gaze," a "self-sustaining, uncanny presence" (Levi 147). Similarly ambiguous are the spectral voices and apparition-like figures of the ethnic enemy soldiers surrounding the tunnel, as suggested by Levi's analysis of the longest flashback, which attests to the third non-representational strategy. Since the trapped soldiers are unable to see what is happening outside the tunnel, their knowledge of the enemy's presence depends on the voices they hear:

More precisely, it depends on the *acousmatic* voices heard inside the tunnel—voices that, as Chion would have it, are "heard without (their) ... source being seen," voices that seem to be "wandering along the surface (of the image, or screen), *at once inside and outside*, seeking a place to settle." (as quoted in Levi 143)

The construction of an enemy as *acousmêtre* has subversive potential due to the misalignment between the voice assigned to the ethnic other and the symbolic reality of the "actually existing" ethnic groups (Muslims, Serbs, etc.). (Levi 144)

For most of the time that the soldiers spend inside the tunnel, the viewer has difficulty deciding whether the voices belong to actually existing Muslim soldiers. Alternatively, they could be aligned with Serb soldiers themselves or with the dead inhabitants of the village. The viewer's indecisiveness around the three reading strategies amounts to the subversive potential of *acousmêtre*, which in turn gives rise to non-representational images of war.

The misalignment between the voice assigned to the ethnic other and the visually identifiable body of an ethnic other opens the genre of standard war film up to that of horror or fantasy.

Patricia White's insights on a seemingly unrelated topic prove useful in elucidating my point. The film scholar engages with the problem of lesbian representability in classical Hollywood films made from the 1930s to the 1960s. Gothic, ghost films and maternal melodramas aimed at female audiences are the focus of her research. As she reminds us in her book *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability*, the film scholar Linda Williams had already recognized an affinity between the monster and the female victim in classic horror films. It is an identification that articulates a female transgression (White 63). White found it necessary to update Williams's reading of horror films by adding that the genre often shows an affinity with homosexuality:

beyond its queer cast of characters or its insistent thematic elaboration of difference in the representation of predatory or sterile desires. For horror puts in question the reliability of perception. Such an epistemological question is bound up with the representation of homosexuality. The question is not only whether "something else" exists, but in what forms its difference can be grasped—horror works the far side of its equation, inventing both "things" and the means of revealing and concealing them. (White 63)

A parallel can be drawn between the Gothic and ghost films that are the focus of White's research, on one side, and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame*, on the other. The epistemological doubt of the latter film is closely connected with the representation of the other. In our case, it is not homosexual, but an ethnic other. The misalignment between the voice assigned to the ethnic other and the visually identifiable body of the ethnic other raises the question of the reliability of perception.

Despite the plurality of readings suggested by the non-representational strategy outlined here, the film opts for an interpretation in which the voice finally matches the body of the ethnic other, thereby settling on the convention of a war film that implies ethnically distinct combatant sides. Levi insists that by doing so, the film "endorses the viewer's critical identification with the characters on ethnopatriotic grounds" (150). The film finally visualizes *acousmètre* by having Halil, Milan's childhood friend, appear at the top of the tunnel. Following a brief exchange between the former friends, Halil learns that Milan did not burn down his shop and the viewer learns that Halil did not kill Milan's mother. The possibility of

renewing their friendship is diminished by a sudden explosion, which by way of *deus ex machina* puts an end to Halil's life:

In light of *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*'s "national economy," it is perhaps not too much of a stretch to suggest that Halil died so that Milan's animosity toward the ethnic other (more precisely, toward the sourceless voice of ethnic otherness) could continue. (Levi 152)

Milan's animosity towards the ethnic other reaches its peak in the following scene, which takes place in the present time in a Belgrade hospital. Blinded by rage, a heavily wounded Milan crawls to the bed of a (voiceless) Muslim inmate and attempts to murder him with a fork. The scene ends with Milan dropping the fork and cursing the ogre. The following scene, by way of non-representation, introduces a change within the established narrative continuity. A panning shot glides over a pile of dead bodies in the tunnel. The corpses of grown-up Milan and Halil appear last in the line, as observed by young Milan and Halil, standing nearby. The inserted scene operates on three different levels of time. The dead bodies are wearing the same clothes as the people gathered for the celebration of the opening of the tunnel in the mockumentary sequence. The grown-up Milan and Halil inhabit yet another period of time, distinct from the one occupied by the younger versions of themselves. It is possible to claim that we are dealing here with a non-linear, Bergsonian conception of time as duration (*durée*) and co-existing layers of time. This conception sees time as an unquantifiable quality and intensity, as opposed to another view, which perceives time as quantifiable and measurable in space. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze reinforces the Bergsonian notion of time as duration:

In any case, what we call temporal structure, or direct-time image, clearly goes beyond the purely empirical succession of time—past-present-future. It is, for example, a coexistence of distinct durations, or of levels of duration; a single event can belong to several levels: the sheets of past can coexist in a non-chronological order. (Deleuze, 2010, xi)

Deleuze uses the Bergsonian conception of time in order to refer to sheets of the past and peaks of the present as characteristics of the time-image. The co-existing sheets of the past in the scene described here function according to a different logic compared to the flashbacks grounded in sensory-motor determinism. Concomitant layers of time require a more active engagement on the viewer's part. It could be argued that the non-representational

image calls into doubt the film's prevalent idea about insurmountable ethnic differences inevitably feeding into conflicts following the demise of Yugoslavia. The boys briefly face the ogre, only to run away from it in the next moment. The film ends where it began, with a mockumentary sequence. A glimpse of hope suggested by the last non-representational image is diminished by a return to the idea of transhistorical interethnic animosity as being relentlessly, yet temporarily suppressed by the official, therefore deceptive Yugoslav motto of brotherhood and unity. The film's tonality of overarching cynicism is reminiscent of that in *Underground*. Both films share a firm rejection of any possibility of renewal or meaning, for that matter. Seemingly postmodern in nature, both have little in common with what LaCapra perceives as a non-negotiable difference:

Nonnegotiable difference might, rather, be seen as the limit-case of incommensurability in another sense: that of the ability to translate from perspective to perspective and perhaps to reach agreement or decision on certain issues without having some superordinate master language, absolute foundation, or final arbiter (divinity, the sovereign, the community, the reason, or what have you). (LaCapra 710)

Non-negotiable difference or reaching consensus over certain issues in *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* is conflated with compliance with a superordinate master narrative and is readily abolished. To those viewers less invested in the history addressed in both films, such dismissal can appear justifiable, if not desirable. To all the others, it is a gesture that keeps post-Yugoslav societies firmly locked in their (post-)war conditions.

***Ordinary People* and *The Blacks*—Beyond Over-Representation of War**

Vladimir Perišić's film *Ordinary People* and Zvonimir Jurić and Goran Dević's film *The Blacks* suggest a major shift from the way in which war was represented in *Underground* and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame*.

Ordinary People

Ordinary People follows a new conscript, Johnny, in an unspecified war meant to evoke the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. The film opens when Johnny and his squad travel to an abandoned farm or factory, where they must stand by and await orders in response to recent terrorist attacks. After arriving at

a deserted location, they sit around, take naps, and smoke cigarettes while waiting to enter the fight. The fight never occurs. Instead, they begin receiving lorryloads of male civilians, whom the soldiers, following orders from their superior, execute in coldblooded fashion. At first, Johnny is reluctant about killing. By the end of the day, he evolves into a professional assassin.

As the title insinuates, the film revolves around the question of how an ordinary citizen evolves into a callous war criminal. According to Pavičić, the film was conceptualized and announced as an adaptation of Slavenka Drakulić's text "One Day in the Life of Dražen Erdemović" from her book *They Would Never Hurt a Fly: War Criminals on Trial in The Hague* (Drakulić 199). As a part of her research, Drakulić spent five months following the war crimes trials at the Hague Tribunal. The text centres on the case of Dražen Erdemović, a young, reluctant soldier from the armed forces of Republika Srpska, who was forced to kill between seventy and 100 Muslim men from Srebrenica in the course of one day, on July 16, 1995, at the Branjevo collective farm in Pilica, around 15 kilometres from the border with Serbia. The Erdemović case is significant for being the first application of the defence of duress in the Hague Tribunal. Erdemović showed remorse while admitting that he had acted under extreme duress. The initial sentence was ten years in prison and, on appeal, was reduced to five (Drakulić 94–107).

Having closely followed the trial, Drakulić came to realize that war crimes had been mostly committed by ordinary citizens and not by some pathological killers. By choosing to believe that perpetrators are monsters, she insists, we choose to distance ourselves from them and refuse to acknowledge that we, ordinary citizens, could ever commit such crimes (Drakulić 166). Drakulić believes that brutality in war is more of a norm than an exception and has more to do with an ordinary person's reaction to an extraordinary situation than with one's character (168). The construction of the other as the object of hatred paved the way for the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia. As Drakulić elucidates, citizens eventually succumbed to hatred, which was grounded on emphasizing a difference based on myths and prejudices, partly rooted in the history of the earlier war, partly in religious and cultural differences (169). State propaganda had helped shape the difference so that it created a feeling of an outside threat and strengthened the urge for homogenization (Drakulić 170). Gradually, the others were no longer acquaintances, professionals with certain names, habits, appearances, and characteristics. Stripped of their individuality, they were reduced to an abstraction. By hating and disregarding the other as a lesser human, to paraphrase Drakulić, we reduce ourselves to an abstract category and allow the enemy to see us as the other as well (170).

Drakulić's observations about war criminals as ordinary people echo Hannah Arendt's coverage of the trial of Otto Adolf Eichmann, a German-Austrian SS-*Obermannsturmchef* (a lieutenant colonel), one of the chief creators of the Holocaust, for the *New Yorker* magazine in 1963. Rather than facing a satanic figure, an extreme anti-Semite, Arendt saw a "terrifyingly normal person" (Arendt 274), a "joiner" (32) and an obedient bureaucrat, merely interested in advancing his career. Eichmann's deeds were monstrous, yet the man himself appeared banal. As Arendt clarifies, he displayed "thoughtlessness," "remoteness from reality" (287), and an "almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view" (48), which, however, did not absolve him of responsibility for his deeds. Eichmann did not have to contend with the consequences of his deeds since the voice of conscience of honourable German society had not told him that he should feel guilty for his actions. (Arendt 150). Arendt's writing drew hefty criticism for downplaying the consciousness and conscience of such a leading organizer of the Holocaust, and in that sense, for absolving him of ideologically infused hatred against the other.⁷ Without entering into a further discussion on the drawbacks of the otherwise remarkable insights provided by Arendt, I make use of her hypothesis "banality of evil" as it feeds into Drakulić's notions, which in turn prove relevant for my analysis of the non-representational strategies in *Ordinary People*. Regardless of the evident disparities in argument, examples and style between Drakulić and Arendt's writing, both authors maintain that ordinary people, under certain circumstances, while obeying the orders of their superiors or succumbing to outside pressure, engage in the most hideous crimes.

Film critic Howard Feinstein observes that young soldiers in *Ordinary People* were not depicted as monsters, "but as uninteresting products of a system of rigid discipline that, over time, eradicates one's sense of self as well as one's conscience."⁸ The aspect of clear submission to military orders was emphasized to such a degree that, as Pavičić remarks, all topological, anthropological, and cultural specificities by which sides in the war are recognized were removed from the film (199). The protagonists' names are ethnically unrecognizable, even within the context of the former Yugoslavia.

7 For an overview of reception and criticism of Hannah Arendt's writing up till present see the following article: Michael Aharoni, "Why Does Hannah Arendt's 'Banality of Evil' still Anger Israelis?" *Haaretz*, May 11, 2019, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-why-does-hannah-arendt-s-banality-of-evil-still-anger-israelis-1.7213979. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

8 For Howard Feinstein's review of *Ordinary People*, see Feinstein, "Ordinary People." *Screen Daily*, May 16, 2009, www.screendaily.com/ordinary-people-/5001216.article. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

Insignia is absent from the uniforms, regardless of the fact that the soldiers in the film were army recruits and not members of a militia. The action lacks a clear indication of place and time crucial to Drakulić's documentarian prose. Geographical names used in the film are invented. It could be argued that the resulting abstraction invites the viewer to attend to the very logic of warfare, which, regardless of one's belonging to a particular (ethno-religious) group, amounts to youth being ruthlessly used by the military apparatus. Such a departure from the original text certainly draws the viewer's attention away from reading into one's ethnicity and cementing preconceived ideas about the perpetrator-victim divide evident from the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. In an interview, Vladimir Perišić argues in a similar vein:

By means of cinema I have tried to understand how an ordinary person can commit a crime. My aim was to convey it in a form, which would prevent the film from being used as a tool for justifying any of current political discourses present in these territories. It is because I do not recognize myself in any of these discourses.⁹

Perišić's insistence on departing from the way in which dominant ethno-nationalist elites use war narratives for their own gains is understandable and most welcome. Such an aesthetic decision explains why the film received the highest accolade at the Sarajevo Film Festival, where it premiered in the competition section in 2009. The perpetuation of recurring, self-victimizing narratives calls, indeed, for their cancellation. In that regard, the strategy of providing soldiers with ethnically unrecognizable names is plausible. The omission of any and all signs by which sides in the war are recognized enhances the viewer's engagement with the film, maintains Miljenko Jergović. In his review of the film, the writer argues that the acts of killing displayed would have been of lesser concern for an involved viewer if the soldiers' uniforms had had insignia. The reasoning goes: if there had been emblems, they would have provided justification for committed crimes and would have distanced the viewer from closely engaging with the film or identifying with its protagonist.¹⁰ My argument is that the missing emblems from the soldiers' uniforms would not have been problematic if other spatio-temporal

9 The complete interview with Vladimir Perišić in its original language can be found here: Ćirić, "Intervju sa Vladimirom Perišićem: Šta to po dvorovima plaši gospodu?" *Vreme*, Jul. 16, 2014, www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1213794&print=yes. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

10 For Miljenko Jergović's analysis of the film "Koje su nacije obični ubojice" ("What nation are ordinary killers"), see Jergović, "Koje su nacije obični ubojice." Miljenko Jergović official website, Mar. 6, 2010. www.jergovic.com/subotnja-matineja/255. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

indicators had not been displaced. The ensuing reduction in style, the sum of all non-representational strategies, amounts to erasure of the political context of the Yugoslav wars. The overall aesthetic treatment of the subject creates an impression that perpetrator and victim are interchangeable categories. At any given time, under certain circumstances, anyone can become a war criminal and a victim, for that matter. If one accepts this view, one agrees with the idea that a situation makes one an assassin. Accordingly, a war criminal is merely a cog in the military machinery, helpless to influence the logic and flow of events once they start unfolding. If a perpetrator is merely a cog in the military machine, is he not indeed exonerated from accountability for his deeds? Leaving this question unsettled, the film raises an ethical concern over the limitations of non-representational strategies.

Raya Morag's reading of *Ordinary People*, published in her book *Waltzing with Bashir*, reflects my remarks to a certain degree:

The film is of course critical of genocide, but fails to relate to any conscious account by the protagonist, who is portrayed as numbed. Thus, though many years have passed since the end of the conflicts, the film demonstrates far less maturity than is required for ethical confession. (Morag 217)

Morag's critique of the film needs to be understood in the context of her conceptualization of perpetrator trauma based on an analysis of Israeli documentary literature and cinema produced from 2000 onwards. As she emphasizes in her book, recent interest in the perpetrator's consciousness has been motivated by "the collapse of traditional war concepts, as well as the Jewish-Israeli legacy of victimhood concepts, including those of the Holocaust" (Morag 207). Departing from the writings of Bessel Van der Kolk, Onno Van der Hart, and Dominick LaCapra on traumatic belatedness inherent to the victim's subjectivity, Morag associates perpetrator trauma with being in the actual space, at the site of atrocities:

Accentuating the evidentiary of the physical space over the volatility of time and memory makes an account of "being there" at the site of atrocities, the root of the process of acknowledging one's deeds. The uncathartic confession, which triggers the social process, is deliberate in not appealing to audience participation with, and compassion for, the confessor; rather, as the documentary works unfold, the perpetrator mobilizes his/her postwar "weapons"—shame, guilt, and self-denouncement—toward an unsettled empathy and deep commitment to the (usually ethnic) other. (Morag 212)

Morag summarizes her observation by stating that recent works by Israeli documentary filmmakers and novelists expose the long, agonizing process of assuming moral responsibility by perpetrators that involves admission of consciousness and agency (213). The level of consciousness and conscience required for a confession to take place is left out of consideration in *Ordinary People*, which deploys a “harsh, quasi-documentary style” to show “a young soldier’s evolution into a murder machine” (217). Morag admits that the space of atrocities plays an important role as a mute witness, but the basic context offered by the film does not allow adoption of the theory developed by her book (218). In my view, the omission of all signs by which the sides in the war are recognized needs to be perceived as the sum of all non-representational strategies, which facilitates the erasure of the political context of the Yugoslav wars. I am convinced that the resulting absence conditions what Morag calls “far less maturity than is required for ethical confession” (217). The film’s refusal to consider moral conundrums inextricable from the context of the killings points out the limitations of the non-representational strategies employed.

In *Ordinary People*, music is absent, dialogue sparse, shots are static with relatively long takes. These stylistic features help maintain a much slower and more contemplative pace compared to *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*. Deleuze wrote that the fixed shot, along with pure optical and sound images, and the montage-cut imply a beyond of movement (Deleuze, 2010, 21). Instead of extending into movement and connecting with other images in the narrative, these actual images link up with their virtual counterparts, with which they form circuits. In this operation, as elaborated in the previous chapter, they require more active engagement on the part of the viewer.

Characters in the Deleuzian time-image type of cinema, which implies a collapse of sensory-motor schemata intrinsic to movement-image cinema, become “seers” as they cannot or will not react to newly occurring situations. *Ordinary People* shares a similarity with this type of cinema for having the protagonist largely portrayed as an observer. In the first part of the film, Johnny is mostly shown from the back while observing, following orders, and then participating in the killing. At another time, his face and other body parts are shown in close-up. By means of seemingly unmotivated close-ups, the killings, as the most anticipated activities in terms of dramaturgy, remain outside the frame. As Pavičić notices, from the moment in the film in which Johnny decisively approaches a new group of civilians, singles out and shoots a teenage boy, the focus is shifted from him to his victim. From then on, the act of killing is no longer elliptically

avoided, but fully shown, involving the perpetrator and the victim in the same frame (Pavičić 203). This strategy implies that Johnny's transformation from a naïve conscript to an entirely wholly engaged assassin, a war criminal, has been completed.

In *Ordinary People*, the space between the camera and filmed bodies is often kept at the same distance. Murtić observes that any activity, be it brushing one's teeth in the bathroom, eating breakfast in the canteen, smoking cigarettes under the tree or executing civilians, is filmed from an identical angle and distance. Such a strategy, in his view, indicates that mass killing has nothing to do with emotions and human nature. A formal and patterned distance suggests that a particular policy constructs a particular social environment in which particular war crimes can happen (Murtić 83). Such an approach certainly creates an impression that war crimes are dispassionate and repetitive, almost industrial-like activities. The film insinuates "an unsettling parallel between acclimatization to violence and learning the mechanics of a new job," John Frosch's review suggests.¹¹ Feinstein takes the argument further, asserting that the soldiers' acts of violating international laws during wartime are devoid of introspection. They are perceived "as banalities, on the same level as smoking a cigarette or brushing their teeth."¹² Feinstein's observation elucidates two points: first, activity is sided with passivity, and second, the two share the same level of banality. The first point is relevant for our discussion on strategies of non-representation and evokes concepts by Jacques Rancière. The second point is immanent to the genesis of the film and induces notions already mentioned by Hannah Arendt and Slavenka Drakulić.

In *The Future of Images*, Rancière writes about a representative regime, in which resemblances are subject to its triple constraint: the visibility of speech; the primacy of the "action," which governs the relationship between knowledge-effects and pathos-effects; and the regime of rationality, which subjects words and images to the intrinsic criteria of verisimilitude and appropriateness. Rancière emphasizes that a break with representation in art is not emancipation from resemblance, but the emancipation of resemblance from that triple constraint. He finds that in the anti-representative break, pictorial non-representation is preceded by something seemingly different, novelistic realism. Flaubert's writing was once criticized under the heading of realism, where:

11 See John Frosch, "Ordinary People: Film Review." *Hollywood Reporter*, May 19, 2009, www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/ordinary-people-film-review-93198. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

12 See Feinstein, "Ordinary People."

everything is now on the same level, the great and the small, important events and insignificant episodes, human beings and things. Everything is equal, equally representable. And this 'equally representable' spells the ruin of the representative system. (Rancière 120)

The new novel, the realist novel, was once criticized for the primacy of description over action. The primacy of description deprives action of its clarity, of ordered distribution of knowledge-effects and pathos-effects: "This power is absorbed by the apathetic *pathos* of description that merges wills and meanings in a succession of little perceptions where activity and passivity can no longer be distinguished" (Rancière 121). Rancière calls the Flaubertian writing style of small perceptions placed side by side a paratactic writing. He reminds us that this is also the style of writing in Camus's *Stranger* and the American behaviourist novel (125).

Smoking cigarettes, executing civilians, lying on the grass, as delivered in static shots, and long takes in *Ordinary People*, follow the same non-representational logic immanent to the paratactic writings of Flaubert and Camus. Acts of killing lined with the boredom of waiting are comparably de-dramatized. As Feinstein observes, the viewer never loses sight of the fact that the single day in which the action takes place is a hot day, a day in which Johnny sweats and glances, whereby similarities with Camus's *The Stranger* cannot be overlooked.

An obvious cinematic reference is Bruno Dumont's oeuvre, in which minimalist aesthetics is married to brutal human behaviour. Other not so evident references include films by Albert Serra, Carlos Reygadas, Lisandro Alonso, Pedro Costa, Gus Van Sant, and Tsai Ming-liang, which film critic Jonathan Romney has called the "new slow cinema" (as quoted in Pavičić 208). Atmosphere in these films has primacy over action, as in the paratactic writing of Flaubert and Camus, and intensifies the viewer's engagement and the overall sense of the passage of time. In Romney's view, this type of cinema indicates a return to transcendence, spirituality, and metaphysics, in clear opposition to practices of making politically, socially and ecologically engaging films emerging after the September 11 attacks (Pavičić 208). The aesthetics of *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks*, according to Pavičić, is different inasmuch as it is inseparable from a commentary to sensitive and traumatic points in the history of one's own society (208).

The Blacks

The Blacks follows a group of men, members of a paramilitary unit of the Croatian Army (Blacks), who were given orders to retrieve the bodies of

fallen soldiers from a minefield during a ceasefire, which brings any military action to a halt. The soldiers are close to psychologically breaking down after days spent interrogating and killing the enemy in a room in the base they refer to as a “garage.” The story unfolds in reverse order: the soldiers’ mission in the minefield appears first, tracking back to events in the base from the day before.

In the first part of the film, the soldiers are shown outside, walking through a green swamp. They have serious looks on their faces as they move around in circles, alert to sounds in nature. The most insecure soldier breaks the silence, disclosing that he is not up to the task. In fact, he lied that he was a deminer in order to get out of prison. His admission creates havoc among the soldiers, leading to them killing each other.

The second part of the film goes back twenty-four hours in time. The action takes place in an abandoned office or a school, in a very dark, labyrinthine, and reclusive area, in which soldiers waste their time waiting for orders from their superior officer. The pale soldier from the earlier sequence has just arrived at the base. Novi (his name translates to “new” in English) is about to learn that the paramilitary squad he was drafted into is involved in the torture and murder of civilians. A similarity can be drawn with *Ordinary People* since the protagonists of both films unwillingly end up in killing squads. An important distinction, however, is that the members of the paramilitary unit Blacks wear distinctive, black uniforms with visible insignia, whereby the political context of the war is made explicit.

The crime insinuated here shares elements with an actual case code-named “Garage,” named after the location in which several Serb civilians were kept and tortured by a special unit, founded by a former major general and right-wing Croat politician Branimir Glavaš in Osijek, Croatia in 1991.¹³

The reference to secret killings in the garage, and to real-life events, is implied in a couple of exchanges between the characters. Unlike *Ordinary People*, the acts of killing and casualties are concealed by *The Blacks*. The choice of a dark, reclusive, labyrinthine setting corresponds well to the web of secrets and lies the soldiers were implicated in. Franjo grapples with his drug addiction while trying to keep it a secret from the others. File is about to learn that his brother got killed in the minefield soon after his cries for help had been broadcast on the local Serbian radio station. Ivo,

13 For more information about the case “Garage” and the multiple trials of Branimir Glavaš, see Sven Milekić, “Branimir Glavas, Croatia’s Luckiest War Crimes Defendant.” *Balkaninsight*, Sept. 27, 2018, www.balkaninsight.com/2018/09/27/branimir-glavas-croatia-s-luckiest-war-crimes-defendant-09-26-2018. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

the commander of the Blacks, tries to hide from his wife the truth about killings in the garage. A day before the mission, the paramilitaries are on the brink of a nervous breakdown.

The first part showing soldiers on a mission is in obvious contrast with the second one, in which the viewer learns that most of them are, in fact, outcasts from society. According to Pavičić, the first segment is not intertextually neutral for the Croatian audience. The scenes with soldiers on a mission resonate with war reportages made by Gordan Lederer in the eastern Croatian region of Baranja in autumn 1991. Jingles on Croatian TV were made out of these vignettes and had the soundtrack *Brothers in Arms* by Mark Knopfler and the band Dire Straits (Pavičić 204). Pavičić argues that the first part of *The Blacks* is in a relationship of direct citation with these jingles as a visual representation and soundtrack of the war (204).

Based on its organization of events, the film shares the characteristics of analytical drama:

in which the plot is not presented in chronological sequence, but begins at the point when events which took place before the drama started, have reached their climax. The reader/spectator becomes familiar with the earlier events as the play progresses.¹⁴

In *Theory of the Modern Drama*, literary scholar Peter Szondi discusses the crisis of drama at the end of the nineteenth century. The crisis emerged as drama, which embodied three factors, the (always) present, the interpersonal and the event, went through its “thematic transformation that replaced the members of this triad with their conceptual opposites” (Szondi 45). Szondi refers to Ibsen to show how the past overshadows the present in his analytical dramas. The past event is thematized, recalled and presented as acting internally. Consequentially, the intrapersonal of the modern drama dislocates the interpersonal of the Renaissance drama (Szondi 45–46). The dramaturgic reversal in *The Blacks*, akin to analytical drama, makes obvious the dominance that the past has over the present. The emphasis on the soldiers’ internal experiences of troubling pasts, as opposed to their external exchanges with other soldiers, shifts the film closer to the domain of psychological drama and further away from the genre of conventional war film.

14 For the definition of analytical drama, see “A Glossary of German Literary Terms: Drama.” *University of Washington Homepage*, www.courses.washington.edu/ger311/terminology/dram-aterm.htm. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

By replacing the cause with the effect in the film's ordering of events, a romanticized image of brave soldiers, participants of the Croatian War of Independence, is challenged by its sobering counter-image. Affective appearance is distrusted by the underlying and less appealing truth about the paramilitaries' unlawful acts against civilians. The viewer uncomfortably learns that a war of liberation was more than its name reveals. The dramaturgical reversal is the film's most obvious non-representational strategy. This way of unfolding the story amounts to breaking with one of the three constraints of resemblances, which, according to Rancière, grounds representation. The first is a model of visibility of speech, the second is an arrangement of relations between knowledge-effects and *pathos* effects, governed by the primacy of action as opposed to description, and the third is a regime of rationality intrinsic to fiction (Rancière 120). By replacing the cause with the effect in the dramaturgical sequencing of *The Blacks*, the ordered distribution of knowledge-effects and pathos-effects gets disturbed. The disturbance of the adjusted relationship between what is anticipated and what arrives as a surprise clearly overturns the viewer's expectations.

Considering the film's self-imposed taboo of showing or narrating about the soldiers' killings, it remains to be seen what role non-representational images of war takes on *vis-à-vis* the film's structuring absence. The following scenes are significant due to their oblique treatment of the subject of violent death.

The opening scene presents the viewer with an image of a black cat nursing her kittens. The darkly lit space indicates bloodstains on surrounding walls, a remaining training shoe and pieces of clothing. Such a stark visual opening is devoid of exposition. In the subsequent scene, the viewer follows a squad in a van on their way to rob a grocery shop, carrying on with their secret mission in the middle of the night. Both scenes are engulfed in darkness. The choice of a dark palette cannot but remind us of Deleuze's remarks on the use of shadows, whites, and colours in film as capable of generating "any-space-whatevers," which he calls "de-connected or emptied spaces" (Deleuze, 2011, 123).

Deleuze relates the period after the Second World War to the appearance of "any-spaces-whatever" and "situations, which we no longer know how to react to." The emergence of these situations is connected with the loosening of the sensory-motor schema, which led to the rise of "pure optical and sound situations" and a "new race of characters," whom he calls "seers," "wanderers" and "a kind of mutants" (Deleuze 2010, xi).

The opening scene with the cat and kittens connects with a short, dynamic scene, which occurs only much later in the film and reveals the garage as a place of a grave crime. Wanting to escape the base and the war itself, Novi



Fig. 4. *The Blacks* [Crnci], directed by Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić, 2009.

finds himself in a dark space. He is heard stumbling over objects lying on the floor. As Franjo switches on the light, walls covered with bloodstains appear again. In the room, filled with silence, traces of former killings are briefly made visible. Several seconds of a sharply lit, outlined, narrow location of former crimes generate another non-representational image of war that disrupts narrative continuity in which actual killings and casualties remain firmly outside the frame.

The third example is a sequence-shot that appears towards the end of the film. Ivo is shown from the back, pulling a box of ammunition over a squeaking floor. The box resembles a coffin. Ivo's movements along the corridor are accentuated with soft music, which otherwise remains absent from the film. This shot anticipates the following, final sequence, in which Darko, the last living soldier, is shown carrying the bodies of his dead peers.

All three scenes are characterized by a lack of dialogue and exposition, by relatively long takes and sparse light. Due to these features, they require a higher degree of the viewer's participation. The first scene is composed of static shots, while the second and the third scenes are distinguished by dynamic shots, made by a hand-held camera, which follow the protagonists at a proximate distance. The first and the second scene indicate the aftermaths of the soldiers' killings of civilians, while the third anticipates the soldiers' killings of each other, which, by means of non-representation, were made known in the first segment of the film. The film's overall strategy of refusing to disclose and narrate the acts of killing, while providing sporadic cues, helps engage the viewer's knowledge, memory, and imagination in the completion of these rarefied, non-representational images of war.

Drawing on actual war crimes committed by Serb and Croat forces in the former Yugoslavia, *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks* take “ordinary people” as their protagonists, who, once drafted into the army or a special squad, end up killing civilians. In both films, the off-screen and on-screen executions take place outside towns, in remote, abandoned premises, in the narrow, direct surroundings of the protagonists, within a twenty-four-hour time frame. Minimalist in their expressions, characterized by long takes, both films reveal the war in its dullness. Exposing the soldiers’ boredom and endless waiting for orders, or revealing their killings in a mechanically repetitive fashion as in *Ordinary People*, the films aim at breaking away from glorifying war and war heroism in general. Blind acceptance of military duties makes their actions devoid of emotional engagement, as compared to *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, wherein soldiers, full of temperament and rage, are ready to enter bloody confrontations at any time. Protagonists, ready to confront their traumas, past burdens or occurring obstacles and change do not, however, populate film worlds like *Ordinary People* or *The Blacks*. Rather, they are caught in wartime situations and neither have the willingness, power, nor any real opportunities to confront the system, embodied by their superior officials. They do not produce a needed change. The characters of *Ordinary People* and *The Blacks* suggest doubt in the world of the resolute protagonists, capable of removing obstacles they come across and staunchly embracing their futures. In this regard, they lack the will and determination that most characters of Pavičić’s films of normalization have. By means of aesthetic treatment of particular episodes in the histories of the two wars, both films indicate a clear shift away from the (over-)representation of war intrinsic to *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, which is why I argue that they need to be categorized separately. As films centring on perpetrators, they should be allocated closer to films of non-representation.

Ognjen Glavonić’s film *The Load* and Igor Drljača’s film *Krivina* are interesting for my enquiry on non-representational images of war due to their treatment of the consequences of wartime atrocities. The former film revolves around one’s complicity in a cover-up crime, while the latter enquires into the aspect of coming to terms with perpetrator trauma while in exile. I argue that a degree of spatio-temporal distance from one’s own involvement in war crimes allows for more experimentation in structuring the narrative and style accordingly. The analysis shows that elaborate non-representational strategies in both films are not, however, without their limitations and/or complications.

***The Load*: Non-Representational Strategies and Their Limitations**

The synopsis of the film *The Load* reads as follows:

Vlada works as a truck driver during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Tasked with transporting a mysterious load from Kosovo to Belgrade, he drives through unfamiliar territory, trying to make his way in a country scarred by the war. He knows that once the job is over, he will need to return home and face the consequences of his actions.¹⁵

The Load is based on real-life events, which were previously addressed by *Depth Two*, Glavonić's experimental documentary thriller analysed in great detail in Chapter II. In an interview with *Film Comment*, Glavonić reveals that the script for *The Load* came first, but the production was delayed by a struggle to secure financing.¹⁶ *Depth Two* came out as an offshoot from the research done for *The Load*. Its international exposure and success helped generate sufficient funding for making *The Load*. *Depth Two* revolves around the secret operation to cover up massacres of Kosovo Albanian civilians during the time of the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. In this particular case, silence and the systematic erasure of war crimes get problematized with the elaborate mechanism of cover-ups. The film itself disguises many details about the atrocities by offering optical images that seek to connect with the viewer's virtual images. Audio images inform about atrocities, as they were executed and experienced in the past. Optical images partly expose former sites of atrocities that attest to the erasure of war crimes and the failure of remembrance. The audio layer has a factual or documentarian grounding, whereas the optical layer is less indicative. *Depth Two* is a detailed reconstruction of the actual covered-up crime and yet is structured around absence in its own right.

The Load draws on the same crime, but focuses on a day in the life of a lorry driver who tries to make ends meet by transporting unknown cargo from one place to another. The protagonist, who was brought up on the antifascist values of the former state, slowly realizes that he is a collaborator in a crime that is fascistic in its nature. The film's approach to silenced atrocities is more restrained and subtle compared to *Depth Two*. The inseparable realities of

15 For the synopsis of the film, see "The Load: Synopsis." *Non-Aligned Films*, www.nonalignedfilms.com/films/the-load. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

16 For more information, see Eric Hynes, "Interview: Ognjen Glavonic." *Film Comment*, Sept. 6, 2018. www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-ognjen-glavonic. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

the last Yugoslav disintegration war and the NATO bombing are visible in its fewer traces, such as a brief amount of information in the intertitle at the beginning of the film, the reflection of burning houses in the window of a passing car, distant columns of smoke and flickers in the sky. *The Load* is devoid of scenes of combat and violence, although it has elements of a war film. Principally structured as a road movie, it plays a lot with the tropes of the thriller and horror genres.¹⁷ Vlada was given a strict timetable and was instructed not to make detours, or to attract any attention. Over the course of the film, the bridge is out, so he is forced into unfamiliar territory, where he comes across a hitchhiker. His cargo eventually reaches its final destination a few hours later than scheduled. *The Load* borrows conventions from different genres only to contradict them in the course of its action. A set of rules Vlada is asked to obey helps establish suspense at the beginning of the film. The thrill of carrying mysterious cargo is soon side-lined by the boredom of the journey. The surrounding landscape and the sky are painted in a low-contrast, grey-brown palette. They match Vlada's clothing and worn-out face. Dreary driving is further accentuated by long shots made inside the lorry, at close range from Vlada. Throughout the journey, dialogue is at its bare minimum. Suspense, which was earlier induced by thriller conventions, is thereby suspended. The resulting paratactic order of actions and descriptions follows the same non-representational logic evident in *Ordinary People*:

Unfortunately, this effective minimalism does not last. Glavonić's camera eventually leaves Vlada's side, breaking the spell somewhat, to take little narrative detours with interesting but frankly peripheral characters. It's as if the film loses its nerve just as Vlada loses his grandfather's lighter, an artifact we learn the man was given in honor of his service resisting the fascists in World War II.¹⁸

Rory O'Connor's remark is well pointed. I would only add that the effective minimalism had been grounded in the linear continuity of Vlada's journey and in the paratactic ordering of acts and percepts, before it was broken

17 In an interview with *Film Comment* (Hynes, "Interview: Ognjen Glavonic."), Glavonić remarks that the film could also be perceived as a period piece, although the events in the film date only twenty years back.

18 Rory O'Connor's entire review is available here: O'Connor, "Marrakech Review: 'The Load' is a Politically-Minded Thriller with Genre Flourishes." *The Film Stage*, Dec. 5, 2018, www.thefilmstage.com/marrakech-review-the-load-is-a-politically-minded-thriller-with-genre-flourishes. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

by little narrative meanders. Side stories open the narrative up to seemingly peripheral characters and objects in a non-representational manner. Most of the characters that cross Vlada's path are younger, and include a hitchhiker, a son, little kids at a wedding. Their appearance adds little to the basic storyline but certainly features a multigenerational dimension. It triggers the question of what the older generation could pass on to the younger one. In Glavonić's words: "not only the war, not only the ruins, not only the crime, but the silence and the stories they didn't want to tell, that they tried to hide, that they didn't know how to articulate, or were afraid to articulate."¹⁹

The title of the film clearly refers to the mysterious cargo. As the viewer gradually learns, the weight of one's complicity in a war crime is also implied herein. A fear of burdening future generations eventually crystalizes in wilful silence over wartime atrocities. The camera does not leave Vlada's side only to side with peripheral characters. It also lingers on objects, which commemorate the antifascist struggle in the Second World War. Optical images of Vlada's lighter, old family photos and a postcard, which he comes across in a tavern, seek to connect with their virtual counterparts, with trans-generational memories of the famous Battle of Sutjeska, which took place in 1943. At one point in the film, the viewer's attention turns to and stays for a while with the Popina memorial complex, which commemorates the first frontal confrontation between Partisans and occupying German Wehrmacht forces in 1941.

As I have sought to demonstrate, the paratactic ordering of actions and perceptions, followed by the branching of the main narrative line, are the film's most obvious non-representational strategies. Both tend to destabilize the previously set conventions of the thriller genre. Narrative meanderings, evoked by peripheral characters and remnants of Yugoslavia, trigger the question of transmitting memories from one generation to the other. The repudiated recollections of the Yugoslav disintegration war are juxtaposed in this operation with preferred reminiscences of the Yugoslav antifascist struggle. I am interested in non-representational strategies, which address those repudiated memories of the war.

A closer look at *The Load* brought to mind Deleuze's concept of "modern political cinema." In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, he argues that the idea of "the people" as a strong, united force is no longer possible. Acknowledging the contemporary context of the dividing forces of new forms of dictatorship, wars, poverty and migration, Deleuze argues that modern political cinema

19 Hynes, "Interview: Ognjen Glavonić."

exists “on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet ... *the people are missing*” (2010, 208).

Third-world cinema, in his view, is a cinema of minorities. The people are missing because they exist in the condition of a minority, whereby their private affairs merge with their social or political immediacy. His latter claim expands on Kafka's reflections on the features of minor literature.²⁰ The role of cinema, in Deleuze's view, is to contribute to the creation of the missing people. Correspondingly, the role of a director is not to represent the people who are already there, but to use his/her “fabulating” films to contribute to the invention of the missing people. Fabulation (is an act or a segment of storytelling that is “not an impersonal myth but neither is it a personal fiction” (Deleuze, 2010, 214). The relationship between the filmmaker and his or her characters is one of becoming: “the author takes one step towards his characters, but the characters take one step towards the author: double-becoming” (Deleuze, 2010, 214). Acknowledging the failure of unifying people, modern political cinema grounds itself on fragmentation, break-up. The idea of fragmentation finds its expression in the multiplication of types and characters, in pure images and sounds that neither connect to the linkage of actions nor to their virtual counterparts (Deleuze, 2010, 212).

The missing people in the context of *The Load* are unquestionably Kosovo Albanians. Their existence has either been suppressed or insufficiently acknowledged throughout the history of Yugoslavia, especially in the 1980s, following Tito's death.²¹ Serbian authorities have denied the truth about the massacres of Kosovo Albanians in 1999 and the associated mass graves in the vicinity of Belgrade all along.²² *The Load* contributes to the “invention” of the missing Kosovo Albanians by means of non-representational images of war. Three scenes come into the focus of my enquiry.

The first scene takes place after Vlada's lorry reaches its final destination. While waiting for his payment at the police base, he finds himself in a dark room. A beam of light and the sound of a loud engine enter the room,

20 A more detailed account on Kafka's notion about minor literature can be found in Deleuze, 2010, 207–15.

21 An overview of the history of suppression can be found in “An Historical Fable of a Country That is No More,” in Murtić, *Post-Yugoslav Cinema*, 36–74; an overview of the context of Yugoslavia's disintegration wars can be found in “The Reckoning,” in Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, 665–701.

22 More information about the efforts of NGOs to commemorate Kosovo Albanian victims amid widespread denial can be found in Filip Rudić, “Serbian Activists Commemorate Kosovo Albanian War Victims,” *Prishtinainsight*, Mar. 27, 2019. www.prishtinainsight.com/serbian-activists-commemorate-kosovo-albanian-war-victims. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

prompting Vlada to approach a window. A sparsely lit tractor digging a hole appears in a static shot. A few seconds later, the image blurs, allowing for Vlada's reflection in the window to appear in the foreground. A sudden noise from the inside urges him to move away from the window, sharpening in turn the background image of the digging tractor. A couple of men are now seen unloading the lorry and throwing white bags in the dugout hole. The content of the cargo is suggested, if not entirely revealed, by means of the non-representational image. The outside light probes the darkness of the room, inviting the wider sociopolitical context of a cover-up crime to overwhelm the seemingly secluded space of the lorry driver. The merging of the social with the private affair is most palpable in this scene. Devoid of exposition, the long, static shot relies on the play between light and darkness, foreground and background. Vlada's reflection in the window in the foreground outlines his personal perspective, his role as an observer. By witnessing a cover-up operation from afar, he becomes fully aware of his own complicity in the crime revealed. With this knowledge arrives at a share of culpability, inseparable from a call for action.

Complicity should be understood in the same way, in which historian and memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg defines the term:

The rhetoric of complicity suggests both a form of binding and a degree of distance: to be complicit is to be responsible (bond to certain events, processes, or people), but it is not identical to being guilty. Complicity suggests an *ethical* binding distinct from *legal* guilt, although they can surely overlap ... (Rothberg, 2019, 250)

Vlada's knowledge about his complicity in the cover-up operation carries a sense of moral obligation, the "load" that becomes increasingly difficult to discharge. The same goes for the viewer, who, with the revealed knowledge, becomes further implicated in the (fictionalized) crime that they progressively feel more uncomfortable with.

The father-son exchange near the end of the film arrives as a surprising answer to the call for action, prompted by the scene that revealed Vlada's complicity. The father opens up to his son about the legacy of his father's antifascist struggle. The lengthy speech act is concomitant with a change of register within the film. As I have indicated earlier, the linear continuity of Vlada's journey is broken up by occasional meanderings. With its grey-brown palette and characterized by minimum dialogue, the first part of *The Load* evokes a sense of threat, isolation and overall pessimism. The father-son exchange, outside in the sun, anticipates a more

optimistic future and, in a non-representational manner, reflects a change in tone and structure in the film. Family memories about the anti-fascist struggle are, however, articulated amid intolerable silence over the current atrocities. The NATO bombardment is referred to only in passing and as a “video game war.” Family reminiscences are uttered in proximity to the lorry emptied of corpses, the victims of current crimes, which demand explanation and proper contextualization. These recollections manage to refocus the viewer’s attention and cloud the wider sociopolitical context of the recent war. It remains unclear what brought corpses inside the lorry in the first place and what is the driver’s effort in reckoning his share of guilt and conscience. In this manner, the overclouding historical context of the war amounts to the pitfalls of the latest non-representational strategy. Following the exchange with his son, Vlada enters the back of the lorry. He is heard taking photographs, which constitutes a relatively weak response to the earlier call for action. Such an ending does, however, elicit a glimpse of hope regarding the future memorialization of the “missing” Kosovo Albanians.

This scene of Vlada’s discovery of the crime contributes to the “invention” of the missing Kosovo Albanians in a slightly more obvious manner in comparison with the two scenes I am about to analyse.

In a scene at the beginning of the film, prior to his journey, Vlada bends down to pet an approaching dog. He notices a lollipop glued to the dog’s fur, which he untangles and throws away. The sound detaches from the image and follows Vlada on his way to the lorry, while the lollipop in the mud appears in close-up. This optical image demands narrative explanation and yet connects with another non-representational image much later in the film.

Following the discovery of the crime, Vlada is tasked with cleaning the lorry ahead of another transportation. While he is washing the lorry’s interior, three objects flush out. A pen, a tiny heart-shaped pendant, and a marble appear in close-ups, resonating with the earlier image of a lollipop. All four objects indicate the most gruesome detail of the crime, the fact that the stored corpses are not only civilians, but also innocent children. The optical images of Vlada’s lighter, family photos, and the postcard in a tavern seek to connect with their virtual counterparts, with trans-generational memories of the Second World War battle at Sutjeska. They succeed as they eventually connect to the linkage of actions, particularly to the father-son exchange near the film’s ending. By comparison, the optical images of a lollipop, a pencil, a pendant, and a marble attest to the failure of remembrance. They fail to connect with collective memories of the massacres of Kosovo Albanians and their cover-ups as already repudiated by the state of Serbia,



Fig. 5. *The Load* [Teret], directed by Ognjen Glavonić, 2018.

inasmuch as they fail to swing into a narrative. They never become a topic of any conversation in the film.

As I have sought to demonstrate, *The Load* borrows the conventions of a war film and a road movie, the thriller and the horror genre. It has undertones of Deleuzian modern political cinema. In its mixing of elements from various genres, a parallel between *The Load* and *Depth Two* can be drawn. In fact, both films share features of Deleuzian nomadic thinking. Nomadism is a framework for thinking that involves artistic experimentation and has political relevance for rendering the escape from established codes.²³ The first principle, mixing of codes, has already been discussed in terms of combining different genres into a new style. The second principle, the relation with the outside, refers to the outside of the film's apparent internal frame of reference. Interestingly, the relation to the outside opens up intensity, the third principle. Intensity, bound to the virtual, is contrasted with representation. The optical images seek to connect with the viewer's virtual images or the previous knowledge about the cover-up operation leading to the mass graves near Belgrade. *Depth Two*, in its forensically detailed reconstruction of the atrocities, can be seen as the actualization of the virtual possibilities outlined by the much more restrained and subtle style of *The Load*. The former film centres on reconstructing an act of brutality largely made possible due to the victim's testimony, whereas the latter film follows an accomplice of a cover-up of the same crime. I argue that these different premises deliver correspondingly

23 More about nomadic thought in Deleuze, 2004, 252–62; and in Pisters, 243–70.

dissimilar treatments of the historical context surrounding the atrocity in question. The fourth principle of nomadism is humour or laughter, and can be found near the end of the film, when Vlada's teenage son and his friends collect hay in the shape of a phallus and set it on fire in response to the NATO aircraft flying above.

Krivina: Non-Representation of Post-War Traumas

Igor Drljača's feature debut film *Krivina* shares the motif of a journey with *The Load*. The synopsis reads as follows:

Miro, an immigrant from the former Yugoslavia lives in Toronto. When he finds out that his pre-war friend Dado, who has been missing for almost two decades, is now wanted for war-era crimes, his life starts to unravel. Upon hearing that Dado still visits a village on the outskirts of Sarajevo, Miro embarks on a trip back to Bosnia to find his friend.²⁴

As can be read in the synopsis, Miro's journey is motivated by the search for an old friend, a fugitive wanted on war crimes charges. In Bosnia, Miro comes across people who knew or assumed something about Dado's whereabouts.²⁵ Following a flimsy trail of contradictory cues, he moves from Sarajevo to nearby villages. In Sarajevo, Dado is remembered as a victim of the war, in Žljebovi as a perpetrator and in Sokolovići as an *émigré*. The film's conflicting narratives indicate the importance of geographical location in determining an identity. A wartime trauma emanates from a location, which in turn helps shape identity. The identity in question fluctuates as the protagonist moves from one place to the other, from the capital of the Bosnian state, situated in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to rural areas of Republika Srpska. By leaving details of Dado's fate unknown and Miro's journey devoid of its initial goal-orientation, *Krivina* becomes more of an anti-travelogue. As the online magazine *That Shelf* points out in its film review:

Not so much a literal road trip to find a friend, Miro's journey is indicative of his own troubles turned inward and the journey of an entire nation.

²⁴ The synopsis of the film is quoted from the website of the production company TimeLapse Pictures, which produced the film in "Krivina: Synopsis." *Igor Drljača*, www.igordrljaca.com/portfolio/krivina.

²⁵ In his contribution for MUBI's Notebook Column, Igor Drljača references Agnes Varda's film *Vagabond* as influential for the structure of his film. The entire text can be found in Igor Drljača, "Igor Drljača Introduces His Film *Krivina*." *MUBI: Notebook Column*, Sept. 13, 2016, www.mubi.com/notebook/posts/igor-drljaca-introduces-his-film-krivina. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

Miro doesn't so much reach for answers to his friend's disappearance, but he unconsciously goes on a search for himself in a country still trying to come to terms with its own national identity.²⁶

Miro's search for another turns out to be a pursuit of another kind. His subsequent inner journey is analogous to the quest for his homeland, grappling with its own national identity. In this regard, it is useful to recall film scholar Hamid Naficy's reflections on the journeys of identity that many diasporic and exilic or, in his term, "accented" films take on as their forms:

Accented filmmakers are subject to momentous historical dynamism and to intense national longing for form. They cross many borders and engage in many deterritorializing and reterritorializing journeys, which take several forms, including home-seeking journeys, journeys of homelessness, and homecoming journeys. However, these journeys are not just physical and territorial but are also deeply psychological and philosophical. Among the most important are journeys of identity, in the course of which old identities are sometimes shed and new ones refashioned. In the best of the accented films, identity is not a fixed essence but a process of becoming, even a performance of identity. Indeed, each accented film may be thought of as a performance of its author's identity. Because they are highly fluid, exilic and diasporic identities, raise important questions about political agency and about the ethics of identity politics. (Naficy 5)

As Naficy's writing suggests and *Krivina* particularizes, the identity in question is not a fixed essence, but a process of becoming, a performance of identity. This view is informed by Stuart Hall's conceptualization, which sees identity as a "production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 68). Deleuze would certainly not use the word identity, but would argue that a process of becoming is inseparable from fabulation or an act of storytelling. Drljača draws on his immigrant experience as he argues along the same lines. In his contribution to MUBI's Notebook Column, he maintains that a way for immigrants to cope with the anxiety caused by violent separation from their home country is to create and nurture narratives to help protect themselves from their active role in the war, apathy or helplessness towards it: "In one

²⁶ The review of the film can be found here: "Review: Krivina." *That Shelf*, www.thatshelf.com/krivina-review. Accessed Apr. 19, 2025.

version of this fiction, the aggressor seeks to play the victim, searching for a more virtuous past, while hiding in plain sight.”²⁷

In *Krivina*, a perpetrator trauma is consolidated within an immigrant trauma. Both types of trauma are informed by a degree of spatio-temporal distance, the former from one’s active participation in war crimes, the latter from one’s homeland: “Distance is the engine of all exilic identities ... Distance also motivates doppelgänger characters and activates the film’s narratives of desire, nostalgia, and memory for other people, places and times” (Naficy 271).

Naficy’s observation proves accurate, taking into account that a distance propels Miro’s search for a more virtuous past. Consequently, *Krivina*’s narrative unfolds in specific temporal and spatial settings. Naficy would describe these settings as “cinematic chronotopes,” a term that he grounds on Bakhtin’s famous literary concept.²⁸

He argues that a typical media response to the rupture of displacement caused by migration is to create a utopian chronotope of the homeland, unspoiled by contemporary facts. This is mainly expressed in the homeland’s “open” form. The rendition of life in exile is correspondingly associated with the dystopian imagining of contemporary times and expressed in its “closed” forms (Naficy 152). According to Naficy, “open” and “closed” cinematic forms are encoded in the *mise en scène*, filming and narrative structure. The “open” form is characterized by *mise en scène*, which favours external locations, landscapes, natural lighting, mobile and energetic characters. In terms of filming, openness is implied in mobile framing and long takes (Naficy 153). The “closed” form is associated with interior locations and closed settings, such as tight living spaces and other forms of confinement. A dark lighting scheme conveys the feeling of claustrophobia and the characters’ movements are shown as constrained. Tight shot composition, static framing and barriers within the *mise en scène* and in the shot’s foreground indicate the closedness of the form (Naficy 153).

Krivina’s narrative unfolds in the “open” and “closed” form of cinematic chronotopes of homeland and life in exile, respectively. The open form is suggested by external locations, the skyline and streets of Sarajevo and the landscapes of Žljebovi and Sokolovići. The exteriors are shot in bright

27 For Drljača’s introduction to the film see Drljača, “Igor Drljača Introduces His Film *Krivina*.”

28 Bakhtin proposes the name *chronotope* (literally “time-space”) “to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature.” A more detailed elaboration of his concept can be found in his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, 84–259.

natural light. Miro is consistently depicted in movement. A hand-held camera follows him at a close range, delivering a series of mobile-framed shots. Long shots equally characterize the “open” and the “closed” form. The latter is mainly associated with the interior of Miro’s tight apartment and his friend Drago’s car. The scenes capturing Miro’s life in exile are darkly lit and marked by tight shot composition. The static camera closely follows the protagonist, whose movements remain constrained due to the tightness of his living space. The scenes taking place in Toronto are characterized by documentary-like descriptions of Miro’s daily routine and detailed activities that slow the film’s pacing.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, *Krivina*’s chronotopic inscription of Utopia and dystopia are embodied in their “open” and “closed” cinematic forms. Contrasting styles of both forms convey Miro’s interior tension, his sense of entrapment, where his present appears to be permanently overshadowed by the past. This is most palpable in scenes in which he fervently follows news coverage from the former Yugoslavia, listens to an old Dalmatian song or gazes at photographs he keeps close at hand.

The photographs capturing Dado’s uncle, a young basketball player and a younger Miro prove relevant for my research on non-representational images. All three appear in close-up and demand the viewer’s closer attention. Following the news coverage about a bus accident in Žljebovi, in which a young basketball player died, Miro looks for photographs that show Dado’s uncle and the deceased girl with a red ball. The photos function in a way as to suggest that Miro has already met the uncle and the basketball player in Žljebovi. In her book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag specifies:

Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it ... A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture. (Sontag 5)

Drawing on Sontag’s remarks, it is possible to argue that Miro’s photographs shown in close-up are meant to support the evidence that these events took place. During his visit to Žljebovi, Miro meets Dado’s uncle and comes across the young basketball player. This would not have been problematic if both had not been dead for some time, as passers-by recount. Miro is shown facing the girl in one shot and observing the splintered glass of the bus window in a bent metallic frame in the other. Successive



Fig. 6. *Krivina*, directed by Igor Drljača, 2018.

images of Dado's uncle in his house, the girl in the field, and Miro next to debris indicate that all three inhabit separate, yet simultaneous sheets of time. They suggest a non-linear, Bergsonian conception of time as duration (*durée*) and the co-existing layers of time. With this indication in mind, it could be argued that preceding photos of Dado's uncle and the basketball player in close-up have already invited the viewer to attend to the film's narrative differently. They have encouraged us to think that the unfolding journey may not be as physical, literal, and goal-driven as initially assumed.

The subsequent and final stop of Miro's voyage is the village Sokolovići. After learning from Dado's aunt that her nephew has not been seen there for the past twenty years, Miro hands her an old photograph of Dado. The younger Miro appears in the photo in close-up and provides evidence that this attentively observed journey was indeed his quest for a more virtuous past. As I have demonstrated, shots of all three photographs are non-representational images in that they introduce a different logic of time, juxtaposed with the sensory-motor determinism, and thereby invite a different reading of the journey. The non-representational images occasion experimentation in genre and enable easier navigation between stylistically opposing chronotopic inscriptions of homeland and life in exile. They provide an understanding that a perpetrator trauma may be experienced as accommodated within an immigrant trauma. Following the non-representational logic, the ending scene brings another twist to the narrative. A continuous shot of Drago in his car, talking to himself, raises the question of whether Miro was made up. The rolling credits, overlaid with rock music, leave the viewer with an impression that all that remains in place are the varying accounts used to shield one from wartime traumas and inflicted realities of displacements.

Conclusion

The third chapter acts as a mirror-image to the second chapter as it zooms in on the figure of the perpetrator. While *Underground* and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* resort to strategies of over-representation, the use of grotesque and hyperbole, *Ordinary People* and *Blacks* shift away from such forms and focus on dead time in warfare or the paratactic ordering of an unconnected narrative. Finally, *The Load* and *Krivina* are characterized as films of non-representation as they attest to a failure of remembrance of the commission of war crimes and to the silent complicity in their cover-ups. The movement from over-representation to non-representation implies a shift away from the glorification of wartime violence and the hindering internalization of derogatory stereotypes about the Balkans along with further perpetuation of nesting Orientalisms, Balkanism, and self-Balkanism. The films that succeed in refusing to disclose and narrate about actual killings, while providing sporadic cues, help engage the viewer's knowledge, memory and imagination in completion of these non-representational images of war. The reduction in style, which amounts to an erasure of the political context of the Yugoslav wars, however, raises an ethical concern over the limitations of non-representation. As the chapter demonstrates, the non-representational images in post-Yugoslav film become problematic when the wider sociopolitical context of war is obscured to a degree, in which the distinction between perpetrators and victims is relativized, and when denial about atrocities or widespread silence about the war past is further enhanced. The introduction of Dominick LaCapra's notion of "perpetrator trauma" and its relation to and integration in a film narrative initiated a discussion about the possible drawbacks of non-representation. A treatment of individual and collective guilt and accountability came under careful scrutiny.

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Films

The Blacks [Crnci]. Directed by Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić, Kinorama, 2009.

The Load [Teret]. Directed by Ognjen Glavonić, Non-Aligned Films, 2018.

Krivina. Directed by Igor Drljača, TimeLapse Picture, 2012.

Ordinary People [Obični ljudi]. Directed by Vladimir Perišić, TS Productions, 2009.

Pretty Village, Pretty Flame [Lepa sela, lepo gore]. Directed by Srđan Dragojević, Cobra Films, 1996.

Underground [Podzemlje]. Directed by Emir Kusturica, CiBy 2000, 1995.

IV Excavating Memories of War

Abstract: Chapter IV revolves around the aftereffects of the Yugoslav disintegration wars, as depicted in films by filmmakers who work(ed) and live(d) in the diaspora. One of the hypotheses, a spatio-temporal distance from places of (post)war trauma, leads to an experimentation in style and contributes to the stronger presence of films of non-representation. A combination of archival footage with home movies in mosaic-screen compositions and slow-motion montage shows that non-representational images of war can offer points of entry for the productive exchange of mediated memories of the Partisan struggle and the Bosnian war. They can draw attention to the failure to reconcile emotional confession with collective responsibility as they seek to account for the historical experience of the post-war condition.

Keywords: war aftermath, diasporic filmmakers, archival footage, home movies, mosaic screen, multidirectional memory

Chapter IV revolves around the after-effects of the Yugoslav disintegration wars, as experienced and depicted in films by filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia who work(ed) and live(d) in the diaspora. One of the working hypotheses of the fourth chapter is that a spatio-temporal distance from places of war trauma and/or post-war anxieties leads to experimentation in style and contributes to the rise of non-representational images of war and the films of non-representation. The films that will be analysed are as follows: Vladimir Tomić's *Flotel Europa* (2015), Lidija Zelović's *My Own Private War* (2016), and Namik Kabil's *Interrogation* (2007) and *Inside* (2013).

The last two films analysed in the third chapter, *The Load* and *Krivina*, proved useful for my enquiry due to their non-representational approach to the consequences of wartime atrocities. *The Load* revolves around the main character's complicity in a cover-up crime, while *Krivina* enquires into the aspect of coming to terms with perpetrator trauma while in exile. In *Krivina*, a spatio-temporal distance from the protagonist's active participation

in war crimes and his homeland propels his search for a more virtuous past. This quest for identity shows that identity is not a fixed essence, but a process of becoming, a performance of identity (as Stuart Hall would define it) inseparable from fabulation or an act of storytelling (as Deleuze would propose). The non-representational images analysed here indicate that a perpetrator trauma could be experienced as accommodated within an immigrant trauma.

The four films I will now analyse, much like *Krivina*, share a spatio-temporal distance from homeland and wartime experience. In each case, this propels a journey, a search for an identity, and the films provide the aesthetic means capable of capturing this quest. As elaborated in Chapter III, *Krivina*'s narrative unfolds in the open and closed form of the cinematic chronotopes of the utopia of homeland and the dystopia of life in exile, respectively.

Flotel Europa shares the motif of a journey with *Krivina*, but its story is associated with the thirdspace chronotope. According to Hamid Naficy, this chronotope involves not only intermediary places such as borders, airports and train stations, but also transportation vehicles, such as buses, ships and trains (Naficy 154). Many refugees and asylum seekers are forced to stay in transitional sites, which are "part of the idea of place that forms their identities and their chronotopical figuration in accented films" (Naficy 152).

The Thirdspace Chronotope of *Flotel Europa*

The thirdspace chronotope of *Flotel Europa* is suggested by a ship, of the same name, anchored in the port of Copenhagen in the early 1990s. The ship used to serve as a temporary home to 1,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina waiting for decisions on their asylum applications. The film focuses on the twelve-year-old Vladimir, who, after fleeing Sarajevo with his mother and older brother, spends two years living on the ship. The ship as a transitional site certainly shapes Vladimir's identity, although not in a predictable way, which is a point I will return to later in the text.

Flotel Europa provides us with an insight into Vladimir's adolescence through a compilation of private archival footage. As the film reveals, phone lines with Bosnia often did not work. These circumstances had prompted Meho, a train operator, and Rusmil, an accountant, to put some money together and buy a couple of used VHS cameras. They had documented life on the ship and later sent video letters to family and friends.

Naficy writes that the epistolary form of accented cinema, constitutive of the "thirdspace chronotope," implies a discourse of desire. It mediates

between distanced but desiring subjects (Naficy 154). Naficy divides epistolary films into three main types: film-letters; telephonic epistles; and letter-films:

Film-letters inscribe letters and acts of reading and writing of letters by diegetic characters. Likewise, telephonic epistles inscribe telephones and answering machines and the use of these devices by diegetic characters. Letter-films, on the other hand, are themselves in the form of epistles addressed to someone either inside or outside the diegesis, and they do not necessarily inscribe the epistolary media. (Naficy 101)

Flotel Europa comes closest to Naficy's third category, "letter-films." The epistolary form of *Flotel Europa* is insinuated by the film's mode of representation, by re-edited snippets of videotapes, which in the diegetic and extra-diegetic reality negotiate the distance between desiring subjects; between refugees on the ship moored in the canals of Copenhagen and their family members back in the Bosnian war zone.

A Coming-of-Age and Found-Footage Film

Due to its focus on adolescence, the film is regarded as a coming-of-age story.¹ The experience of puberty is offered from the perspective of a grown-up man, who is heard in voice-over. The director's voice-over guides the viewer of *Flotel Europa* through a collage composed mostly of other people's video letters.

Laura U. Marks perceives the use of voice-over as intrinsic to diasporic filmmaking. Along with the wide-spread use of dialogue and oral histories in many works of intercultural cinema, it helps organize the work together "in the absence of a stable, informative image or a linear storyline" (Marks xv). Intercultural cinema is characterized by the attempt to represent the "social character of embodied experience" (Marks xiii), "the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West" (Marks 1).

1 The labelling of *Flotel Europa* as a "coming-of-age" film can be found here: "Flotel Europa: Synopsis." *Vladimir Tomic Official Website*, www.vladimirtomic.com/flotel-europa; and here: "2015 Forum, Searching for Evidence: Interview with Christoph Terhechte." *Berlinale Website*, 2015. www.berlinale.de/en/2015/topics/searching-for-evidence-forum-2015.html. Both accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

In her writing, Marks focuses on the experimental styles of various short and documentary films, as well as videos produced in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

The absence of a stable image in *Flotel Europa* could be associated with the film's reliance on (other people's) private archive. The existing material was rearranged to fit a certain narrative. Snippets were mixed together to produce new meanings, and the use of voice-over helps organize the work by ironing out any contradictions that might occur.

In an interview, Christoph Terhechte, the former head of the Berlinale Forum section, proposed that *Flotel Europa* could be regarded as a found-footage film. Given that the original footage was arranged to convey a coming-of-age story, the voice-over could equally well be fabricated. For Terhechte, the excitement of the viewer's experience of the film arises from imaginative ways in which the original material and voice-over were used, even if that makes it more a work of fiction than a true documentary.²

In his analysis of the film, Sanjin Pejković explores the same issue in greater detail. His exposition starts with a reference to film theorists such as André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer, who drew "a strong association between the indexical character of photographic image and the primacy of realism as a code within cinema" (Pejković 95). Their understanding of photography and the privilege of realism have shaped the notion that "documentary film is primarily an instrument of unproblematic observation and record capable of being put into didactic service" (Pejković 95). Pejković stresses that with the digital age, a new type of scepticism of the indexical nature of the photograph has arisen. The use of archival material by documentary filmmakers is determined by considerations other than evidential ones. A series of digital post-production strategies are employed not only to increase the spectator's engagement with the story, but also to force them to question the status of the images that he/she is seeing as documents and the narrators' voices they are hearing (Pejković 95). Pejković argues that the memories of the former country are questioned and destabilized by the very images that are used in *Flotel Europa*. Certain strategies are deployed to deconstruct the indexical stability of the film document in front of the viewer. Pejković connects these tactics with the instability and the loss of home, viewed with a certain time delay. He perceives the image as both truth and fiction, as a document of history, and further, as unreliable evidence of a history that is being rewritten (96).

I agree with the more general observation that the viewer's engagement with the film may increase due to digital, post-production strategies used

² Ibid.

in the archival work. I can understand how the viewer might become suspicious about the status of the images and voices. However, I fail to see how Vladimir's reminiscences about the former country are questioned by the strategies employed in *Flotel Europa*. It is the recollections of his youth spent on the ship that are destabilized by the compilation, and not the memories of his country. *Flotel Europa* primarily offers us insight into Vladimir's adolescence, with the joys and troubles of growing up in the foreground of *Flotel Europa*. Recounting the most memorable episodes of the adolescent's life on the ship in chronological order, visualized as re-edited snippets of other people's private footage, is what constitutes the film's mode of representation. The film concentrates on a period of two years as the most exciting episodes in the life of a teenager. The viewpoint offered here shields the protagonist (and the viewer alike) from the harsh reality of being a refugee, and from the causes that brought him to the ship in the first place. The overall tonality is marked by the protagonist's detailed and humorous accounts of chatting up a girl called Melisa, the awakening of his sexual maturity, supplemented by adventures with his cool and older friends. The optimistic tone progressively shifts into its darker opposite as the outside reality of war and divisive nationalisms starts to creep into the secluded life on the ship.

Beyond the Thirdspace Chronotope: Non-Representation of the Bosnian War and the Second World War

My argument is that non-representational images of war enable the shift from romantic recollections of adolescence to a more sober vision of communal refuge. Non-representational images of war destabilize the narrative, expressed through the collage of clips overlaid by voice-over, by introducing a much broader spatial and historical context. Post-production strategies used in the archival work certainly trigger the viewer's suspicion about the status of the image as document. They make the viewer doubtful about whether this is a documentary or a work of fiction. But non-representational images of war disrupt the narrative of *Flotel Europa* by evoking the time-space beyond the thirdspace chronotope associated with a single ship anchored in the canals of Copenhagen in the early 1990s. This broader context entails private and collective memories of the Bosnian war, the Second World War and the legacy of the Yugoslav motto Brotherhood and Unity.

Since the Bosnian war is rarely mentioned or discussed in the film, either via images or the director's voice-over, non-representational strategies indicate

three modes in which the war reveals its presence. In my analysis of the following scenes, I move from the remotest to the most obvious mode in which the Bosnian war is disclosed and disrupts the narrative, which centres on adolescence. The distant reality of war takes on a certain immediacy via the sporadic telephone and letter exchanges between refugees and their family members in Bosnia as revealed in the voice-over, through glimpses of images broadcast in the so-called TV room and by way of exposing the magnitudes of war destruction in the black-and-white photographs incorporated in the film.

I am reminded of two scenes that offer a view of communal activity in and around the ship, as the narrator reveals fragments of news from Sarajevo reaching the protagonist.

In the first scene, a children's birthday celebration is underway when Vladimir's mother receives a phone call saying that Vladimir's uncle has been killed. A follow-up scene shows ships anchored in the canal of Copenhagen, while the voice-over provides a brief explanation, which the mother passes on to her sons. The Serbian army had occupied the eastern part of Sarajevo, Neđarići, and deported all the Muslims and Croats. Vladimir's uncle had left his house to defend his neighbour Sejo, but the soldiers beat him up and drafted him into their troops. Not long after that, a sniper from the Bosnian side shot and killed him.

In the second scene, refugees gather on the pier to send food packages to their family and friends in Bosnia when Vladimir's mother receives a rare letter from Sarajevo. It says that Vladimir's father was trying to evade the draft to the army, and Vladimir's grandparents had been taken by a Muslim unit and nearly got exchanged with captured soldiers on the opposite side.

Both scenes display regular communal activities, vaguely related to the content of the news revealed in voice-over. The slower pace of habitual behaviour in visual images is juxtaposed with distressing bits of information in their audio counterparts. The reality of war remains excluded from the visual register. It is merely suggested in the condensed descriptions of traumatic events. The audio-visual arrangement of both scenes follows the non-representational logic: the audio images introduce the context of distant conflict into the narrative, which otherwise centres on the challenges of adolescence.

The Bosnian war's distant reality becomes more apparent in a scene that thematizes the importance of the TV room for the inhabitants of the floating refugee centre. As the narrator announces: "if Flotel Europa and our refugee life made a kind of vacuum in space and time ... then the TV room of Flotel Europa was a vacuum inside that vacuum."

With a nod to Naficy's concepts, it could be said that the TV room of Flotel Europa expresses another chronotope within the existing thirdspace

chronotope. Refugees would gather daily to watch the news on a single screen in their community room, hoping that they would see someone from their families in the war reports. The scene with the TV room acts as a strong reminder that the war is taking place elsewhere, but still shapes the lives of the inhabitants of Flotel Europa considerably. Broadcast images emerge in response to more private images made by refugees. Both types of image share the same, VHS format. It is relevant to add at this point that the Yugoslav wars of disintegration became the first to be recorded on VHS by the people who experienced them first-hand: "VHS was the main material for recording that reality, which fitted in the TV news around the world with the help of satellite broadcasting. Private footage would become global material on a much larger scale than ever before" (Pejković 95).

The film itself explores the fine line between the private reminiscences in video letters and the official representation of the war in broadcast images. The scene with the TV room acts as a prelude to the scene in which the effects of the Bosnian war are most perceptible.

The latter scene provides a look at an exhibition of a series of black-and-white photographs, shown in close-up. The photographs provide a glimpse of the wartime atmosphere: a child holding a gun, an older woman amid furniture on the back of a lorry, an elderly man rubbing his eyes in front of a destroyed house, a wounded, expressionless man in a hospital. As one photograph appears immediately after the other, the voice-over recounts that one day, after watching the CNN news in the TV room, a guy called Ramiz approached Vladimir. He put his arm around the boy and pointed his finger at one of the translators at the reception desk. Then he said that the man over there is a "Chetnik," just like Vladimir. Overwhelmed by fear, Vladimir did not say anything. A moment later, Ramiz gave Vladimir some money and sent him to buy a loaf of bread, which the boy did.

The consequences of war destruction are made visible in this scene. The spectator's attention is on still images, snapshots of the reality of war, which remain mostly outside the frame. The stillness of each photograph becomes more apparent in the light of the narrative, which is conveyed by images made by a clumsily held camera. Traces of war destruction in the image appear only seemingly disconnected from the event described in the voice-over. The audio-visual arrangement of the scene indicates two simultaneous operations taking place. The distant reality of the Bosnian war becomes visible by means of black-and-white photographs in close-up and at once palpable, more immediate, through the detailed encounter in voice-over. Due to the unexpected nature of Vladimir's encounter with Ramiz, the scene functions as a turning point in the narrative. It marks a moment of

sudden realization for Vladimir and the viewer alike that tensions between different ethnicities took hold in the refugee centre. Divisions have slowly but surely settled among the refugees at Flotel Europa. From this moment on, the viewer's attention is attuned to the communal aspect of life on the ship, which is why the entire scene acts as a non-representational image of war.

I have identified three modes of non-representational strategies in which the Bosnian war discloses and destabilizes the narrative centred on adolescence. Now I focus on memories of the Second World War, which in a similar fashion disrupt *Flotel Europa*'s mode of representation. Three scenes inserted from Branko Bauer's 1978 fiction film *Boško Buha* indicate collective memories of Yugoslav resistance during the Second World War.

The first scene is introduced early on in the film, via voice-over. Prior to Vladimir's departure for Denmark, his grandfather, a former Partisan, advised him to remember Buha every time he was afraid. A moment later, Buha appears equipped with hand grenades, in the company of two other Partisan boy soldiers. The scene immediately follows the shot of the ship Flotel Europa arriving in the harbour. In the second scene, one-third of the way into the movie, Buha is shown in action, on his way to destroy an enemy bunker. Through the accompanying voice-over, it becomes clear that Melisa had approached Vladimir and asked him for his name, to which he replied, "Boško Buha." The scene comes directly after the shot of Melisa in traditional clothing, sitting quietly, ahead of her folklore performance. The last scene featuring Buha appears towards the end of the film and shows him dying while being ambushed by Chetniks. The voice-over indicates that because Vladimir had mistakenly thrown a snowball at Melisa's face, he got "punished" by other boys in a snowball fight. The scene closely follows the slow-motion shot of Melisa performing on stage.

At this point, I should clarify what makes Boško Buha a historical figure and why the collective memory of his bravery is relevant for my discussion of non-representational images of war.

Boško Buha rose to fame as a teen, martyred Yugoslav Partisan. He became known for sneaking towards enemy bunkers and destroying them with hand grenades. In 1943, Buha died at the age of seventeen, when he was attacked by surprise by a group of Chetniks. As one of the youngest soldiers in the People's Liberation Struggle (PLS) in the Second World War, Boško Buha became a symbol of the struggle and martyrdom of youth. Posthumously, Buha received the title of the People's Hero of Yugoslavia.³ A number of

3 An overview of Buha's participation in the PLS in the Second World War can be found here: "Na današnji dan: U četničkoj zasjedi ubijen Boško Buha. Imao je samo 17 godina." ("Commemorating

monuments, schools and streets across the former Yugoslavia bear his name. Memories of Buha's wartime adventures were mediated through this film and a 1980s television series, also made by Bauer.

In her book *Memory in Culture*, memory studies scholar Astrid Erll points out that mediation should be understood: "as a kind of switchboard at work between the individual and the collective dimension of remembering. Personal memories can only gain social relevance through media representation and distribution" (Erll 113).

Mediated memories of Buha's bravery certainly helped stabilize a site of memory associated with the PLS. Buha's heroic acts had gradually entered the domain of Yugoslav popular culture and, through the film and TV series, became accessible to younger generations without first-hand experiences of the Second World War. For that reason, it is possible to argue that the scenes from *Boško Buha* inserted in *Flotel Europa* are an expression of a "prosthetic" type of memory.

According to memory studies scholar Allison Landsberg, prosthetic memories "originate outside a person's lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memories" (Landsberg 19). By definition, prosthetic memories are "transportable and hence not susceptible to biological and ethnic claims of ownership" (Landsberg 19). Memories of the Partisan struggle are prosthetic for not strictly belonging to Vladimir and for being mediated as the scenes extracted from the popular Partisan film. Materialized as partly alien to Vladimir, they call for an active participation of the viewer, who may or may not be acquainted with Buha's wartime adventures in particular or the PLS in general.

By incorporating the scenes from *Boško Buha* into *Flotel Europa*, tribute is clearly paid to Vladimir's grandparents. One need only remember how the first scene featuring Buha was introduced in the narrative, via voice-over. Prior to Vladimir's departure to Denmark, his grandfather advised him to remember Boško Buha every time he was afraid. Provided with this cue, the viewer is encouraged to imagine ways in which his grandparents' experiences in the Second World War were passed on to Vladimir and remained vivid in his memory. On this ground, it is possible to argue that the inserted scenes are also an articulation of postmemory.

As conceptualized by memory scholar Marianne Hirsch, "postmemory" is distinguished by generational distance, as it "characterises the experience

the death of Boško Buha, who at the age of 17, was killed in ambush set by Chetniks.") *Lupiga Magazine*, www.lupiga.com/hiperlink/na-danasnji-dan-u-cetnickoj-zasjedi-ubijen-bosko-buha-imao-je-samo-17-godina. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

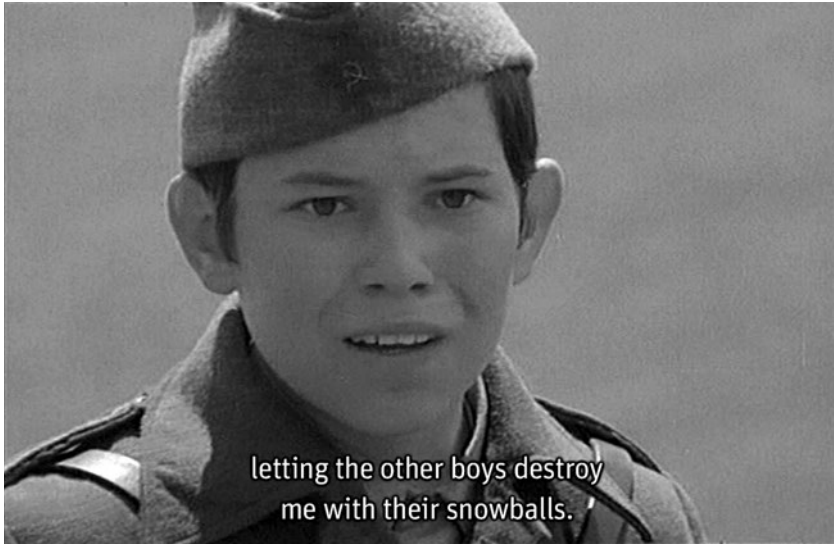


Fig. 7. *Flotel Europa*, directed by Vladimir Tomić, 2015.

of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth” (Hirsch 22). The transgenerational dimension, which Hirsch has in mind while focusing on photographic memory, is immanent to the mediated memories of Buha’s heroic acts in *Flotel Europa*. Tomić provides additional evidence for this claim in an interview by stressing that in the film he speaks about his grandparents and the Second World War, and that the inclusion of the scenes evokes nostalgia for another generation of “ex-Yugos.”⁴ Due to the humorous effect that the inserted scenes generate, I would argue that they are an unmistakable expression of reflective Yugonostalgia.

In Chapter I, I indicated that Nicole Lindstrom draws on Svetlana Boym’s distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative Yugonostalgia is an “expression of longing for an essential Yugoslav past” and looks back towards a somewhat fixed time and space, whereas reflective Yugonostalgia “relies on a self-consciously ambivalent, politically engaged, and critical frame in indulging fantasies of this past” and is open to imagining possibilities for the future (Lindstrom 233).

A critical engagement with the official representation of the PLS derives from editing the scenes from the well-known Partisan film to voice-over

4 The interview with Vladimir Tomić can be found in Pamela Cohn, “Videos Home: How VHS Found Footage Became a Groundbreaking Film About Bosnian Refugees,” *The Calvert Journal*, Aug. 10, 2015. www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/4521/flotel-europa-vladimir-tomic-srdan-keca. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

recounting Vladimir's clumsy meet ups with Melisa. The audio-visual arrangement of the scenes clearly induces humour. On another level, it introduces the broader context of the Second World War in the narrative, which focuses on the portrayal of the intricacies of being a teenager under peculiar circumstances. In that sense, the scenes featuring Buha follow the non-representational logic. They evoke the previously analysed non-representational images of war by way of the "multidirectionality" of memory. Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory can help us reflect on the constellations formed by memories of the Partisan struggle along with memories of the Bosnian war.

Rothberg perceives multidirectional memory as "subject to ongoing negotiations, cross-referencing, and borrowing, as productive and not privative" (Rothberg 3). His concept is meant to draw attention to "the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance" (11). In Rothberg's view, Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" constitutes a specific version of memory's multidirectionality. Mediation and the belatedness of "postmemory" are "points of entry for the multidirectional confluence of disparate historical imaginaries" (Rothberg 271).

Flotel Europa suggests that mediated memories of the Partisan struggle stand in a dynamic relation with mediated memories of the Bosnian war. These memories are not in competition with one another, where one type of memory tends to silence or overwrite the other. As non-representational images of war, they offer points of entry for the multidirectional convergence of distinct historical imaginaries. The more established memories of the Partisan struggle assist the process of coming to terms with the trauma inflicted by the Bosnian war. Multidirectionality could also be traced in the other direction, where memories of the Bosnian war, even if somewhat elusive and fragile, help bring neglected memories of the Partisan struggle back into public awareness. Mediated memories of Buha's bravery deserve the viewer's closer attention as they emerge in the light of how present-day nationalisms erase memories of antifascism within the former Yugoslavia, but also across Europe.⁵

Regardless of their critical perspective on the official representation of Yugoslavia's past, the scenes inserted into *Flotel Europa* convey a sense of

5 I have touched upon this issue already in the first chapter. Sociologist Gal Kirn elaborates extensively on this matter in his book *The Partisan Counter-Archive: Retracing the Ruptures of Art and Memory in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle*. For more information, see Gal Kirn, *The Partisan-Counter Archive: Retracing the Ruptures of Art and Memory in the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle*.

loss of the federal state and common identity, which is explored in detail in another scene, towards the end of the film.

Diasporic Visualization of Yugoslavia

The scene in question shows Alen Islamović, the singer of the most popular Yugoslav rock band Bijelo Dugme, performing for a diaspora audience, right after a nationalistic singer. Prior to his performance, he is shown sitting near the stage. He wears a look of resignation while smoking a cigarette. The accompanying voice-over reveals that Vladimir went to the concert with his older friends hoping to meet Melisa there:

Melisa never showed up, and we all fell silent. We waited for Alen to take the stage, as the only present member of a great band from our youth. A band from a time when there was a big country, a country whose end we became aware of for the first time that evening.

The scene conveys the sense that both the homeland and collective identity are irretrievably lost. Unlike the films that I analysed in the previous chapters, *Flotel Europa* is the first to address a collective identity as the director's straightforward, conscious, and deliberate choice. I believe that the film owes this to the director's life experience in the diaspora.

Naficy and Robin Cohen's notions helped me realize that collective memory of an idealized homeland is constitutive of diasporic identity. Naficy observes that "people in diaspora have an identity in their homeland before their departure, and their diasporic identity is constructed in resonance with this prior identity" (14). In his book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, social scientist Robin Cohen proposes nine features of the classical notion of diaspora. Among others, the characteristics include "dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically," "a collective memory and myth about the homeland," and "a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time" (Cohen 17).

These three characteristics are conveyed by the scene involving Alen Islamović in *Flotel Europa*. The collectively shared Yugoslav identity, even if irretrievably lost due to the wars, comes across as the only affirmative group identity. I see two reasons for this qualification. First, it is a trans-ethnic, all-encompassing identity, as opposed to today's divisive, ethno-religious identities across the former Yugoslavia. Second, it is the only identity that Vladimir, his family, and friends could possibly relate to prior to their

departure to Denmark and the subsequent constitution of diasporic identity. Yugoslavia as a federal state no longer exists. The film, however, occasionally suggests that there is an intact homeland to return to in imagination.

My Own Private War or Turning Absence into Loss

The idea of an affirmative collective identity resonates even more strongly in *My Own Private War*. The film offers an autobiographical account of collective responsibility during and after the war by filmmaker Lidija Zelović. Coming from an ethnically mixed family, Zelović grew up in Sarajevo, where she worked as a television journalist. In the early 1990s, she fled the Bosnian war with her family and settled in the Netherlands. Prompted to learn more about the disintegration of Yugoslavia, she went to report on its final war in Kosovo. Twenty years after her emigration, Zelović returns to her home country. There she meets her cousin Željko, who was a sniper during the war, her journalist friend Snježan who closely followed Ratko Mladić, and other relatives who, around the table, passionately “dig through history to prove who they are,” as her voice-over suggests. In an attempt to make “the most honest and truthful film about the war,” as indicated in the voice-over narration at the beginning of the film, Zelović seeks to come to terms with the loss of Yugoslavia.

With a nod to LaCapra's concepts, obtaining the necessary knowledge about the war would help Zelović work through her loss of Yugoslavia (LaCapra 716). As the loss would be precisely located, melancholy could be resolved into mourning. The latter proves to be a necessary precondition for reinvesting in life with all the social demands and responsibilities it requires. The film asks whether it is possible to make a personal film on war, whether an emotional confession can be reconciled with collective responsibilities necessitated by (post-)war realities.

My Own Private War is a collage composed of private and public archival VHS footage, family photographs, and recently recorded material on a digital camera. Scenes and fragments from different formats are occasionally associatively connected with one another. As in *Flotel Europa*, the material is mainly organized through the use of the director's voice-over.

In her writing on transcultural memory in documentary cinema, film scholar Dagmar Brunow discusses the role of voice-over. The use of voice-over contributes to the film's subjective stance by guiding the audience through the film and pointing at the situatedness of knowledge (Brunow 64). Brunow refers to Stuart Hall and his understanding of situated knowledge as a sign

of anti-essentialism. For Hall, the latter is “a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position as “ethnic artists” or “filmmakers” (Hall, 169–70). The use of voice-over as a strategy of anti-essentialism is a logical and necessary consequence of Zelović’s double displacement. Her dislocation is conditioned by being a diasporic and self-declared Yugoslav filmmaker. Her persistence to speak from a particular place, out of a particular experience and culture, without being contained by the position of either ethnic Serb or Croat filmmaker in post-Yugoslav and post-war realities is evenly conveyed throughout the film.

Zelović’s fondness for Yugoslavia is determinately expressed in three scenes. The first scene belongs to the corpus of publicly available archival footage, an excerpt from the TV coverage of the opening ceremony of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo. The other two are more recent scenes, recorded for the purpose of making *My Own Private War*. In the second scene, Zelović’s son Sergej is shown looking at a map of Yugoslavia in their apartment. In the third scene, an exterior shot of her father’s idyllic home village is introduced with the soundtrack of Ismeta Krvavac’s famous patriotic song “*Zemljo moja*” (“My Land”). Svetlana Boym’s conception of nostalgia provided me with the framework to understand that the choice of motifs such as the Olympic games, the map of Yugoslavia and Krvavac’s song indicate not only a longing for Yugoslavia as a place, but also a yearning for a different time, the time of long past youth. Reminiscences of youth are inextricably connected with recollections of a collective homeland:

Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory, individual home and collective homeland. (Boym 151)

Boym’s distinction between melancholia and nostalgia made me realize that the state of melancholy I referred to earlier in the text is better conceptualized as nostalgia. Assuming that melancholy can be resolved into mourning, would there be an equal way of coping with nostalgia?

Throughout the film, Zelović expresses the view that learning about the war would help her acknowledge and accept the loss of Yugoslavia and move on with her life. Gaining knowledge about the war would concretize the absence into loss and resolve her enduring nostalgia. As Zelović occasionally intimates, a way to accomplish this goal requires her to be free of her personal story. But is it possible to retain the objectivity required by war reporting

in conversations about war and accountability with your closest family members and friends? Especially in a time when Zelović's father, cousin and friend no longer share her Yugoslav identity, but instead have adopted a more exclusionary and divisive ethno-religious identity.

Dino Abazović's remarks on ethnopolitics and religion in post-war Bosnia prove useful for elucidating the term ethno-religious identity. Following the collapse of socialism in the former Yugoslavia, religion was politicized through ethnicization:

as this occurred, the "understanding" of religion has, unfortunately, narrowed: religion has been oriented and reduced to ethnicity, rather than to its immanent universal characteristics, features and mission, thus, ethnic and religious identities collapsed into each other ... During the war, politicized and ethnicized, religion becomes a powerful tool for mobilization against "ethnic enemies." (Abazović 39)

With ethno-religious affiliations, insurmountable differences between groups come to the fore. The differences translate into diverging views on the history of wartime atrocities, which block the much-needed reconciliation in the region. Due to ethno-politics overpowering daily life in the post-Yugoslav states, a simple task of figuring out what happened during the wars turns out to be a walk through a minefield. In *My Own Private War*, the gap between official, historical records and non-official, familial memories proves too big to be bridged. For that reason, Zelović fails to a certain extent in her attempt to make "the most honest and truthful film about the war." Non-representational images of war draw attention to the failure at reconciling emotional confession with collective responsibility, familial remembrance with public representation. They appear as a mosaic screen and slow-motion scenes.

Between History and Memory: Mosaic Screen and Slow Motion as Strategies of Non-Representation

Before I take a closer look at strategies of non-representation, I need to explain what I mean by *mosaic screen*. Film scholar Sergio Dias Branco introduced the term because he felt that the split screen could not be used as an umbrella term for films and series with images of usually distinct characteristics arranged on screen. His major points of reference are the TV series *24* (Fox Network, 2001–10) and films such as Norman Jewison's

The Thomas Crown Affair, Vincent Gallo's *Buffalo '66*, and Bruce McDonald's *The Tracey Fragments*. Before I summarize the key features of the mosaic screen according to Branco, I will put forward two definitions of split screen.

The first is a quite reduced explanation of the term offered by film scholars David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson: "In this process, two or more different images, each with its own frame dimensions and shape, appear within the larger frame" (Bordwell 187).

Film scholar Malte Hagener provides a somewhat broader understanding of the same practice. He suggests that it is often regarded as incompatible with the idea of transparency immanent to continuity editing and with the narrative style predicated on the invisibility of technique and technology:

A frame within a frame draws attention to the act of framing itself by visibly displaying the basic principle that forms the condition of possibility for the image: the frame that draws a distinction between inside and outside, between image and non-image.⁶

This definition proves useful for enhancing the understanding of artificiality and the constructedness of the image in the digital age. Contrary to the commonly held view that the split screen runs counter to the precepts of continuity editing, Branco asserts that the use of split screen is regularly aligned with the prevalence of causality and simultaneity:

The split screen is generally connected with simultaneity as well as division—the technique is often used as a division that allows simultaneity. That is why it is regularly employed in television news and live sportscasts.⁷

Unlike the split screen, which divides the screen into halves, the mosaic screen "splinters" the screen.⁸ In Branco's view, it organizes two or more isolated, detached images on screen. In this way, images that vary in their characteristics are assembled together. They retain their autonomy, as they remain disengaged one from another. The split screen divides the screen

6 For more information see, Malte Hagener, "The Aesthetics of Displays: How the Split Screen Remediate Other Media." *Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment Media*, vol. 14, 2008, www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/2008/12/24/the-aesthetics-of-displays-how-the-split-screen-remediate-other-media-%e2%80%93-malte-hagener.

7 For more information, see Sergio Dias Branco "The Mosaic Screen: Exploration and Definition." *Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment Media*, Dec. 27, 2008. www.hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:16983. Accessed Apr. 18, 2025.

8 Ibid.

into two or more segments, while keeping them effectively connected based on the existing relations of simultaneity and causality.⁹

With this conceptualization in mind, the use of mosaic screen in *My Own Private War* can be regarded as an additional post-production strategy used in the archival work. Employing the mosaic screen in the film does not, however, induce the same scepticism of the indexical nature of the image as does adding the director's voice-over to the collage composed of other people's archival footage in *Flotel Europa*. The process of image making is, nonetheless, of major concern for Zelović.

Her filmmaker's biography is self-reflexively interwoven with the narrative, like in most accented films (Naficy 271). Acting as a documentary filmmaker, Zelović reflects on her role as a journalist covering conflicts. The two positions appear to challenge one another, as private, more contemplative images juxtapose mass media images meant for faster consumption. The film could be regarded as an attempt to negotiate between the two positions and, correspondingly, between two different types of image and narrative. Non-representational images of war assume the shape of mosaic-screen scenes and thereby point out the impossibility of such reconciliation.

The first mosaic-screen scene is introduced via voice-over early on in the film. The viewer learns that, at the beginning of the war, Zelović was in the Netherlands, while her parents and brother were still in Bosnia. She did not know if they were alive. All she had was "a constant repetition of news footage from my hometown" as she was busy learning Dutch by repeating new verbs and sentences. The left side of the screen shows mass-media images of the war in Sarajevo, one frantically following the other: shelled buildings at night, heavily wounded and dead people on a street, civilians crossing streets under sniper fire. The other side presents Zelović in slow motion, walking through a sun-drenched park, surrounded by people celebrating Queen's Day.

The second mosaic-screen scene appears halfway through the film. The voice-over indicates that Zelović was on her way to report on the war in Kosovo. Since her assignment had preceded Sergej's birth, nothing could have possibly stopped her from going into the war zone. The left side of the screen shows Sergej building a LEGO house in their apartment. A view of Zelović reporting and commenting on war developments in Kosovo is offered on the right side. Excerpts from various items of TV coverage are interspersed with news images of burnt houses, marching tanks, and mass graves.

9 Ibid.



Fig. 8. *My Own Private War*, directed by Lidija Zelović, 2016.

The third example of the use of mosaic screen involves a scene appearing two-thirds of the way into the film. The scene thematizes July 11, 1995, the day Ratko Mladić entered Srebrenica with his Army of Republika Srpska. During the war, he served as a Bosnian Serb colonel-general and later was convicted as a war criminal by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Years after the war, Zelović meets her friend Snježan, who closely followed Mladić and his troops. At one point, the screen fragments. The left part shows Mladić giving an interview to Snježan, who is seen answering Zelović's questions on the opposite side. The mosaic screen lasts for several seconds. A few moments later, it reappears. It is introduced via voice-over indicating that Snježan filmed the day that Mladić's troops came into Srebrenica, where Zelović went years after the war to film the women, who lost their sons and husbands. The left part of the screen offers a view of a mass grave in a forest. A mother of Srebrenica is seen giving a statement to Zelović, who is seen sitting with Snježan on the grass, occupying the opposite side of the screen.

In all three scenes, the voice-over guides the viewer through the collage composed of private and public archival VHS footage and recently recorded material on a digital camera. VHS recordings of the shelling of Sarajevo and Kosovo villages, as well as the fall of Srebrenica, belong to the corpus of publicly available images. These are, mostly, dramatic representations of war meant for faster and broader consumption. Mass media images of war-ravaged Sarajevo and Srebrenica constitute Zelović and the viewer's prosthetic memory. A destruction of Kosovo villages is illustrated by commentary, co-created by Zelović and her journalist colleagues. As the repeated use of the mosaic-screen technique indicates, Zelović used to follow coverage of one conflict and produce reports on the other. Although there are degrees of difference between the two positions, together they appear irreconcilable with the position of a documentary filmmaker. The slower

pace of the recent and more intimate shots of Zelović in the park and Sergej building his LEGO house is clearly juxtaposed with the frenzied speed at which mass media images of war replace one another. The use of mosaic screen accentuates the disparity in experiencing life at home and abroad, in the past and the present, during peace and wartime, in private and public, through the lens of VHS and a newer digital camera. The third example of the use of mosaic screen is relevant to my discussion on non-representation for accentuating a clear and unbridgeable divide in choices and orientation between two old friends, journalists and image-makers, one following the future war criminal and the other attending to its former victim.

As indicated earlier, non-representational images of war appear as mosaic screen and slow-motion scenes. My last example is a scene that appears near the end of the film and is presented entirely in slow motion.¹⁰ Such an artistic decision clearly separates the scene from the rest of the film. Zelović is seen driving a car, while the outside landscape gets blurry. In the next shot, she is shown in front of the building of The Hague Tribunal, surrounded by many journalists and photographers, eagerly anticipating the arrival of Ratko Mladić. She is shown looking at the landing helicopter. A moment later, a blue sky emerges behind white clouds. An episode from Zelović's time in Kosovo is being narrated. She was getting ready to do a presentation on camera with her colleagues from the BBC, when an angry soldier ordered them to turn off the camera. He asked her to go to the main commander, which the crew wanted to prevent. She reassured them and went to the base on her own. From that moment on, the narration switches from English to Bosnian. The next few lines provide a sparse amount of information: her clothes were taken off, she was humiliated, interrogated and threatened. Some time later, she was asked to sign a paper that she was not raped. She complied while she needed closure, for herself and the soldiers present. The account finishes with her asking the soldiers not to do it since they are compatriots. They objected by stating that she is no longer on the same side with them.

The visual and the audio image match insofar as they engage on equal terms with the role of media during and after the war. Compared to earlier mosaic-screen scenes, the audio-visual arrangement of the latter scene further

10 In their book *Film, a Critical Introduction*, Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis provide the following definition of *slow motion*: "A technique that involves filming at a speed faster than the speed of projection (24 frames per second), then projecting the footage at normal speed. Because more frames are recorded per second, the action appears to slow down when projected. For example, if 36 frames are recorded in one second, capturing an action, when the footage is projected at 24 fps, it will take 1,5 seconds than the action to unfold" (456).

complicates the relationship between documentary filmmaking and war journalism. The more intimate view on a large-scale, public event such as bringing Mladić to justice is achieved through the use of subjective camera and slow motion. The reduced manner of the audio account engages the viewer's attention in making the unseen, traumatic experience more perceptible and memorable than any other in the film. The switch from English to Bosnian language particularizes a direct, bodily experience of war and detaches it from the somewhat impersonal, objective duty of a war correspondent.

On a related note, Naficy emphasizes that the use of multilinguality, multivocality, and voice-over narration in accented cinema helps "destabilise the omniscient narrator and narrative system of the mainstream cinema and journalism" (Naficy 25).

The widening gap between emotional confession implied in self-reflective documentary filmmaking and collective responsibilities assumed by war journalism is emphasized through non-representational strategies of introducing slow motion combined with a reduced mode of narration in a language other than conventional. The impossibility of reconciling the two outlooks on war is more concisely yet strongly articulated only in the title of the film *My Own Private War*.

At the beginning of this chapter, I asserted that a spatio-temporal distance from homeland and wartime experience propels a journey, a search for an identity, and the aesthetic means capable of capturing this quest.

In *Flotel Europa*, the experiences of an adolescent and asylum seeker are reflected in one another. Both suggest a temporary, transitional, and formative episode in the protagonist's life. The film is conveyed as a coming-of-age story. It takes the form of an assemblage of other people's private footage, edited with the director's voice-over. The autobiographical aspect proves inherent to the accented films of diasporic filmmakers, as can be seen in *My Own Private War*.

The latter film indicates that for former Yugoslavs in the diaspora, grieving the loss of the homeland precedes any reflection about the war. The loss of Yugoslavia means a loss of group identity and subsequent search for a renegotiated identity. It translates into accepting or not, but, in any case, learning that the country as a federal state no longer exists. The film is intended as an enquiry into Yugoslavia's wars of disintegration. It assumes the shape of a mosaic, made of public and private footage.

The non-representational strategies in *Flotel Europa* and *My Own Private War* act as points of rupture within the existing narratives. Inserted black-and-white photographs and movie excerpts introduce the wider context of the Bosnian war and the Second World War within the coming-of-age

narrative of *Flotel Europa*. Mosaic screen and slow-motion scenes evoke doubt about gaining full knowledge about the wars in *My Own Private War*. As both films suggest, the wider context of the wars is either gradually revealed or additionally obscured through the strategies of non-representation. In either case, the awareness of the loss of Yugoslavia—as a direct consequence of the wars—proves to be a defining feature of a new collective identity among former Yugoslavs living in the diaspora.

A distance from homeland and wartime experience motivates a quest for knowledge about the war and the way it shapes emergent identities in Namik Kabil's films *Interrogation* and *Inside*. Both films engage with the problem of coming to terms with the wartime past. A concern over the loss of Yugoslavia and shared collective identity is replaced by a concern over the post-war reality as being determined by ethno-religious identities. As my analysis will show, ethnic representation remains a politically loaded term for the subjects of both films. There is a general preference to be termed less rather than more. The initial urge for self-determination has been replaced, years after the war, by the urge to tone down the overwhelming ethnic over-representation. It boils down to less identity altogether.

Excavating Memories of War

Interrogation and *Inside* take the spectator on a journey through a variety of collective and individual memories related to the atrocities in Bosnia. These memories are brought to the viewer in the form of testimonies and interviews, face-to-face exchanges between the interviewer and the interviewees. Through *interrogation* both films expose an *inside* view of the Bosnian conflict, which in this case could be seen as a miniature version of the Yugoslav conflicts as a whole.

In *Interrogation*, director Kabil takes on the position of an interviewer, whereas his friends, neighbours, and acquaintances appear as interviewees. While all the interviewees have direct personal experience with the Bosnian atrocities, they are of different ages and have varied professional and educational backgrounds, ethnicities, and nationalities. The title of the film refers to a juridical form of interviewing with the specific goal of extracting a confession or obtaining information from an interviewee or witness. The director “interrogates” because he wants to learn more about the interviewees’ relation to and experiences of the war. The viewer learns that during the war, Kabil lived in Santa Monica, in the United States, and is now based in Sarajevo. He lacks war experience; therefore, he interrogates. The

exchange between the interviewer and the interviewees takes place around a table in a dark, abandoned warehouse. The interviewer's questions range from: when did the war start? who was the aggressor? is peace righteous? and to whom should one talk about the war nowadays? Surprisingly enough, the same question evokes a variety of answers and views on the past. As the film progresses, any consensus about what happened during the war is lost within the turmoil of the memories evoked. Due to the inconsistent answers to the questions Kabil proposes, the film touches upon the issue of war denial.

Kabil's subsequent film, *Inside*, takes up where *Interrogation* left off. The subject matter is the denial of atrocities. *Inside* takes place in a spacious hospital with long, bizarre-looking labyrinthine corridors. Much like *Interrogation*, *Inside* is characterized by the use of the same interviewing technique—an interrogation. Within the diegesis of the film, the position of the interviewer is shifted from a psychiatrist character to a patient character. At the beginning of the film, the psychiatrist is the one in charge of asking questions; while later in the film, the interrogator's role is assigned to the patient. It is important to add that the patient is a survivor of the genocide in Srebrenica, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Inside consists of three distinct parts. The first comprises conversational scenes between the psychiatrist and the patient, while the second conveys an "interrogation" of five Serbian women (all played by the same actress, Jasna Ornela Bery), conducted by the patient. The third focuses on the patient's discussion with another patient (again played by the actress Bery). The first segment revolves around the doctor's treatment of the patient's traumatic recollections and the second offers a view into a slightly distorted confrontation between the patient and five different and yet similar Serbian women. This segment raises the issue of war denial because four out of the five Serbian women refuse to acknowledge the genocidal nature of the crimes committed by Serb forces in Srebrenica. Finally, the third part consists of a more nuanced discussion between the two patients. As can be presumed, all these exchanges touch upon issues of collective and individual memories, denial of war atrocities, and empathy.

The Non-Representational Strategy of Un-Naming in *Interrogation* and *Inside*

The names, occupations, exact ages, and other biographical data that might help the viewer identify the interviewees are not explicitly given in the film

Interrogation. Nevertheless, the group of seventeen interviewees comprises Bosnian public figures (for instance, a theatre director, a journalist, two writers) and relatively unknown individuals. Their appearances are juxtaposed. For the Bosnian audience, it is clear who these public persons are, whereas for the spectators outside the region of the former Yugoslavia, the functions and social positions of these figures remain unknown. To allow the readers to orient themselves throughout the film, I have provided interviewees with provisional names. Within the attached cast list, the interviewees are presented as Woman A, Woman B, Woman C, etc., Man A, Man B, Man C, etc. The A, B, C, D order follows the chronological order of their appearance within the film. In addition, within the cast list every interviewee is presented with a name and a corresponding photo, a screenshot of his/her face.

The strategy of “un-naming” and leaving out information about the interviewees results in a de-individualization of the interviewees. I believe that this de-individualization enables a stronger integration of the interviewees into the group of people who experienced the siege of Sarajevo and the war. This strategy also draws attention to collectively similar war experiences as opposed to different ones, which leads me to a second explanation. The strategy of omitting biographical information implies that the interviewees are not automatically being differentiated by their names and classified in their ethno-religious groups. Their belonging to a certain ethno-religious group and their political affiliations remains unspecified.

Consequently, the individuals are distinguished or unified by what they say about their past and not according to their names. It is essential to add that during and after the war in Bosnia, it was common practice to seek an ethno-religious background in a person's first and last name in order to presume possibly related political affiliations. For that reason, Bosnian names have become markers of ethno-religious differences. During the rule of one political party in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the ethno-religious differences were not expressed nor appreciated as such. The unity and the brotherhood of different nationalities and ethnicities were the state's motto and future goal. The Partisan struggle, which led to the formation of the federal state of Yugoslavia, was aimed against the principle of the ethnic hatred of the Second World War. As sociologist Gal Kirn emphasizes, “the Partisan principle was based on multinational antifascist solidarity, which declared the equality and unity of all nations and working people” (Kirn 35).

The Partisan principle is best understood as a rupture. Kirn makes a reference to Rancière's notion that “the existence of real ruptures (‘politics’

that interrupts the order of 'police') ... needs to entail a process of 'de-identification'" (as quoted in Kirn 37). For Kirn, "de-identification" is a fitting term to describe the collective character of Partisan resistance. It is "posited against the (local) fascist ethnic hatred and racial hierarchy, while also against the old stereotypes of national character" (Kirn 37).

In line with Rancière's and Kirn's understanding of "de-identification," the strategy of omitting biographical information within *Interrogation* conveys a strong sense of unity among the group whose members share similar war experiences. If the film is regarded as an attempt to extract information, to articulate and name silenced war experiences, then the "un-naming" of interviewees is a non-representational strategy inasmuch as it prevents any automatic ethno-religious classification and differentiation of the interviewees.

Interrogation and *Inside* address the problem of the complexity of national and ethno-religious group identity. *Inside*, which can be perceived as a follow-up to *Interrogation*, addresses this issue more directly. Even though the viewer is not provided with the names of the characters, right from the beginning of the film it becomes apparent that the protagonist is a Bosniak, a survivor of the genocide in Srebrenica suffering from PTSD. What is more, the film thematizes the patient's encounters with five Serbian women, whom he "interrogates" in order to learn more about their views on the war atrocities committed by the Serb army in July 1995 in Srebrenica. At the beginning of the film, the viewer learns from the patient's conversation with his psychiatrist that he grew up with the Muslim myth that "They (Serbs) are all the same," which he, allegedly, did not believe. He confronts five women in order to put this myth to the test. The ensuing detail proves to be an extremely significant artistic choice: as mentioned, the same Bosnian actress Jasna Ornela Bery plays the roles of all five women, who are physically distinguished by minor modifications in their styling and the way they express themselves. Their opinions about the Srebrenica genocide differ to a certain degree. The first woman claims that Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić were CIA agents, and that the CIA should be blamed for the war. The second one admits Serbian involvement in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and feels sorry and ashamed, whereas the third claims that people, especially youth, should not be bothered by some Balkan war-torn past. The fourth woman accuses the media of the wartime atrocities, while the fifth has an irrational view in general. In this film, like in *Interrogation*, the characters are not specified by their names. For that reason, I have provided the characters with their provisional names, included in a separate cast list. The patient and the doctor are regarded as

Patient and Doctor, whereas five Serbian women are, in accordance with the above order of appearance, referred to as Woman 1, Woman 2, Woman 3, Woman 4, and Woman 5. The other patient is named Patient 2. Each character is presented with a photo of his/her face, accompanied by his/her provisional name.

Time-space of *Interrogation* and *Inside*

Interrogation is set in an abandoned factory, charged with the collective memories of pre-war Yugoslavian industrial prosperity. As an abandoned, partly demolished venue, it proves to be a proper stage for “extracted” war memories. The film operates with three different levels of time. First, the choice of the post-industrial place induces collective memories of the socialist past. Second, the interviews evoke memories associated with Bosnian war experiences. Finally, the interviews take place fifteen years after the war. Consequently, two layers of the collective past—the socialist and the Bosnian war past—co-exist in a more recent, present moment.

Inside takes place in a bizarre looking hospital with many labyrinth-like corridors and entrances to numerous rooms. It is important to mention that Kabil shot this film in the largest nuclear bunker in the former Yugoslavia and in one of Sarajevo’s hospitals. The nuclear bunker, built between 1953 and 1979, is located 200 metres underground, inside the mountain Prenj, 60 kilometres southeast of Sarajevo. In his article “Beneath the Regular,” architect Christoph Hinterreiter claims that the nuclear bunker D-o was supposed to “ensure the survival of the political and military elite of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” in the case of a nuclear war after Yugoslavia’s exclusion from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s dominated Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties) (Hinterreiter 1). *Inside* implies that collective memories of President Tito’s prosperous Yugoslavia and his legendary split from the Soviet leader Stalin resonate in the numerous corridors of this outlandish space. Collective memories belong to one layer of the past, whereas exchanges between Patient and Doctor, like other conversations within *Inside*, refer to another sheet of the past. These dialogues evoke memories of the protagonist’s traumatic survival, which took place next to the mass execution of more than 8,000 people in Srebrenica in 1995. Two “sheets”¹¹ of the past—memories of

11 The reference is made to Deleuze’s term “sheets of past,” thoroughly explored and presented in the chapter “Peaks of Present and sheets of Past: Fourth Commentary on Bergson.” See Deleuze

Tito's Yugoslavia and those of the protagonist's survival—are simultaneous with the present. The present is referred to as the actual time in which the conversations took place. The Bergsonian conception of time as duration is reintroduced within *Inside*.

This outlandish setting, with its numerous, long and narrow corridors, evokes the image of brain lobes. Interestingly, the film's title refers to the inside of the protagonist's mind. In addition, the protagonist's PTSD and memory-based hallucinations indicate that the viewer experiences the same events as the protagonist, as if the viewer could have inhabited the protagonist's mind. The Patient character relives his past through his hallucinatory encounters with imaginary Serbian women. For most of the film, the viewer experiences the protagonist's visual hallucinations with him. Hence the confusion between what is true and what is false or, using the Bergsonian distinction, between what is actual and what is virtual.

Seers

In *Interrogation*, the film director's friends and acquaintances, people of different ages and various backgrounds, have, in some way or another, experienced the Bosnian war. According to their statements, there are no goals that were achieved during or after the war. "Nobody won the war," "everybody lost," "what we fought for was utopia" are statements that echo throughout the film. Recurring variations of these and similar statements imply a certain sense of loss, disorientation, and a state of being common to Deleuzian "seers." The film title implies that individuals are brought into the factory and seated around the table to be "interrogated." They are not supposed to move nor leave; it is assumed that they will be confronted with their memories. In many ways, the *mise en scène* of the film insinuates that an interrogation or an artificial trial might take place. The specific lighting of the film, the face-to-face position of the interviewer and the interviewees evoke film-noir aesthetics. Dim lighting, which is a characteristic of film noir, makes use of shadows and contrast to convey a sense of danger and intrigue (Prammagiore 93). The faces of the interviewees are partly covered by shadows. This type of lighting conveys their feeling of uneasiness while reminiscing about the war. In fact, as *Interrogation* clearly demonstrates, some interviewees do not wish to discuss their past. A few others seem reluctant to name the aggressor. Even though they are well aware of the

devastating atrocities committed during the war, they avoid naming the perpetrator. On the opposite end, there are interviewees who address the relevance and pressure to discuss past experiences.

Obviously, all the “interrogated” individuals in *Interrogation* are in some ways aware of the overwhelming silence related to the past atrocities. The only difference is that some of them do not find it relevant to discuss traumatic events; the others tend to disapprove of them, while the third acknowledge the importance of talking about them. Why is there no firm stand among the interviewees, a straightforward action against the pervasive silence and the increasing denial of the war atrocities? A possible explanation is to be found in Deleuze’s formulation. There is “something intolerable in the world” and “unthinkable in thought,” which occurs after a war, which breaks an organic motor-sensory link between a man and the world and produces a line of “seers” (Deleuze xi; Pisters 232).

Inside is a film that revolves around a psychic situation of a “seer.” A deeply traumatized victim, who has PTSD, relives his trauma through his visual hallucinations. The protagonist’s delusions compose the largest portion of the film and are framed by a supposedly therapeutic conversation between him and the doctor. The only action that the patient is capable of is to “interrogate” five Serbian women. These women, nevertheless, prove to be a product of his imagination. Later in the text, I will demonstrate how I came to this conclusion. The protagonist seeks to learn more about the women’s views over the genocide in Srebrenica. Yet, once he has been asked questions in turn, he is incapable of providing answers. Several times he stares in silence instead of reacting firmly against the aggressive provocations. It is relevant to stress that the protagonist is depicted sitting when he is in his therapy session, when he confronts his “imaginary” enemies, and even when he talks to another patient. Most of the time, he does not move. The immobility of the character, or the impossibility to react to occurring situations is what enables the Bergsonian conception of time to enter this type of image. In Deleuzian terms, time emerges and subordinates movement to itself:

And thanks to this loosening of the sensory-motor linkage, it is time, “a little time in the pure state,” which rises up to the surface of the screen. Time ceases to be derived from the movement, it appears in itself and itself gives rise to false movements ... Even the body is no longer exactly what moves; subject of movement or the instrument of action, it becomes rather the developer (*révélateur*) of time, it shows time through its tiredness and waitings. (Antonioni) (Deleuze xi)

The immobilized protagonist of *Inside* is a body in the process of waiting, a true developer of time. He exhibits his tiredness, while staring, unable to react and unable to protest.

True or false? Non-Representational Images in Between

The viewer of *Inside* mostly experiences what the protagonist's visual hallucinations "inform" him of. Nevertheless, the protagonist's delusions are not clearly separated from his "real-life" perceptions, hence the confusion between what is true and what is false, between subjective and objective. How can the viewer orient himself within the diegetic world of *Inside*? Deleuze's understanding of the actual and the virtual together with the proposed concept of non-representational images might be helpful in this matter:

We run in fact into a principle of indeterminability, of indiscernibility: we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do not have to know and there is no longer even a place from which to ask. It is as if the real and the imaginary were running after each other, as if each was being reflected in the other, around the point of indiscernibility. (Deleuze 7)

A sense of disorientation, a lack of centre to refer to, or a whole to develop an organic sensory-motor relationship with add up to create the conditions for the emergence of the principle of indeterminability.

The point of "indiscernibility" is what, according to Deleuze, forms the crystal-image. In fact, "the crystal constantly exchanges the two distinct images which constitute it, the actual image of the present which passes and the virtual image of the past which is preserved" (Deleuze 79).

The difference between the actual and the virtual is a difference in time. The present that passes defines the actual, whereas the virtual is defined by the past that conserves itself. The crystal image consists of the indivisible unity of an actual and its "virtual" image (Deleuze 77). Inspired by Bergson, Deleuze names this unity a mutual image and claims that the present is the actual image, and its contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror. In Bergson's words:

every moment of our life presents the two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and recollection on the other ... Whoever becomes conscious of the continual duplicating of his present into perception

and recollection ... will compare himself to an actor playing his part automatically, listening to himself and beholding himself playing. (quoted in Deleuze 77)

According to Bergson, memory is a virtual image, which co-exists with the actual perception of the object. Memory is a “virtual image contemporary with the actual object, its double, its ‘mirror image’” (Deleuze 150).

Inside can be perceived as an exchange or interplay between the actual and the virtual. At the beginning of the film, the viewer follows a conversation between Doctor and Patient. Within a therapeutic process, Patient reveals details about his traumatic past. Since he has PTSD, he starts to relive his past through his hallucinations, in which he confronts five Serbian women. By the end of the film, the viewer comes to understand that all five women, played by the same actress, physically resemble Patient 2, who shares a hospital room with the protagonist. Essentially, all the women “residing” in the protagonist’s imagination are modelled around the appearance of his hospital roommate.

It is possible to sketch out the following organization: the film is divided into three parts. The first segment revolves around the Doctor’s treatment of Patient’s traumatic recollections; the second offers a view into a slightly distorted confrontation between Patient and five “invented” women; and the third consists of a more nuanced talk between the two patients.

The first and the third part of the film might be perceived as the actual. Both segments refer to what Bergson calls actual perception. The second part of the film acts as the virtual. Shaped by the protagonist’s hallucinations, this section might be conceived as the virtual image co-existing with the actual perception of the first and the third part of the film. Furthermore, the aforementioned segment functions as a double, a mirror-image to the actual depiction of the conversations of the first and the third part. In fact, the first part of the film introduces Doctor-Patient, or the interrogator-interrogated relation, whereas the second brings a change, a shift in the power positions mentioned. The interrogated person of the actual becomes the interrogator of the virtual. Consequently, *Inside* produces a mutual image, a co-existence of the actual image of interrogated Patient and the virtual image of the interrogator. This simultaneity goes back to Bergson’s notion of the continuous duplicating of the present into perception and recollection. His illustration of an actor playing his part while listening and beholding himself playing comes to mind. The spectator watches the protagonist tell a story in which the protagonist sees himself playing the role of the interrogator.

In his *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze refers to many cases where a film is either reflected in a theatre play, a show, a painting, or in another film (73). He argues that the film within the film is a mode of crystal-image (74):

It will be observed that, in all the arts, the work within the work has often been linked to the consideration of a surveillance, an investigation, a revenge, a conspiracy, or a plot. This was already true for the theatre in the theatre of Hamlet, but also for the novel of Gide. (Deleuze 75)

Since the second part of *Inside* functions as a mirror-image to the first and the third parts of the film, it is possible to claim that this “double” functions as a film within the film. The segment mentioned previously is related to an investigation. Within the therapeutic process, the protagonist must put the “Serbs are all the same” myth to test. As a survivor of the genocide in Srebrenica, he asks himself if he can make a distinction between Serbs. He needs to determine if he believes that all Serbs are perpetrators. Therefore, he makes a “mental” journey, an investigation, in which he confronts five Serbian women to learn more about their views on the war atrocities committed in Bosnia. Throughout his introspection, he relives his trauma in order to be able to leave his past behind and move towards the future. It is relevant to add that the protagonist’s reliving of his trauma can be compared to a notion of re-enactment.

Re-enactment is a process of playing certain episodes from the past in order to come to terms with that past. I am particularly reminded of the opening scene of *Inside*, which in the given dramaturgical sequencing acts as a non-representational image. Without any prior explanation, the spectator is confronted with the scene of a man, naked from the waist up, sitting passively in his chair. His head is down. A close-up of his face discloses red lipstick on his lips and black mascara on his eyelashes. It reveals and adds nothing to the viewer’s comprehension of the situation but nevertheless has an impact on the viewer. The viewer may not understand the context but does sense that there is something awkward and slightly disturbing about the situation in which the character finds himself. In the second part of the film, the protagonist is seen speaking with Woman 2. Their exchange reveals that he managed to escape the act of killing of 8,000 people from Srebrenica. During the conversation, the protagonist presents a photo, which depicts him disguised as a girl. The explanation follows that as a young boy he had to put on a headscarf and make-up in order to be disregarded by Serb troops. Since the troops had divided men from women with the intention of eliminating men, the protagonist had disguised himself in order to escape an inevitable ending. A UN soldier operating in Srebrenica, which used to be



Fig. 9. *Inside* [Unutra], directed by Namik Kabil, 2013.

one of the UN safe areas, took the photo after realizing that the protagonist was masked. Luckily, Serb authorities were tricked by his camouflage, and the protagonist managed to escape. Two non-representational images, which appear as two shots, one at the beginning of the first and the other at the end of the second part of the film, show Patient, naked from the waist up, sitting passively in his chair. Bright red lipstick colours his lips, and black mascara his eyelashes. Having seen him in this state for the second time in the film, one sees him reliving and re-enacting his past trauma.

Aside from acting as a non-representational image, the scene depicting the disguised protagonist serves as a good illustration of the crystalline image. We are confronted with Bergson's notion of duration, which presupposes the simultaneous unfolding of the protagonist's actual perception and his traumatic memory. Given that the crystal-image assumes the actual and the virtual in a perpetual exchange around a point of indiscernibility, it is relevant to look for cues of indistinguishability within the diegesis of *Inside*. Due to the indistinguishability invoked between the actual and the virtual, these cues give rise to non-representational images within the narrative. Three examples come to mind. During the actual talk between Patient and Doctor, the camera tilts a little upwards and downwards instead of remaining fixed. In this way, the camera work renders a discomforting situation. The resulting scene implies that the viewer is aware that a set of objective shots might have become subjective. Therefore, this conversation might as well have taken place in a protagonist's dream or hallucination. As argued earlier in this chapter, this segment of the film is regarded as the actual. Nonetheless, the viewer recognizes an intrusion of the virtual within

the actual. As a matter of fact, this scene illustrates that the actual and the virtual “chase” each other around the point of indiscernibility. It becomes difficult to determine precisely when the actual stops and the virtual starts. This point of hesitation, insecurity, indistinguishability between the two is what forms the crystal-image and gives rise to the non-representational image. Also, towards the end of the film, when Doctor is seen having a telephone conversation with his friend, Woman 4 passes by. As evident from the earlier assessment of the film’s organization, Doctor inhabits the realm of the actual, and Woman 4 resides in the virtual. This example demonstrates the virtual’s interference in the actual. Yet, it is difficult to entirely distinguish one from the other.

My final example is drawn from the second part of the film. It is the sequence in which the protagonist confronts five Serbian women. The discussion heats up; many questions, answers, and insults are exchanged. In a brief moment, a camera points to an empty chair opposite the protagonist. Suddenly, the spectator realizes that the protagonist is alone in this room. His actual perception intrudes the realm of his memories and imagination. Given this cue, the viewer is able to navigate through the film structure. It makes the following argument possible: the middle segment of the film is shaped by the protagonist’s imagination that functions as the virtual, which unfolds as the film within the film.

Powers of the False and the Limitations of Non-Representation

In Chapter II, it was stated that the movement-image, or what Deleuze calls organic narration, consists of the extension of sensory-motor schemata: goal-driven, self-determined characters react to situations or act in such a way as to disclose the situation. This is “a truthful narration in the sense that it claims to be true, even in fiction” (Deleuze 123).

On the opposite end, crystalline narration is quite different. It implies a breakdown of sensory-motor schemata: “Sensory-motor situations have given way to pure optical and sound situations to which characters, who have become seers, cannot or will not react, so great is their need to “see” properly what there is in the situation” (Deleuze 124). Deleuze suggests that these conditions form a new status of narration. The narration ceases to be truthful, and becomes essentially falsifying (Deleuze 127). It is a “power of the false, which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts” (Deleuze 127).

By claiming the power of the false, Deleuze refers to Nietzsche, who, “under the name of ‘will to power,’ substitutes the power of the false for the form of the true” (127). Narration ceases to be a truthful narration, which is related to sensory-motor descriptions. A description becomes its own object, and “narration becomes temporal and falsifying at exactly the same time” (Deleuze 128). Deleuze adds that the formation of the crystal, the force of time and the power of the false are strictly complementary. They continually implicate each other as the new coordinates of the image (Deleuze 128).

Essentially, the actual breaks free from its motor linkages, and the virtual disengages itself from its actualization. Unrelated to each other, the actual and the virtual become legitimate for themselves (Deleuze 123). The forger or the falsifier becomes the main character of the cinema. As Deleuze states, “it is not the criminal, the cowboy, the psycho-social man, but the forger pure and simple, to the detriment of all action” (128). He could previously appear as a liar or traitor, but now he presupposes an endless appearance, which creeps in and overwhelms the entire picture. The forger stands for “indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary,” of the actual and the virtual. He makes the direct time-image, the crystal-image apparent. The forger “provokes undecidable alternatives and inexplicable differences between the true and the false, and thereby imposes a power of the false as adequate to time, in contrast to any form of the true which would control time” (Deleuze 128).

The lead character of *Inside* shares characteristics with Deleuze’s forger. He is a magician with words, a storyteller. He is the one who, while speaking to Doctor, continually makes up stories. Unlike the liar or traitor of the movement-image, his appearance is not accidental or short-lived but endless and permeates the entire narration. He is the maker of a “pseudo-story,” the one who plays tricks with the viewer’s mind, makes the viewer suspicious about the objectivity and truthfulness of the unfolding events:

The story no longer refers to an ideal of the true which constitutes its veracity, but becomes a “pseudo-story,” a poem, a story which simulates or rather a simulation of the story. Objective and subjective images lose their distinction, but also their identification, in favour of a new circuit where they are wholly replaced, or contaminate each other, or are decomposed or recomposed. (Deleuze 144)

As seen from the latest examples, objective and subjective images have lost their distinction; they are decomposed or recomposed; the actual and the virtual are hardly distinguishable because they are constantly moving;

they run after each other, and refer back to each other. The story and the simulation of the story are hardly differentiated. The actual Doctor-Patient talk and the virtual Serbian women-protagonist talk influence each other and refer back to each other.

Contrary to the organic form, which is unifying and presupposes a coherence of the character, the power of the false cannot be divorced from an "irreducible multiplicity" (Deleuze 129). According to Deleuze, French poet Arthur Rimbaud's credo *Je est un autre* ("I is another") has replaced Ego=Ego. The protagonist ceases to be reduced to a coherent, self-conscious and self-determined subject. Instead, he becomes a series of many possibilities and versions of himself: "Even 'the truthful man ends up realizing that he has never stopped lying' as Nietzsche said. The forger will thus be inseparable from a chain of forgers into whom he metamorphoses" (Deleuze 129).

The falsifier exists in a series of falsifiers who are his metamorphoses. According to Deleuze, a becoming, an irreducible multiplicity, characters or forms are now valid only as variations of each other (140).

Five "invented" Serbian women appear as transformations of each other, and as transformations of the protagonist himself. All five women are physically identical, yet in terms of their narratives, they differ from each other. All five of them are forms of what Deleuze refers to as "becoming." The Patient keeps on transforming himself, becoming five women, while telling his stories to the disinterested Doctor:

What cinema must grasp is not the identity of a character, whether real or fictional, through his objective and subjective aspects. It is the becoming of the real character when he himself starts to "make fiction," when he enters into "the flagrant offence of making up legends" and so contributes to the invention of his people. The character is inseparable from a before and an after, but he reunites these in the passage from one state to the other. He himself becomes another, when he begins to tell stories without ever being fictional. (Deleuze 145)

The Patient tells the stories and thus invents people. The five Serbian women, variations of him, are not accidental, short-lived appearances within the film. In the process of continuous re-invention, they permeate the narrative. They continually make the viewer question the truthfulness of the unfolded events. At the beginning of the second part of the film, the protagonist acts as the interrogator, a person in charge of asking questions. By the end of this part, his "becoming," five different variations of himself attack him back and overtake his interrogator's throne. The protagonist's inventions,

powers of the false become a dominant, self-evident and inescapable fact of the narrative.

Interrogation, on the other side, provides the viewer with a few scenes that, in a slightly different mode, exemplify Deleuze's concept of powers of the false. But first, let me briefly refer to film-philosophical notions provided by Laura U. Marks.

In her book *The Skin of the Film*, Laura U. Marks discusses Deleuze's concept of powers of the false with regard to the works of intercultural cinema. She brings into discussion one of Deleuze's descriptions of the crystal image:

When a film reflects upon its own production process, its obstacles, and the very cost of its making, it acts as this sort of catalytic crystal, reflecting the film-that-could-have-been in the complex of its virtual images. (quoted in Marks 65)

In a similar manner, many of the films Marks analyses are “constructed around the setbacks that block their production—the cancelled interviews, the amnesiac interviewees, the censored images, the destruction of real archives” (65). The obstacles that were in the way of making *Interrogation* are to be found in the answers provided by two “amnesiac” interviewees—Woman G and Man E. Both interviewees face difficulties naming the perpetrators. Woman G cannot name the army responsible for the eight-month long, continual shelling of the building that she lives in, whereas Man E, self-identified as Safet Buljko from Mostar, refuses to say which were the enemy forces that stopped him on his way back from Mainz. Both interviewees have been repeatedly asked to name the perpetrators and have repeatedly refused to provide the interrogator and the audience with a clear, unambiguous answer. The non-representational strategy of “un-naming” interviewees, which I discussed earlier, appears to be in a relationship of direct dialogue with two scenes involving the two amnesiac interviewees. The non-representational strategy of “un-naming” the interviewees enhances the aspect of group cohesion among those who survived the war regardless of their eventual ethno-religious inclination. The “un-naming” of perpetrators follows the same non-representational logic, however, it reinforces the aspect of overriding silence and the denial of past atrocities.

Woman G and Man E share a number of similarities with Marks's agents of intercultural cinema. With a reference made to Deleuzian forgers or “intercessors,” Marks defines the characters of intercultural cinema as “real characters who make up fiction” (68). As she suggests, “these are not the

docile informants of documentary, but resistant characters who dispute the filmmaker's construction of truth at every turn" (68).

The forgers, intercessors, and resistant interviewees of *Interrogation* insist on telling stories that undermine the director's construction of truth. At the same time, the interviewees' memories are set against the official version of Bosnian history and can therefore be conceived as Foucauldian "counter-memories."¹² However, Woman G and Man E's answers do not offer any critical distance from the hegemonic narrative, nor do they provide the viewer with some other, politically relevant explanations. Or, in Laura U. Marks's words: "the powers of the false only undermine the hegemonic character of official images, clichés, and other totalising regimes of knowledge. They do not privilege some other experience as truth" (66).

In the case of *Interrogation*, Woman G and Man E do not privilege some other experience as truth. Or I would say they do not explicitly privilege some other experience as truth. However, at the core of their statements lies an attempt to distort, hide, and deny facts about one group's committed war crimes. The characters end up creating a fiction, producing lies. Their answers cannot be conceived as a critical re-consideration of the established and sedimented truth since they relativize, normalize, and equalize war crimes for the purpose of sending these very crimes to oblivion. Therefore, what might have initially appeared to be an obstacle in making this documentary has turned out to be its specificity. What might have been the interviewees' straightforward refusal to provide clear-cut answers has turned out to signify a deeper and more complex problem. The forgers of *Interrogation* have got their counterparts, a whole series of forgers, multiplications, and variations in *Inside*. What has been an expression of the false in some parts of the film *Interrogation* has resulted in an overall rule of the powers of the false within *Inside*. What has been an insinuation of the denial of atrocities in *Interrogation* has clear contours in *Inside*.

12 A brief but good summary of Foucault's concept is provided by Barbara A. Misztal and reads as follows: "Foucault (1977) defines counter-memory as a political force of people who are marginalized by universal discourses, whose knowledge have been disqualified as inadequate to their task, insufficiently elaborated or as naïve knowledge, located low down in the hierarchy. These elusive group memories, which are frequently in a sharp contrast to the dominant/official representation of the past, provide a group with a repertoire of categories for enacting social divisions. Counter-memory illuminates the issues of the discontinuity of traditions and the political implication of alternative narratives." (Misztal 78) For more information see Barbara A. Misztal, "The Sacralization of Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 7, no.1, 2004, 67–84.

Conclusion

The working hypothesis of the chapter is that the spatio-temporal distance to the former Yugoslavia alleviates the consequences and pressures of the post-war condition and leads to formal experimentation and a greater freedom in moving towards non-representational strategies than is the case for films made by those authors from the former Yugoslavia without the experience of living in the diaspora.

Flotel Europa and *My Own Private War* combine archival footage with home movies in mosaic-screen compositions and slow-motion montage. They show that non-representational images of war can offer points of entry for the productive, multidirectional exchange of mediated memories of the Partisan struggle and the Bosnian war. They can also draw attention to the failure to reconcile familial remembrance with public representation, as they seek to account for the historical experience of the post-war condition. The awareness of the loss of Yugoslavia—as a direct consequence of the wars—proves to be a defining feature of a new collective identity among former Yugoslavs living in the diaspora.

The emergent ethno-nationalist identities are a point of departure for *Interrogation* and *Inside*. Both films are characterized by the use of interrogation. This proves to be a fitting technique to investigate the pervasive silence about wartime experiences or outright denial as the challenge imposed by the post-war present. The non-representational strategy of “un-naming” the interviewees enhances the aspect of group cohesion among those who survived the war regardless of their possible ethno-religious inclination. The “un-naming” of perpetrators follows the same non-representational logic, however, it reinforces the aspect of pervasive silence and denial about past atrocities and points out the limitations of non-representation discussed previously.

All four films indicate that the wider context of the wars is either gradually revealed or additionally obscured through the strategies of non-representation. They make it conceivable that non-representational images of war can create new productive forms of future thinking and point to the way beyond the post-war condition, also when they indicate how difficult it might be to resolve differences between private and public memories. Non-representational strategies, which help obscure the political context and, thereby, provoke ethical concern about their usage, can be part and parcel of the films that thematize and problematize denial about past atrocities. The fourth chapter makes this contradiction palpable and sets a necessary framework for the future debate on the limitations and potentials

of non-representational strategies in accounting for the historical experience of denial as implicated in the enduring post-war condition.

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Conclusion

The multi-faceted meanings of the adjectives *post-Yugoslav* and *post-war* were reflected on in Chapter I. The detailed analysis there showed distinct differences between the legacies or continuous influence of Yugoslavia on the one hand, and the war on their respective aftermaths on the other. Post-Yugoslavia implies retrieving once lost memories of living in the former federal state. Post-Yugoslavia may in time persist on its own, as a separate entity and a gentle reminder of antifascism, multiculturalism, and solidarity, once deeply shared values among south-Slavic people. The notion of a post-war society assumes an inability to detach from the war, to separate trauma and the legacy of the war from the present. The distinction between the post-war and the post-Yugoslav condition, which was outlined in this chapter, justifies the imperative to move beyond the post-war condition. What is at stake here is bringing an end to an enduring and un-reflected legacy of the war—making the post-war condition an afterthought, disconnected from the war as its source. This implies coming to terms with painful and contradictory memories of the war, while not only criticizing a status quo that is experienced as an unchangeable and cemented legacy of the war, but also as a habit of turning a blind eye to post-war quandaries like corruption and massive poverty.

In the context of filmmaking, overcoming the post-war status assumes finding the aesthetic means to convey memories of the war while avoiding the traps of representation. A closer look into problems of representation, as explored by Gilles Deleuze, helped me ground and further develop the concept of non-representational images. Non-representational images are ideas and affirmed differentialities in the Deleuzian sense. They cause disruption to existing representation, which always comes from within. They present rather than represent war traumas in their belatedness. They provide a glimpse into the agony of living in a permanent post-war condition. Non-representational images express a certain reluctance to swing easily into film narrative, to connect with other images and produce clear-cut meanings that would corroborate official state narratives. Rather than restricting representation to a sense of linear and causative storytelling,

I suggested that it should be associated with a sense of narrative continuity, which, as some films from the former Yugoslavia indicate, can end up supporting damaging ethno-religious stereotyping. In those instances, the narrative continuity proves to be aligned with exclusionary ethno-nationalist narratives, which rest on erasing the collective memories of living in the former multinational federal state of Yugoslavia. These narratives are best understood as historical memories, which flow into historiographies that are later captured by intellectual elites. The narrative continuity, which reflects and reinstates the convenient and useful historiography, implies a certain doubt about the possibility of truthfully conveying collective trauma. The post-war condition is implicated in various forms of self-victimization, which are inseparable from the daily political discourse in the former Yugoslavia. The self-serving, exclusionary ethno-nationalist narratives imply a notion of a resolvable past, the coherence of a narrative continuity, in need of being challenged.

By refusing to add up to a coherent, self-evident film narrative, non-representational images open a narrative up to inassimilable heterogeneity. In this operation, they refer back to themselves, yet at the same time require a specific type of spectatorial engagement. Considering the existing lack of resolution in the dispute over consciousness and subjectivity between Deleuzian and phenomenological thought (for its part), I found it useful to reconsider Bergson's notions on matter and memory. A return to Bergson's notion of attentive recognition proves rewarding when taking into account the shortcomings of both Gilles Deleuze's and Vivian Sobchack's models of spectatorship. As film scholar Darlene Pursley stresses in her writing, the Bergsonian model implies a dualism of spatial and temporal spectatorship. A certain "mental flexibility" is indeed required for a notion of spectator oscillating between the spatial and temporal modes of spectatorship, between "space as narrative continuity and physical sensation and time as affect and memory" (Pursley 1192).

I draw on the most systematic study of post-Yugoslav cinema, that of Jurica Pavičić on film style and ideology, published in 2011. Pavičić offers a tripartite categorization of post-Yugoslav film: films of self-victimization; films of self-Balkanization; and films of normalization. These categories propose a coherent narrative of a shared past with the purpose of laying the groundwork for a shared future for their respective countries or communities of origin. They categorize films according to what could be called the ideological objective and possible influence of their narratives. Films of self-victimization argue that the war was the result of external prediction; films of self-Balkanization internalize and amplify western stereotypes

about the intrinsic irrationality of Yugoslav peoples and politics; and films of normalization attempt to create a false consistency through narratives that suggest that what is still persistently present, the unresolved past, has actually been resolved and turned into a liveable past. I depart from and at the same time challenge Pavičić's model by distinguishing my own three categories of post-Yugoslav cinema: films of over-representation; films of representation; and films of non-representation. Films of over-representation (often in melodramatic or epic modes) stage competition between victims and strengthen divisive ethnic stereotypes, or resort (in more postmodern modes) to relativizing forms of self-Balkanization (that is, they roughly correspond to Pavičić's first two types). Films of representation reject such strategies and instead tend to use minimal realism, classic narrative arcs, and linear storytelling (roughly Pavičić's films of normalization). Finally, films of non-representation tend to reject linear narrative storytelling and work instead with silences, long shots, shaky camera, and the insertion of archival or home movie footage. These films derive their power from non-representational images, which in their self-reflection have the capacity to elicit particular effects and encourage political awakening.

Chapter II revolves around the portrayal of a victim that varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each selected film submits to. The emphasis is placed on the shift from representation to non-representational strategies. And this shift is partly reflected in the change of register within the oeuvre of the same filmmaker, as seen with Aida Begić and Jasmila Žbanić in particular. As could be seen, non-representational images of war can deviate from the linear, cause-and-effect narrative, but remain supportive of the film's overarching optimism and related goals, as in *Grbavica* and *Snow*. They can appear as inserted home videos or news footage and thereby challenge the coherence of the narrative structure, as in *Children of Sarajevo* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*. Alternatively, the cause-and-effect narrative can be left behind, and new temporalities can emerge with new sound/image arrangements, as in the fully fledged films of non-representation *Depth Two* and *1395 Days without Red*. An evoked traumatic past can be successfully mastered and integrated into the films' present, as the films of representation show. Alternatively, its assimilation into the film's narrative, which is marked by its predisposed goal orientation and overarching optimism, can be challenged, as evident in the films featuring a higher degree of non-representation. If *Madonna* offers a clear-cut opposition between victim and perpetrator, which is narratively presented in melodramatic terms, *1395 Days without Red* is at the opposite end of the non-representational scale in that it suspends cause-and-effect

relations and rejects representing human suffering altogether. A shift away from objectifying victims, on one side, and towards escaping the convention of representation in order to restore dignity to victims, on the other, are issues of political relevance that were addressed in this chapter.

Chapter III acts as a mirror-image to Chapter II. It revolves around the portrayal of a figure of the perpetrator, which varies from film to film, depending on the degree of representation that each selected film submits to. While *Underground* and *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* resort to strategies of over-representation, the use of grotesque and hyperbole, *Ordinary People* and *Blacks* shift away from such forms and focus on dead time in warfare or the paratactic ordering of an unconnected narrative. Finally, *The Load* and *Krivina* are characterized as films of non-representation as they attest to a failure to remember the commission of war crimes and the silent complicity in their cover-ups. The movement from over-representation to non-representation implies a shift away from glorifying wartime violence and the inhibiting internalization of derogatory stereotypes about the Balkans along with a further perpetuation of nesting Orientalisms, Balkanism, and self-Balkanism. The films that succeed in refusing to disclose and narrate actual killings, while providing sporadic cues, help engage the viewer's knowledge, memory, and imagination in completion of these non-representational images of war. The reduction in style, which amounts to an erasure of the political context of the Yugoslav wars, however, raises an ethical concern over the limitations of non-representation. *Ordinary People*, for example, works with a decontextualization of its narrative (concrete historical events or ethnic affiliations are not traceable) and thus could be understood as evading the problem of historical guilt and responsibility. The introduction of Dominick LaCapra's notion of perpetrator trauma and its relation to and integration into a film narrative is used to initiate a discussion about the possible drawbacks of non-representation. A treatment of individual and collective guilt and accountability came under careful scrutiny.

Chapter IV revolves around the after-effects of the Yugoslav wars of disintegration, as experienced and depicted in the films by the filmmakers from the former Yugoslavia who (have) work(ed) and live(d) in the diaspora. One of the working hypotheses of this chapter was that a spatio-temporal distance from the places of war trauma and/or post-war anxieties leads to an experimentation in style and contributes to the rise of non-representational images of war and a stronger presence of the films of non-representation.

Flotel Europa and *My Own Private War* combine archival footage with home movies in mosaic-screen compositions and slow-motion montage.

They show that non-representational images of war can offer points of entry for the productive, multidirectional exchange of mediated memories of the Partisan struggle and the Bosnian war. They can also draw attention to the failure to reconcile familial remembrance with public representation, as they seek to account for the historical experience of the post-war condition. A concern over the loss of Yugoslavia and collective identity is integral to *My Own Private War*, whereas a concern over the post-war reality as being determined by ethno-religious identities is meticulously scrutinized in Namik Kabil's films *Interrogation* and *Inside*.

All four films indicate that the wider context of the wars is either gradually revealed or additionally obscured through the strategies of non-representation. They make it conceivable for non-representational images of war to create new productive forms of future thinking and point the way beyond the post-war condition, also when they indicate how difficult it might be to resolve differences between private and public memories. Non-representational strategies, which help obscure the political context, and thereby provoke concern of the ethics of their usage, can be part and parcel of the films that thematize and problematize a denial of past atrocities. The fourth chapter makes this contradiction palpable and sets up the necessary framework for any future debate on the limitations and potentials of non-representational strategies in accounting for the historical experience of denial as implicated in the enduring post-war condition.

Based on the analysis of the objects in my study, the political relevance of non-representational strategies in post-Yugoslav film lies in: recuperating the dignity of a survivor of the war that was previously lost to mass media images of human suffering; approaching the denial of past atrocities without reinforcing divisions across ethno-religious lines that keep post-Yugoslav society locked in its post-war condition; and preventing the glorification of wartime violence. Non-representational images in post-Yugoslav film become problematic when the wider sociopolitical context of war is obscured to such a degree that the distinction between perpetrators and victims is relativized, and when denial about atrocities or widespread silence about the war past is further enhanced. Within the scope of my research, I investigated how contemporary images of war shape the film aesthetics and development of film language in post-Yugoslav cinema. The question of the political relevance, possibilities, and limitations of non-representational strategies was the focus of this study.

An enquiry into the role of the Sarajevo Film Festival in selecting, showcasing, and supporting the production and circulation of post-Yugoslav films would provide further insight into the topic. It would be relevant to explore

whether and how the Sarajevo Film Festival as a privileged showcase of post-Yugoslav cinema contributes to the overall discourse on reconciliation within post-Yugoslav society. In particular, it would be essential to determine whether and to what extent the festival encourages the production and promulgation of films that avoid the use of representational images of war and address both the historical experience of war and the contemporary experience of post-war society through non-representational strategies.

My research on non-representational images of war in post-Yugoslav cinema would benefit from a comparative analysis with films and artworks that originate from or engage with other areas charged with collective memories about past trauma. Joshua Oppenheimer's films *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, Rithy Panh's *The Missing Picture*, László Nemes's *Son of Saul*, and Alfredo Jaar's *The Rwanda Project 1994–2010* are prominent examples that come to mind. A closer look at the difficulties of representing victim and perpetrator trauma, complicity in cover-up crimes, silence and denial about atrocities across various historical and geographical sites would properly contextualize my findings. The ensuing interdisciplinary exchange between artistic practices and theories could eventually lead to the creation of the first catalogue of non-representational images of collective traumas. In line with the aim of this research, the catalogue would highlight the role of non-representational images of war in shaping the film language of the post-conflict societies addressed. The social relevance of the strategies analysed here would be on equal footing with their aesthetic properties. The question of reconciliation would be as relevant as the form of expression it pursues.

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