

ISBN: 978-88-96951-10-1

PECOB'S VOLUMES

*Post-Yugoslav Film
and Literature Production:
an Alternative to
Mainstream Political and
Cultural Discourse*

Tijana Matijević

MIREES

Interdisciplinary Master's East European Research and Studies
Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna

PECOB

Portal on Central Eastern and Balkan Europe
University of Bologna - Forlì Campus

www.pecob.eu

*Post-Yugoslav Film and Literature
Production: an Alternative to
Mainstream Political and Cultural
Discourse*

Tijana Matijević

MIREES

*Interdisciplinary Master's East European Research and Studies
Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna*

Mentor
Prof. Ana Dević

Second reader
Prof. Cristina Demaria

Academic Year: 2008/2009

Table of Contents

Summary.....	4
Introduction	5
1. Post-Yugoslav Film and Literature: an Overview	9
1.1. Post-Yugoslav Literary Production.....	13
1.2. Post-Yugoslav Film Production.....	22
2. The Emigrant.....	30
2.1. An Emigrant and the Yugoslav Conflict.....	35
3. Remembering the past.....	39
3.1. Metaphor of Garbage: Between the Past and the Future.....	41
3.2. Negotiating the Past: From Nostalgia to Parody.....	44
3.3. Trauma and Memory.....	48
4. The Other	52
4.1. Female otherness and its (dis)contents.....	53
4.2. Otherness and Its Cultural Concepts.....	59
4.3. An Individual as the Political Other.....	61
4.4. Absurdity of Violence: the Other in the Contemporary Society.....	62

4.5. The Other Multiplied: Instability of Structure and Meaning.....66

Conclusions.....69

Bibliographical references.....72

Summary

Drawing upon studies which emphasized and conceptualized the existence of political and cultural alternatives to the emerging nationalistic cultures in ex-Yugoslav societies, this study aims at following those *anti-nationalist artistic records* in newly formed post-Yugoslav states. By offering an overview to the contemporary artistic production, namely literature and film, an exploration will focus on several concrete cultural concepts, which should then function as tools for displaying the difference/opposition between the mainstream culture and its alternative authors and artifacts.

I argue that post-Yugoslav authors are conceptualizing the post-socialist and post-conflict situation through negotiation of several concepts, that of *an emigrant, of the Other and of memory*. Those have been therefore employed as main theoretical *filters*, or basic analytical references. The question of an exile, as existentially altered position, which also reframes the issue of one's belonging, then question of the Other, crucial for establishing one's identity, and finally a notion of memory which is a space for reconsideration of both private and official histories, problems of responsibility and guilt, are encompassing the way these post-Yugoslav film and literature authors articulate their own artistic and political views.

Process of violent disintegration is a constitutive argument of this research, for it necessitates understanding of three post-Yugoslav states which were at war (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) as a single cultural/political space. By inevitably touching upon Yugoslav cultural heritage this writing also seeks to distinguish novel identities and concepts which have been emerging after the dissolution.

Introduction

As Chip Gagnon and Eric Gordy¹ have demonstrated in their influential studies, radicalization of antagonisms which led to the violent dismemberment of Yugoslavia, was accomplished and maintained by the political elite's strategy of publically and politically discrediting the opposite, dissident stream in the society. The ruling establishment, whose goal was remaining in power and preserving political and economic prerogatives in the state, was actively engaged in destruction of the alternatives (Gordy). The regime was demobilizing and marginalizing those pushing for change (Gagnon) by confining them to the politically irrelevant ambience of the private and sub-cultural.

Hence, two authors have contributed greatly to the non-essentialist theory on Yugoslav conflict and have shed stronger light to political strategies of the nationalistic elites. More importantly, they addressed the *silenced alternative*, both in terms of political activism and cultural production. My study complements and broadens their work by evidencing more recent development in the area of non-nationalist and anti-nationalist literature and film production in Yugoslavia's successor states. Therefore, by following this line of artistic production my interpretation contrasts reductionist cultural theory which affirms nationalist interpretations of culture. I will also show that art, that is effects of aesthetics are worthwhile analyzing in the contexts of nationalism and post-conflict setting.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to offer a different way of seeing and understanding the post-Yugoslav space (in its socio-political-cultural totality and dynamics), that is, to illuminate its *artistic artifacts* in order to be able to depart from the common, dominantly politically-oriented and negatively connoted analysis of the region. By negative I understand dealing persistently with those forms of political or cultural phenomena in the region which are structurally inscribed in the ethno-nationalist paradigm of the region of ex/post Yugoslavia. As already noted, the focus will not be on the artistic production which supported and served as a type of a cultural milieu for all of Yugoslav nationalisms, but on those alternative-to-dominant-culture authors and their works. Film and literature have been chosen for several reasons.

As regards some formal and poetics commonalities among literature and film, I would add that they are both based on the story-telling, or to put it more broadly, they both operate as types of (cultural, political) narratives. Therefore, structural similarities function in various elements of those narratives: from the fabula–syuzhet dependence, characters, plot, to the imagery of particular social or historical background they, with

¹ V. P. Jr Gagnon, *The myth of ethnic war: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, London, 2004 and Eric D. Gordy, *The culture of power in Serbia: nationalism and the destruction of alternatives*, The Pennsylvania State University, 1999

the exception of certain genres, as experimental for example, favor.

Two media have had a long history of mutual influences. Firstly, film as an art expression draws from literary sources of drama and theatre. Secondly, both in its beginnings and nowadays, cinema very often searches for its stories in the works of literature. Dramatization of famous novels has been very productive and popular direction of contemporary film making, upholding the fact about the corresponding structural features they share. So, film and literature modify each other, they are mutually dependent.

Moreover, borrowing from a prominent (post)Yugoslav film theoretician here, I would like to stress that film is the first degree social and political intervention.² Accordingly, literature poses the same potency, precisely over and through the medium of language it constantly negotiates and changes. It thus enables novel inputs of understanding the world we live in. Importantly, it structurally functions *outside the power*, as Roland Barthes had affirmed. It is thus the space of freedom, and furthermore, *creativity*. Creativity of post-Yugoslav authors in understanding the phenomena of Yugoslav conflict, everyday life and past we all shared is an impending input into politics and cultures of the region.

A work of the almost the same title- *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film*- by Gordana P. Crnković, a professor of the Slavonic studies at the University of Washington, has been published in 2012, showing the growing need of authors to deal with the topic of post-Yugoslav artistic production, particularly in the sense of seeing it as originating from a single cultural foundation. Besides focusing on the identical art forms, the book is also important for it supports the approach and the argumentation demonstrated in my research. Crnković urges the ‘separation of arts from [various power] discourses’, and the recalling of ‘*radical potentials of arts*, in this case by illuminating selected works of post-Yugoslav literature and cinema, which tend to enrich global realms of *sensitivities, concepts, and politics*.’³

Crnković offers few essential arguments about the legitimate research motifs related to the concept of the post-Yugoslav culture: ‘related to each other by emerging from an environment of such changes, the post-Yugoslav literary works and films have much to tell to the world, especially about things that bring wars’⁴ and ‘the artistic and conceptual realm that they create when they are brought together and allowed to relate to each other simply by being put together.’⁵

Therefore, the main task of this research is to interpret current streams in film and literary production in three post-Yugoslav countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia). I examine post-conflict and post-authoritarian political and cultural

2 Pavle Levi, quoted in Ana Dević, “‘Open Regionalism’ in the Cinema Production in Yugoslavia’s Successor States” in: Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz (eds.), *Towards Open Regionalism in South-East Europe*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012, p. 196

3 Gordana P. Crnković, *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film: Fires, Foundations, Flourishes*, Continuum International Publishing, 2012, p. 6; cursive mine.

4 Gordana P. Crnković, op. cit, p. 5

5 Gordana P. Crnković, op. cit, p. 5

environment, that is artifacts produced mainly since the year 2000 to the present day. I start with the works produced in the aftermath of the conflict as a kind of an introduction, but give priority to those pieces made after the year 2000. The focus of the interpretation will be on the type and symbolic of the narratives, characters and stories chosen by the film and literary authors, their innovative strategies and concepts.

The selection of three countries is justified by the same language idiom used in this region (which has its official unifying name: Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian/BCS), shared cultural and political history, same population and developing of the same economic and cultural market and cooperation in recent years. However, what is essential for understanding these three states as one political and cultural space is the process of its violent disintegration. This indeed makes the comparison necessary because official nationalism triggered and imposed processes of divisions and hostilities. Furthermore, Yugoslav war, its political, historical and legal implications are still a tabooed question region wide. It is a point of controversy and even obliteration, and for those very reasons it is a threshold political and cultural issue. I also argue that the authors presented in this research address this issue both directly and indirectly, but, unlike the status this war has in the dominant culture, for them this topic is *ultimate political and aesthetic component*.

Writers included in the research are representative and relevant authors in the respective country or the whole region in some cases. Some of them made their ‘dissident’ careers in former Yugoslavia, some formed during the years of war, whereas some of them started producing their first works only after the war and general hostile atmosphere had ended. In this way, we can follow the continuous line of alternative paths and resistance voices existing parallel with the dominant paradigm.

The selection of films was done according to the equivalent criteria, except the fact that the focus was more on the particular film work and not necessarily the author. This was mainly due to two reasons: not all the films were available for watching and film directors, unlike writers, did not always have the opportunity to make their movies in a continuous time line. To sum up with quoting again Gordana P. Crnković when elaborating her selection of the works analyzed: ‘book engages with literary and cinema works that seem to [her] both *exquisite in themselves and standing as a model of a score of other works from the region grappling with the same realms*.’⁶

I apply theoretical concepts of gender and broader cultural studies, together with elements of conflict studies, considering their great interdisciplinary capability. Moreover, since my interest in the alternative pursuits in the sphere of literature and film is motivated by my previous education and general interest in the contemporary art I will also employ interpretative strategies of literary and film theory. Here I rely strongly upon Roland Barthes’ conception about the *responsibility of the form*⁷, by focusing on the aesthetic features of art and what they suggest or which meaning they

6 Gordana P. Crnković, op.cit, p. 6; cursive mine.

7 Rolan Bart, *Lekcija: pristupno predavanje na Kolež de Fransu (1977)*, Karpos, Loznica, 2009, p. 19

bring into being.

Also, I support the insight that ‘the purpose of these texts is not to construct ethical representations which directly address their readers, but a kind of mimesis for mimesis’s sake. It is this autonomy, this retreat from ethics’⁸ which interests me and in this way I intend to shift the attention from the mentioned *ideologically interested* theoretical discourse to the one which would illuminate artifacts of one culture by pursuing inherently artistic devices and processes. However, here I strongly rely on the concepts of Benjamin and Rancière who established a direct relation between aesthetics and politics, thus showing that every studying of the aesthetics cannot avoid ethical implications.⁹

Therefore, my approach is predominantly that of the *analysis of the plot* for this concepts also allows for making certain conclusions about the shift which occurred in the realm of culture ever since 1990s up to 2000s and further. Topics, narratives and characters have been changing ever since 1990s onward indicating also alteration in other fields but arts. Analysis of the plot is a legitimate and adequate method for it functions simultaneously as reading of ideological models¹⁰ and it includes attitudes and autobiographical features in those works of post-Yugoslav authors.

Besides the introductory and concluding chapters, there are four chapters which constitute this thesis. Whereas the first one is meant to offer an overview of the contemporary literary and film scene in three countries, focusing on features and strategies which define selected works as an alternative, the middle three chapters are envisioned as responses to three cultural concepts which are, in my opinion, cardinal in studying the post-conflict setting of Yugoslav successor states. The concepts and their corresponding chapters are: *The Emigrant, Memory* (Remembering the Past) and *The Other*. I try to pursue the way selected authors relate towards those concepts, how they negotiate them, and importantly, how they position them against the ruling set of values and ideas.

8 Simon During, *Literature – Nationalism’s other?*, in: ‘Nation and Narration’, (ed.) Homi, K. Bhabha, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 147

9 Benjamin, Rancière- see bibliography for the full reference.

10 Nevena Ivanović, “Zaposedanje Drugog i manipulacija ženskim pismom”, Reč, 59/5, 2000, p. 200

1. Post-Yugoslav Film and Literature: an Overview

Cultural-entertainment program – what is that?

A camouflage!

That’s right!

Gori vatra (Fuse)

Period of communist rule was important and productive period of Eastern-European dissident thought, leaving behind precious artifacts of alternative political and cultural charge, and, importantly, inaugurating many of the concepts Western political theory did not refer to in the first place (we refer here predominantly to works of Vaclav Havel and Milan Kundera)¹¹. Yugoslav intellectuals, however, pursued different political and theoretical agenda, elaborating primarily theoretical foundations of the developed socialism and performing *within* the framework of the political establishment.¹² Whichever the differences, Polish, Czechoslovakian and Yugoslav model of intellectual agency have all been forged and realized in a dynamic relationship towards the discourse of the ruling establishment, to whose role and meaning Yugoslav intellectuals contributed greatly by constant challenging, negotiating, but also by legitimizing its ideological postulates. Similarly to great dissident figures in mentioned Eastern European countries, many of Yugoslav cult writers were at the same time either dissident authors, or supporters of the communist regime, or, in a longer perspective, both. Writers had enjoyed a reputation of a first rank political and cultural authorities. They were recognized and praised for their literary *authorship* which simultaneously functioned as a powerful political and cultural authority people should have embraced. Therefore, writers were the core of cultural and political activities in ex-Yugoslavia, formulating, promoting and representing certain set of values which were then to be followed and praised.

Nevertheless, as Andrew Wachtel has maintained, ‘literary work had lost its central, propulsive role in producing the meanings in their respective [Eastern European] societies.’¹³ Therefore, the relevance of literary authors had to be either re-

11 According to: Barbara J. Falk, *The dilemmas of dissidence in East-Central Europe : citizen intellectuals and philosopher kings*, Central European University press, , Budapest ; New York, 2003

12 According to: Siniša Malešević, , “From ‘Organic’ Legislators to ‘Organicistic’ Interpreters: Intellectuals in Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav States”, *Government and Opposition*, 37 (1), 2002, 55-75

13 Endru Baruh Vahtel, *Književnost Istočne Evrope u doba postkomunizma* / Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*, Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 2006, p. 3

affirmed by their eventual political engagement (many examples of emerging writers-nationalistic ideologists), or to be achieved by shifting and updating the literary discourse itself. However, this transformation of the role of a writer has been also the result of the global 'liberation' from the pretensions of the high art and its prescriptions. The postmodern absorbability of heterogeneous artistic techniques, multiplication of meanings and ambiguous character of artistic imagery in general shape contemporary art as diversified, multi-perspective and *contaminated* space. Moreover, by recognizing that 'the literature of the post-socialist cultural model [is] socially noncommittal, almost exclusively **private** story'¹⁴, we touch upon this private-public dynamics which also plays the important role in the realities narrated in the works of post-Yugoslav authors.

Therefore, bringing out the individual, private life and memories has become the main preoccupation of film and literature authors.¹⁵ Maintaining the contrast between the private and the public, official version and improvised, spontaneous interpretation of various critical events, post-Yugoslav authors are writing about everyday life, but also about how that life had been transformed and lived after the war, and after a period of political and cultural repression.

Since the end of the eighties and during the nineties (post)Yugoslav authors' were seeking to articulate the anti-mainstream attitudes and to show that there have been voices and cultural practices which have been continuously opposing retrograde and conservative politics in the region. Detachment from the themes of national past or established historical narratives are very often parts of artists' strategies. This can be conveyed in the form of *extradiegetic* narration: 'What is wrong with me? While serious writers are preoccupied with a heavy burden of history, I'm attracted by a bird on the cross, or I'm being captured by some inexplicable mystic fear'¹⁶ (Mirko Kovač, *Kristalne rešetke / Chrystal lattices*, 1995).¹⁷ As if being preoccupied with particularities, details and ephemeral phenomena in life is not all only a part of the artistic imagery, but conscious decision of the author and a manifestation of his poetic and political interests. This uncertainty between biographical and fictional aspects of the procédé is meant to draw attention to the very process of writing and of the authorship. His choice is given as an exclusive, almost capricious will, which stresses the prevalence of the particular, individual perspective and experience. By expressing his own interests when choosing a writing topic, this author is challenging the problematic character of the option which stands on the opposite side of the artistic imagination- *history* and its 'burden'.

Famous Serbian-Canadian writer David Albahari has disclosed philosophical implications of the relationship between the individual and history: 'history is

14 Mihailo Pantić in: Endru Vahtel, op.cit, p. 8

15 I am not, however, arguing that this ought to be the invention of the post-Yugoslav authors or some artistic novelty. I am underlying the difference between this artistic provenience and those strategies and interests present in re-traditionalized artistic forms, conveying national myths, collective spirit, big historical narratives and alike.

16 Mirko Kovač, *Kristalne rešetke*, LIR BG, Beograd, 2001, p. 46

17 To help following the chronology of works, I apply, besides regular footnotes, references in the brackets which are used when a book is mentioned for the first time; they include the name of the author, the title (with the English translation) and the year of the first edition of a book; the same rule is applied when a film is mentioned for the first time, only that the year is the year when the film was released.

impersonal and can not exist on the level of an individual... for it would be impossible to comprehend. That is why every history transforms into a quest for the smallest and largest common components, as if every man is the same and all human destinies are alike'.¹⁸ (David Albahari, *Gec i Majer*, 1998)

Authors presented in this research are interested in the life and position of an individual, very often seen as a 'little man', who is invisible or absent from the discourse of the official ideology's politics and culture. Focusing their attention on a destiny of a 'little man', literature and film authors are choosing to interpret cultural and political ambience by bringing to light stories from everyday life. By offering their insights into the problems those individuals are facing in their families, workplaces, in a society, these authors have departed from the mainstream interpretations of reality which is always idealized or simplified and charged with ideological inputs. Moreover, I would argue that by drawing upon narratives of national past and myths, insisting on traditional values and artistic forms this discourse cannot offer tools for interpretation of ambiguous, dynamic and challenging reality.

On the other hand, interest for and narrating lives of the people living on the borderlines of social, economic and political sphere has been continually present in the works of anti-mainstream Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav authors. Undoubtedly, one of the most famous and most meaningful performances of the mentality, way of life and social interaction among marginal groups of people was staged in Bosnian TV show from the eighties named *Top lista nadrealista (Surrealists' Top Chart)*. Focus of this TV program, conceived as a humorous and satiric interpretation of the contemporary Yugoslav society was given to 'little men, petty thieves and crooks, and others who were dwelling on the margins of a society.'¹⁹ This program, a type of Yugoslav *Monty Python*, had set standards of specific style of humor and subtle provocation, which later on could be traced in works of various Yugoslav and, importantly, post-Yugoslav authors.

In her evaluation of the Balkan cinema, Dina Iordanova has observed that there is certain imagery *shared* across the Balkan cinematography: 'the Balkans share very similar experiences. The problems seem the same: patriarchy, marginality, stubbornness, hostility, narrow-mindedness, ethnic conflicts, resistance to authority, and a special ethnic harmony currently endangered by mismanaged politics. It becomes clear that in spite of their insulation, common preoccupations and interconnections characterize the new Balkan cinema.'²⁰

The assessment about the cohesion existing among the works of post-Yugoslav authors has been intensified in Nebojša Jovanović's²¹ analyses of post-Yugoslav film and the Yugoslav cinematography it emerges from. By evaluating writings of prominent

18 David Albahari, *Gec i Majer*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2005, p. 39

19 Pavle Levi, *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu / Desintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-yugoslav Cinema*, Biblioteka XX vek, Beograd 2009, p. 100

20 Dina Iordanova, op. cit. p. 890

21 See bibliographical reference.

film theoreticians form the region, Jovanović has concluded that they are all engaged with reinventing the respective histories of post-Yugoslav national cinematographies. Their ambition has been to create national cinema which would fit the newly drawn political boundaries²², thus pretty much denying the existence of what used to be Yugoslav film, and how all particular national authors or production companies had contributed to its creation. On the contrary, ‘the medium of film has been exploited as the message about the inviolability of the (ethno)national cause’²³. On the other hand, by quoting Vida T. Johnson, Jovanović reasserts her view that “[n]owhere was the idea and reality of ‘Yugoslavia’ more fruitful than in its cinema’.²⁴

Yet, it seems that Yugoslav film died twice: first time it was done by politicians, and second time, by film theoreticians²⁵. That is why Jovanović proposes that ‘Yugoslav cinema should have continued to exist in the way in which Weimar cinema or Soviet cinema still exists, i.e., to put it crudely, as a *corpus of films*, produced in a particular historical context.’²⁶

It seems that the (official) recognition of this particular corpus and outlining of the true past of post-Yugoslav cinemas would make difficult the ongoing denial of continual and shared artistic experiences across the post-Yugoslav cinematic and political borders. Yet, Jovanović is not alone in his judgment. Croatian author Jurica Pavičić has written a volume named *Post-Yugoslav Film: Style and Ideology (Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija, 2011)* in which he states that post-Yugoslav film actually exists²⁷. He believes that ‘the issues of the 1991–1999 wars, the specifics of the post-war and post-socialist transition, and the need to grab a larger share of the shared language(s) market, as well as the embeddedness in the pre-1991 local traditions, are so widely and uniquely overlapping, that the best films in the region would have to adopt similar styles and rely on similar ideological premises’.²⁸

Therefore, post-Yugoslav in terms of common film production is worthwhile studying, and is legitimized by both structural and historical continuities which exist among separate national cinematographies from the region.

Many of the phenomena and motifs listed in Iordanova’s and Juričić’s accounts are indeed the topics which trigger artistic imagination of the authors in this study. However, important element of authors’ artistic pursuits is also their endeavor to negotiate a range of troubling cultural and political concepts and launch them in the public discourse.

22 Nebojša Jovanović, “Bosnian Cinema in the Socialist Yugoslavia and the Anti-Yugoslav Backlash”, <http://www.kinokultura> (accessed 15 December 2012)

23 Nebojša Jovanović, “Fadil Hadžić u optici totalitarne paradigme”, *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, god. 17 (2011), broj 65-66, proljeće/ljeto 2011, p. 48

24 Nebojša Jovanović, “Bosnian Cinema..”

25 Ibid.

26 Nebojša Jovanović, “Breaking the wave: A commentary on ‘Black Wave polemics: Rhetoric as aesthetic’ by Greg DeCuir, Jr”, *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, Volume 2 Number 2, p. 169; cursive mine.

27 As interpreted in: Ana Dević, “Open Regionalism’ in the Cinema Production in Yugoslavia’s Successor States” in: Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz (eds.), *Towards Open Regionalism in South-East Europe*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012, p. 205

28 Ibid.

1 1. Post-Yugoslav Literary Production

In Croatia the 3rd of January 2000, date when the HDZ²⁹ was finally removed from power, is frequently being used metonymically (‘trećesiječanjska vlast’/‘the 3rd of January government’, or simply: ‘3. sječanj’/‘January the 3rd’) to denote political (and issuing cultural) changes which took place after the elections³⁰. The new Croatian government has not only interrupted the rule of the conservative and war-associated HDZ, but has since started the chain of democratic and economic changes. Importantly, it also initiated variety of social and cultural changes and shifted official attitude towards the realm of artistic production in general. Introduction of novel cultural policy, supported by the social-democratically oriented government, had enabled renewed cultural-political relevance of literature and general innovative way of rethinking contemporary Croatia in literature.

FAK (abbreviation for the *Festival of an alternative literature*, later renamed into the *Festival of A literature*) was the central spot of this activity. Conceived as the non-institutionalized, non-formal gathering of writers and audience and organized for the first time in the mid nineties in Croatia, this event has established novel understanding of the role and position writers and their literature could hold in a society: ‘[Writers] are trying to present themselves as they really are, to demystify the status of a writer, for they themselves enjoy the spectacle of self irony, simplicity and wittiness’.³¹ (Kruno Lokotar in: *Fak-ju anthology*, 2001) So, writers themselves are engaged in the process of self-demystification, by which they themselves start to subvert the elitist concepts of culture and literature. Organizing those literal evenings as writers’ public reading of their works, fostering interaction between the writers and the audience, creating generally easy and friendly atmosphere, this event has introduced different model of writers agency, and altered social scope and influence of literature: ‘FAK is a festival of public reading, created with the aim to show that literature is alive despite everything, that it is capable to correspond to reality in which it exists in an affirmative way, and – what is probably the most important- that it is not afraid to look the reader straight into the eyes.’³² Therefore, this project re-incorporated writers in the domain of culturally relevant space, which is then in return understood differently. FAK has stressed the importance of literature and potentials of *cultural* endeavors in a society.

29 Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union) has been a ruling party in Croatia of the nineties, responsible for the ideological image of the new born Croatian state, mainly thanks to the all-embracing figure of the president Tudjman.

30 Kruno Lokotar, literary critic, editor and a moderator of the Festival of an alternative literature has once wrote about the creation of the festival and used the phrase: ‘in that symbolic spring of the year 2000’, so to reassert the novel epoch in the ongoing literal and cultural activities.

31 Kruno Lokotar in: *FAK-JU!: antologija / anthology*, Kruno Lokotar, Vladimir Arsenijević (eds.), Rende, Beograd, 2001, p. 11

32 Vladimir Arsenijević, ‘Da li se osećate fakovano?’, *FAK-JU!: antologija*, p. 13

Therefore, together with live performances, new formal elements and literary themes also have emerged. The fact that maximizes importance of this literal phenomenon is that it had exceeded (in war, and by war established) political and physical frontiers. It was also organized in several other towns and cities, not only in Croatia, but also in Serbia. When FAK was organized for the first time in Serbia, in Novi Sad, it presented not only new literary forms and standards, or a new type of a cultural event, but was also the *first* gathering of formerly Yugoslav authors after the war.

Andrew Wachtel sees literary model previously existing in the region as normative and instrumentalized: 'literature very often created new identities and new societal and political reality', and was also 'far from being the reflection of the reality'³³. New literature, unlike its precedent, is extremely interested in describing, interpreting and conveying events of the recent past and existing political and social circumstances. Employing specific narrative strategies, themes and characters, writers have been trying to reflect reality and offer its different implications and facets. That is why Kruno Lokotar asserts that 'The most of the prose which is being read on the FAK represents a diversity of neorealisms.'³⁴ By exposing flamboyant characters of a criminal or some other sub-urban milieu, showing interest for marginalized social groups and phenomena, and finally, by adopting the language of those groups, new authors have been epitomizing various societal and cultural manifestations alien to the dominant cultural model. I would even argue that they have broadened the sphere of socially and politically acceptable behaviors and identities. By convincing artistic transposition and impartial representations these authors legitimized a range of new social types and phenomena. Importantly, throughout this process they have incorporated the societal and social Other (various marginal and minority groups) into the cultural discourse and started resolving the ambiguous position those groups previously were holding in a society.

It is rather interesting how Lokotar is replying to accusations that writers gathered around FAK are not an alternative since they are well known and already affirmed: 'all the best writers are performing with us. It became pointless to repeat over and over again that this is an alternative by the model of presentation which is closer to the rock concert in its atmosphere, closer to the everyday life, relaxed and expressively spontaneous.'³⁵ FAK has *legitimized* practice of 'deconstructing the authority by mocking it'.³⁶ By naturalizing this concept previously alien and directly opposed to the mainstream discourse, FAK authors pushed the limits imposed by the official and authoritative culture.

Everyday life and politics thus tend to be conceived as a burlesque fusion of humor, irony and sharp critique. Đermano Ćićo Senjanović, a long time contributor of

33 Endru Baruh Vahtel, op.cit, p. 20

34 Kruno Lokotar, op. cit, p. 9

35 Kruno Lokotar, op. cit, p. 9

36 Kruno Lokotar, op.cit, p. 11

Feral Tribune and *Slobodna Dalmacija*³⁷, writer of several novels which are humorous and satiric chronicles of our time, most impressively demonstrated this vision in his famous book *Dorin dnevnik (Dora's Diary, 1997)*: 'This morning I woke up thinking. I was thinking if it pays off to live at all. After few minutes, it turned out that the best thing to do is to die. So I died. [...] I went out to the corridor and said: "People, I died", but except: "Thanks God", I didn't hear any other reaction. So I went back to bed and continued being dead.'³⁸ Surrealist envisioning of everyday life is imbued with questions of relevance and importance of one's own life, particularly in hostile surrounding which is marginalizing and silencing its opponents. This author is alluding to a society which is embedded with corruption, denial and moral decay. He continues by depicting a Croatian army officer, thus continuing with a captivating reflection on war and role certain people played in it: 'He took out the gun, HV³⁹ officer badge, Homeland war commemorative medal, penis and an army ID. Everyone calmed down. He told me to sit down if I am afraid, which I accepted gladly. The bus stopped a dozen times before Lora, an officer not even once⁴⁰.' However, the army and its war engagement is not the only subject of Senjanović's irony. Societal corruption and bribery is a phenomenon he gladly draws upon. In this excerpt it is being conveyed as the fragment about a visit to a doctor: 'I asked what I should do, and he said I should do push ups. I asked how many, and he said: for you- 500 marks.'⁴¹

Unlike situation in the neighboring Croatia, Serbia has waited longer for certain changes to take place. Postwar and post-authoritarian ambience was more complex and ambiguous in Serbia than it was in Croatia, which affected nationalistic and traditionalist cultural model to be more persistent in Serbia, at least as regards what is visible and permitted to enter the public domain of the official culture. Therefore, estimation that Croatian literature has been more communicative and dissent has been confirmed also among Serbian readership and writers. It is in a way a model authors from Serbia use, very often in a bias and cumulative manner, to describe their local scene. A kind of a negative comparison is at stake, which is also very interesting for this study, for it evidences the need to reflect post-Yugoslav cultures in each other. Vladimir Arsenijević, famous Serbian writer has asserted: 'There are many reasons why FAK occurred precisely in Croatia. [...] The books (mainly the collections of stories) which those authors [Miljenko Jergović, Borivoj Radaković, Robert Perišić, Zoran Ferić, Ante Tomić etc.] were releasing recently showed that [Croatian literature] is experiencing the revolution, one completely new awakening, which was never possible in Serbian literature, apathetic and self-satisfied, dreading more the impression of the literary critique, than the readers, who seem alien, distant and therefore completely

37 Both newspapers have articulated voices of political alternative in Croatia during the nineties.

38 Đermano Senjanović Ćićo, *Dorin dnevnik*, in: *FAK-JU!: antologija*, p. 256

39 Abbreviation for Hrvatska vojska-Croatian Army

40 Đermano Senjanović Ćićo, op. cit, p. 257; *Lora* is a Croatian war camp, well known as a place in which large scale ferocities were perpetuated.

41 Đermano Senjanović Ćićo, op. cit, p. 258

unimportant.⁴² If we add to all this a fact that Croatian literature has been developing thanks to the support and promotion of the cultural and political establishment, it becomes even more clear how and why Croatian literary scene was advancing in this realm of dominant cultural sphere. Therefore, in the period after the war and an end of the nationalistic political proceedings new authors and pieces of literature have emerged in Croatia. Abundance of genres, styles and new authors characterize this scene: 'Croatian literature has [...] discovered the sensibility of the end of the century, listened to the language of the street, precisely mastered the slang, dialects and colloquialisms, returned to the art of storytelling [...], adopted self-irony as a norm, and sharpness as its basic task.'⁴³

Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of Vladimir Arsenijević and the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade, FAK spread into Serbia, being organized in Belgrade for the first time in the year 2001. It was held under the name FAK JU!⁴⁴ (Before Belgrade, it was organized in Serbia, but in Novi Sad.)

Strikingly enough, the same year (2000) was the year of the elections in Serbia, which resulted in kind of a political transformation in this country too. This political change was seen as the *revolution*, and its date and year were again metonymically used ('petooktobarska revolucija'/'October the 5th Revolution', 'dvehiljadita'/'the year 2000'). Expressive and extensive usage of the date has even exceeded the metonymic substitution, alluding to the millenary concepts of 'before' and 'after' this date, obviously establishing a new historical timeline. Yet, the wave of democratization of cultural and all other institutions, has not been stabile and only-progressing-forward all the time. This fact ultimately shaped cultural and art scene, influencing above all social and political *position* of the authors and the art. Unlike new authors in Croatia who had the opportunity to participate in the creation of the *mainstream* cultural discourse, alternative writers in Serbia were still confined to cultural margins. They were either absent from the institutionalized literary circles or were publishing or even already living abroad.

Nevertheless, literary activity has been very dynamic. There have been several authors who articulated different voices in new Serbian literature, even though they remained outside the public and *recognizable* image of Serbian literary corpus. I would argue that the collection of stories *Pseći vek (Dog's Century, 2000)* stands as one of the central literary artifacts at the beginning of the new period, particularly due to the fact that it had the features of a manifesto. As authors themselves explained, it was published as a generational response to official nationalistic politics and war waged in former Yugoslavia. The topics which were certainly preoccupying those young authors were questions of responsibility, remembrance and guilt. That is why some of them also gathered to create a newspapers supplement called *Beton (The Concrete)*⁴⁵, which

42 Vladimir Arsenijević, op. cit, p. 14

43 Vladimir Arsenijević, op. cit, p. 14

44 Being a regular abbreviation for the Festival of an alternative literature Yugoslavia, the name is also a phonetic transcription of a famous English language swearing.

45 Allusion also to a famous Thomas Bernhard's novel of the same name. In many respect authors of Beton share

is certainly the most radical among similar existing editions. Editors have decided to focus on publishing negative critiques, thus highlighting the fact that there are more than plenty affirmative, conformist reviews in the realm of contemporary Serbian literature and culture. *Beton's* authors are focused on exposing nationalistic agenda present in the works of acclaimed Serbian writers, which have been simultaneously promoted and praised by the official critics and academics. Nevertheless, one of *Beton's* most significant columns is the one about the problematic biographies of recognized Serbian writers, academics, ideologists and politicians, which is a valuable contribution in the process of questioning *personal* merits, but also responsibility and guilt. *Beton's* authors are interested in contesting the mainstream versions of recent past and Serbian role in it, and more widely in the question of memory.

Renowned Serbian emigrant writer (of Jewish origin) David Albahari is haunted by this topic. His literature is notably politically engaged. He forges his narratives as quests for recuperation of one's own destiny. Importantly, this was made possible through the confrontation with the *past*, its recognition and remembering: 'Remembering, I said, is the only way to triumph over the death, even when the body is forced to disappear, especially then.'⁴⁶ On one hand this resonates wholly with Kundera's ethical envisioning of the process of remembering in his *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*: 'struggle against the power is the struggle of memory against the forgetting'. On the other, though, this anti-authoritarian awareness is becoming even more intense when associated with the insight of one Yugoslav author, who has produced the most profound literature on Holocaust and totalitarianism- Danilo Kiš- who said that literature is giving sense to the horrors of history. The idea that literature is a way to remember and rethink the reality has become one of the reasons why I tried to understand and interpret the horrors of recent post-Yugoslav history through studying aesthetics in the first place.

Besides writing about the Second World War Jewish history, Albahari treats topics of recent Serbian (authoritarian) past and marginalized and problematic identities. By conceptualizing remembering as process of establishing solidarities among the dead (victims) and the living, this author is envisioning a philosophy of the spiritual which entitles certain therapeutic features; it transcends the confines of historical and temporal, thus recuperating for the earthly absurdity: 'the spirit which is remembering can't ever be lost'.⁴⁷

Consequently, the lack of political and *moral* activism and a kind of an existential indifference is the often explored literary topic. On one hand this can be seen as the evidence of a traumatic experience (caused by the war), but on the other, it can also be forged as the conscious act of detachment from reality (again, precisely because of the war). Yet, importantly, it is not an escapist philosophical attitude, but rather an inability of protagonist to face the war which occurred and violations and ferocities it generated.

views on state, its institutions and nationalism with this Austrian author.

46 David Albahari, op.cit, p. 149

47 David Albahari, op.cit, p. 173

Describing miserable conditions in which Jewish prisoners were held in the German war camp built in Belgrade on the bank of river Sava at the beginning of the Second World War, David Albahari is particularly interested in contextualizing this within the everyday life of other citizens of Belgrade. The fact that they continued their lives as if nothing had happened, even though the camp was standing on an exposed place and the suffering of Jewish citizens was apparent, compels the narrator to say: 'Belgrade... is silently watching them from the other side of the river'.⁴⁸ Author's continuous inquiry brings to light his belief that the indifference towards the suffering of others is impermissible, which is supported by an indirect ironic figure: 'Only that what you can see, truly exists, and what you cannot see, not... Life is simple and there is not any reason to complicate and tangle it like an un-sewed sweater'.⁴⁹ One of the leitmotifs of the novel is repeated invocation of Belgrade and its people, who did not respond to inhuman position of their fellow citizens. Nevertheless, narrator's voice, indignant and evoking the tone of the Old Testament resentment, provokes implications which transcend particular historical event. I would argue here that the author has chosen to tell the story of Jewish suffering in order to convey the defeatism and indifference which marked the period of war in former Yugoslavia, when many of its citizens were suffering while many others either didn't know about it, or were denying it.

Vladimir Tasić's novel about the life in an exile and those family ties which overcome temporal and spatial confines- *Oproštajni dar (A Farewell Gift, 2001)* - follows the lives of several young people living in Novi Sad in the period of nineties. The story is narrated from the perspective of a female character, who is remembering how she decided to flee the country. One seemingly innocent, everyday situation, which a group of friends have experienced together, would become a profound author's analysis of Serbian society at a time. They were sitting and enjoying their time on the beach, playing with a ball. Suddenly airplanes started flying above them: 'And then they continued playing picigen⁵⁰. Don't think I judge anybody. There isn't much philosophy in it. You were not there. You don't know how it feels. Any of those boys could have been caught the next day... What could they do? Nothing much. Play picigen. I couldn't do even that. There. That is why I left. Because of picigen.'⁵¹ Young people, protagonists of the novel, understood war as something happening to someone else and indifferently continued playing on the river bank. Even though girl's decision to leave is seemingly paradoxical, it is her response to infantile and, basically passive role young people were forced to play.

Nevertheless, even though reality is dominantly seen as contaminated and removed realm, it can be also conveyed as a space of personal dilemmas, or of uncertainties of growing up and understanding the world around oneself. In Borivoje Adašević's story *Spas (Salvation, in collection of short stories Dog's century, 2000)* a traumatic

48 David Albahari, op. cit, p. 23

49 David Albahari, op. cit, p. 52

50 Local version of the name of the amateur sport 'picigin', played in the water and without any strict rules.

51 Vladimir Tasić, *Oproštajni dar*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2001, pp. 128-129

experience of poverty, war, and corrupted society is transmitted through protagonist's sudden flashbacks of an *imagined* war and his constant frustration and unknown fear. In this story we are told the inner, reverse side of the external events which are reflecting in a young man's consciousness. As we saw earlier, experience of war could be psychologically internalized as indifference, or even ignorance, but in this story it is an invisible struggle of a young man to overcome the fear and dissatisfaction: 'He knew immediately: if he doesn't find some firm support for his own being, something that would tie him up to the ground, like an anchor, and embed his spirit in reality- he is ruined. [...] already a few weeks have passed since he started struggling with the suffering which was manifesting in constant neurosis and ill-omened wobbling of his being to slightest wavering of reality'.⁵²

Therefore, reality is seen as a chaotic, threatening space which provokes feelings of unease and tension. But, in an unexpected narrative twist, precisely in the manner of *Deus ex machina* literary device, young man's troubles disappear: 'Suddenly [...] young man heard a female voice coming from the radio, salutary and healing'⁵³. It was the voice of one of his favorite writers (hence the immediate identification), telling an anecdote from her youth. Here mutual resemblance of their literary biographies (young man is also a writer) further establishes solidarities of their shared identities. The voice from the radio is telling a story about seeing another famous Yugoslav writer- that is, the most famous of all, a metonymic author, Nobel prize winner Ivo Andrić- reading a book in an old book shop in Belgrade. After Ivo Andrić had left the shop, she had taken the book the writer was reading and discovered that what he was reading were verses of a German poet: 'Gross wie die weite Welt (My love is great like the wide world)'. Verse itself is expressively pointing out to the existential and poetical situation of letting one's emotions go out into the world, which should result in an absolute correspondence with that outside world. This discovery made young writer feel connected to all other writers in the world, and to their destinies, unlike his previous feeling of being lost and isolated: 'Deep inside, he understood resemblance among the writers' destinies, likeness in an endless diversity. He felt a subtle alliance among the real lives of all the writers in the world'.⁵⁴ Earlier, reality has been causing extremely negative sensations, but afterwards this has been overcome and instead replaced with a synthetic vision of the world. Conflict with the reality and with the world has been harmonized in the instance of spiritual and aesthetic: 'That night he experienced a lifesaving catharsis, a purification which made him stronger and ready for life and its hardships. Like always, the salvation has come unexpectedly, from a place where he didn't search for it and where, for sure, he can't ever try to find it again'.⁵⁵

The art itself is seen as a powerful instrument of personal fulfillment, but, probably even more importantly, as a space in which it is possible to identify with others and

52 Borivoje Adašević, 'Spas', in: *Pseći vek, šest pripovedača*, Saša Ilić (ed.), Beopolis, Beograd, 2000, p. 111

53 Borivoje Adašević, op.cit, p. 118

54 Borivoje Adašević, op.cit, p. 121

55 Borivoje Adašević, op.cit, p. 123

assemble around common values and beliefs. This type of virtual grouping, feeling of belonging to a wider collective is a significant aspect of post-Yugoslav writers' agency. It is type of a political and cultural horizon on which many of the anti-nationalistic and avant-garde political and cultural ideas started emerging and circulating.

That is why poetic correspondences between Adašević and Muharem Bazdulj, a young Bosnian writer, are even more fascinating. Bazdulj is also thematizing war, but unlike Adašević, for him it was not an unknown disturbing spiritual force, but simply the fact of the everyday life, since he was living in the besieged Sarajevo. By using almost identical literary technique and relying upon similar philosophical implications, Bazdulj has told a story about his individual, private experiences of wartime, which are separated from the pessimistic and traumatic life in a besieged city. I would argue that the fragment which follows is semantically multifaceted. It tells a story of a young man experiencing same problems as anybody his age, living in whichever part of the world. In this way author is succeeding in shifting the common (self) perception of people living in a besieged Sarajevo or some other war region, and suspend stereotypes about those people being only passive victims. In this vision of the world it is allowed to be living and experiencing moments of excitement and personal fulfillment despite the external horror and despair. This story is significant also for its new *feeling* of the recent past, which is imbued with spiritual and emotional phenomena of one *individual* self. The perspective of narration is subjective, intimate, which is why different interpretation of war past was made possible in the first place. Importantly, this story also brings certain *deliberating* feeling of past, which is, I would argue, an emancipatory process, both individually and generally. Therefore, author's interest for the invisible, internal aspects of an existence, his preference for introspection over reality accounts have all designed a particular literary imagery. It demystifies cliché war narratives and discloses hidden perspectives of the past:

'It was silent and dark, but I soon caught quiet intimate piano accords from the house above [...] I knew that Springsteen's song [...] And at that moment, in a *lonely chillness before the dawn*, the voice of the landlord singing had imprinted into my mind: *Show a little faith, there's magic in the night*. Yes, the night did hide the magic, and two cracked asphalt lines of the Školska Street were connected with all other roads, from Amsterdam to Vladivostok. The air was imbued with the smell of a linden-tree, the river rumbled loudly, and my sorrow had disappeared. My night wasn't less magical than any other night, any time, any place.

At half past six in the morning a grenade detonation waked me up. I later found out that it had exploded in the little grove some fifty meters above the stairs I was sitting on. Awesome!⁵⁶ (*Čarolija / Magic*, 2008)

Therefore, time of war is not necessarily invoking ready-made devices or conventional models of literary representation. Since those authors are recalling the past,

56 Bazdulj, Muharem, *Čarolija*, Gradac K, Čačak, 2008, p. 7

and particularly war past, as a space of *private, individual* experience, it is impossible to interpret it without investing intrinsic meanings into the storytelling. That is why there are also other literary accounts in which the war past is conveyed through the stories of personal joy and harmony. Turning against the tabooed representations of war, which are most commonly displayed as black and white images in a concluded chapter of a sacred history, Bosnian writer Nenad Veličković is writing about his own life lived in a besieged Sarajevo in a way which associates it with the narratives of nostalgia:

'But war was not a hell for him! His neighbors weren't his enemies.[...] When a baby girl Marina was born, in the summer of the first war year, the neighbors were singing songs with her name under the window. Tajron had brought a new film roll [...] on which the story about the war in 36 pictures is preserved. On one of the photos, there is Veličković, 20 kilos lighter and with a few teeth less than today, watching into the objective with the smile of a happy man. If sometimes there is a trace of nostalgia in his speech about years spent under the grenades, without electricity, food, water and warmth, it is thanks to the gratitude for the lesson learnt: a man's life is worth as much as other people can prosper from it.'⁵⁷ (*Bedel*, 2007)

Evoking the war as the experience of intimate emotional excitement was also an artistic ideal of a young Bosnian writer Lamija Begagić. By remembering the war as an occurrence circumscribing her romance, she offers a different view to the wartime and people who had suffered it. Whereas classic wartime narratives emphasize the external aspects of war and are showing interest for causal analysis of the events, personal memories could be reflecting any, even the smallest and most ephemeral feeling experienced or image seen during the war. In Lamija's story *Darija: To divno ratno nebo* (*Darija: That wonderful war sky*, in collection of short stories *Godišnjica mature / A Class Reunion*, 2005) a protagonist is enchanted by the sky illuminated by the artillery fire: 'The sky is full of stars... I feel as if I have never seen such a beautiful thing in my life. Except in this war. In the war the sky was magical, with all those colors and shining bullets which would occasionally paint the sky'.⁵⁸ It was the ambience of her romance, which for the moment (by virtue of the convincing narration) seems really a perfect décor of a romance: 'There was a war and we didn't have anything else except endlessly beautiful sky and stories from our previous lives.'⁵⁹

Nevertheless, implicating that the end of war meant an end of the romance, the author is disclosing peculiar and authentic emotional recovery of the past: 'Along with the peace came the electricity and the light of the chandelier in our room had put away sky lights... Nothing was like it used to be.'⁶⁰

In Bosnia a whole new generation of literature and film authors has emerged after

57 Nenad Veličković, 'Bedel', in: *Drugi pored mene*, antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope / anthology of the Eastern-European writers, Richard Swartz (ed.), Samizdat B92, Beograd, 2007, p. 226

58 Lamija Begagić, *Godišnjica mature*, Rende, Beograd, 2006, p. 73

59 Lamija Begagić, op. cit. p. 75

60 Lamija Begagić, op. cit. p. 75

the war. Bosnian director and scriptwriter Namik Kabil has recently stated in a TV interview that the current artistic production in Bosnia is a *direct* consequence of war. Consequently, artistic inspiration, imagery and topics center around the war, directly or indirectly. War is envisioned as the *mise-en-scene* of human destinies and a background of individual artistic explorations. Nevertheless, postwar period is equally, if not even more dominant artistic topic, especially in the works of young authors.

From Lamija Begagić, Muharaem Bazdulj, Aleksandar Hemon and Nenad Veličković in literature to film directors such as Aida Begić, Jasmila Žbanić or finally, the Oscar winning author, Danis Tanović, the whole generation of new authors has appeared in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Importantly, they don't constitute a homogenous age, provenance, gender, ethnic, stylistic or even language group. Therefore, a country of fragile political institutions and economy, in which various conservative concepts of culture and society still sustain, simultaneously seems to be having strong cultural scene, rich artistic production and articulated art scene⁶¹.

1.2. Post-Yugoslav Film Production

Postwar everyday life is in the focus of Bosnian cinematographers. The story of departure, criminalized social ambience, and finally comic stylization of Bosnian society are probably the most interesting perspectives of their cinematic storytelling.

In the movie *Gori vatra* (*Fuse*, 2003), *departure* is the concern which shapes main protagonist's destiny. In a way it also offers a more general viewpoint to the prospective of living in postwar Bosnia. Corrupted, unsafe and hunted by the ghosts of war victims, a remote and lethargic little town in the midst of Bosnia seems not to be the best place to live in. Leaving it seems to be the only possibility for somebody to continue with normal life, and that is what the main protagonist would eventually do. The narrative of leaving is central also in the movie *Mlječni put* (*Milky way*, 2000). The plot centers around difficulties of two Bosnian families to leave to New Zealand. After deciding to follow the rules set by the New Zealand administration which grants visas only to mix marriage couples, those two couples decide to exchange partners. Eventually, they are granted visas, but, incapable to accommodate to their new identities, one couple makes a mistake and discovers their true identity on the airport the day they were supposed to leave. Border officer is not letting them pass to the gate, so one couple manages to leave, whereas the other one stays at the airport, on the other side of the frontier. This comically forged situation, with the elements of absurd, draws attention to people who are trapped in their new identities, which were forced upon them, this time ironically, by the benevolent, but bureaucratic international community. I would argue that the characters stay not only on the wrong side of the spatial frontier, but also

⁶¹ Interestingly, none of these authors comes from the Serbian entity of Republika Srpska. This, I would argue, expressively indicates the problem of divided Bosnian society and disparate concepts of culture and language existing in two entities.

the *temporal* one. The war has made such an immense change and altered standards of living, together with one's feeling of his or her own identity, that it is impossible to continue living without adapting to the new rules, no matter how absurd and difficult they might seem. So, again, a choice to leave is seen as choosing to pass the threshold between the past and future.

Criminalized everyday life of postwar Bosnia is the narrative background in many of Bosnian movies. In *Teško je biti fin* (*It's Hard to Be Nice*, 2007) and *Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini* (*Summer in the Golden Valley*, 2003) by young Bosnian director Srđan Vuletić, phenomena of the corrupted and violent environment are embedded in telling family-centered stories. In the first one criminal milieu is the background against which the audience can follow main protagonist's moral transformation. He is succeeding to get rid of the criminal past, but also his personal flaws and macho prejudices and start living a harmonic family life. In the second movie a petty criminal initiates the plot. He is falsely informing a young boy that he has inherited his deceased father's debt. Wanting to save his family's dignity and social reputation, young man involves into the quest for money down the axis of criminal. He would eventually find out that the accusation was not true and give up his enthusiastic effort, but he would also get to know the reverse side of the life as he knew it until recently. Interestingly, even though the two protagonists have experienced what it is to be dwelling in a criminalized societal inferno, both films end well. Letting them wonder around panorama of impoverished, ruined and criminalized city, director is awarding them personal emancipation in the end of their journey: ex-criminal is managing to overcome his instincts and become a *decent* citizen, whereas a young boy realizes the obsolescence of his endeavor and a burden of a family duty. Instead of letting himself be pulled down by the past he had no influence upon, young boy decides to step out of the patriarchal paradigm he was trying to sustain in the beginning. Unlike the other character (taxi driver) he emancipates from the past which was not his own, but rather was imposed upon him through the mechanisms of societal and family authority. That is why this film bears such a powerful message- it articulates the voice of those who didn't have anything to do not only with the past, but implicitly with the war. I would argue that *the young*, as a particular social and cultural group in ex/ post-Yugoslavia, are seen as a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-dogmatic (be it state, organized criminal or family hierarchy) agent.

Already mentioned film *Gori vatra* is probably one of the best examples of the comic stylization of a postwar Bosnian society. The authors of the film depicted the life in contemporary Bosnia by placing the fable in the little town of Tešanj in northern Bosnia. The central place of the movie is the tavern run by the local criminal, which is an excellent setting for exposing humorous aspects of everyday life and protagonists' destinies. Organized criminal (trafficking, prostitution, smuggling, piracy) is seen as a small, almost funny puzzle of a larger societal picture, where from a powerful comment on a generally corrupted and vain society arises. For example, we can immediately witness connections existing among criminals and local policeman, chief of the police station. Nevertheless, one event changes the habitual passivity of citizens in the little

town. An American president Bill Clinton is said to visit the town of Tešanj on his tour in Bosnia, which again offers the platform for various humorous events and a display of different funny situations and characters.

Yet, there is a sharp contrast to the carefree side of life shown in this film. We also follow the fable about a father who lost one of his sons in the war and who is committing a suicide in the end of the film. Yet, similarly to protagonist of the film *Summer in the Golden Valley*, the main character (the other son) is making a kind of an imagined agreement with his brother, who died in war and his father, who committed a suicide. In a realistically framed conversation between him and ghosts of his brother and father, he is asking them to promise that they would not follow him or appear at least for a while. They affirmatively answer to his request and he leaves his hometown, thus leaving behind his own tragic past, but also the past of war and the criminalized and unpromising Bosnian ambient.

Whereas Bosnian film authors are dominantly focused on narrating the postwar picture of Bosnian society, drawing various lines towards recent past and its political implications, Serbian directors are developing different topics and artistic strategies. Among other things, it is very interesting that the interest for genre movies in Serbia has been increasing. Well established Hollywood genres, thriller or comedy, for example, are ways of local cinematographers to get involved into a mainstream film production which is above all in favor of entertainment.⁶² Nevertheless, this is also a response of the young movie makers to a period in which redundant film narratives and stereotypical storytelling were in favor of production houses and budget distributors of the state.

It is even more curious that an interest for certain less popular and commercial genres, also originating in American sub-culture, could be seen among Serbian directors of younger generation. I would argue that in this way, unlike the situation with classical genres, the distance from the (above all: local) mainstream has been radicalized. Those types of movies, together with broader sub-cultural artistic production, which includes comic books scene, various performing and visual arts and literature, shows the need of young authors to be creative and productive in the space of artistic, but also moral and political freedom. Snuff, camp, trash movies are some of the critical attempts of young directors to broaden the cinematographic, and not less, cultural field in Serbia.

Importantly, contemporary Serbian film authors in this way continue the cinematic traditions formed in the times of the so called *Black Wave*, which was an avant-garde anti-authoritarian aesthetic and political cinema in Yugoslavia of the sixties and seventies. In the similar way *those films questioned 'ideological dogmas across the entire social and political space of Yugoslavia'*⁶³ nowadays authors are doing the same by using their own preferred genres and poetics, which are mostly expelled from the official canon. By showing the 'awareness of the duty to criticize'⁶⁴, they are making

62 I would argue that it is not relevant to discuss eventual commercial success of these movies, having in mind the economic situation in Serbia and general lack of cinema audience.

63 Ana Dević, "Open Regionalism.", p. 4

64 Ana Dević, op.cit., p.5

movies which are functioning also as a powerful social and political corrective.

Yet, there are occasional cinematic achievements which are difficult to reduce to any kind of systematization. Here I would stress the works of the famous director Željimir Žilnik and his younger colleague Milutin Petrović. The first one earned the position of a dissident author in the former Yugoslavia for making films which exposed weaknesses and malevolence of the rigid ideological system. Nevertheless, he continued to unsettle the establishment also after the dissolution of the former country took place, by illuminating tabooed and invisible destinies of marginal people who live their life in the shade of the authoritarian system. Milutin Petrović continues to challenge hegemonic approaches to culture and arts by creating films in which he ridicules desirable collective values and fixed truths. Building on the tradition of nonconformist Yugoslav directors he is focusing on the film narratives and protagonist which are *out of the ordinary*.

Serbian directors have also developed their favorite film topics. Corresponding to Bosnian cinematography, there is also a narrative of leaving which has emerged as one of the most dominant artistic narratives since the beginning of nineties in Serbia. Nevertheless, this theme is very often intermixed with the recognizable narrative of the urban generation and its culture. Urban life is of course a procédé in other two cinematographies too, but it seems that in Serbian one this kind of mythologizing the urban surroundings and young people dwelling in it has become even a type of a genre.

Whereas Bosnian authors are employing the topic of leaving primarily as a powerful social and political metaphor of unfeasibility of Bosnian society and traumatic experience of war, Serbian directors are concerned with other implications of emigrant's identity, and that is, I would argue, precisely the status of *non-belonging*.

Importantly, in recent Serbian movies this topic is often considered as the *return*, and not leaving in itself. *To leave* has been seen as an implicit aspect of one's biography, and has already become an integral part of his or her emigrant identity. It has to be stressed, though, that a kind of an implicit artistic motivation was also the need to articulate the feeling of hopelessness and difficult living conditions in a native country. Simultaneously with negotiating new emigrant identities, those movie makers are also interested in depicting the life of the generation which was pushed to the margins of the society, thus becoming a kind of an *internal emigration*. So, it is the population of young people *absent* from the mainstream political and historical affairs, which was in one way or another influenced by the war, feels disillusioned and dwells along comparable social and identity perspectives of the *lost generation*. This is also an important *topos* of the entire post-Yugoslav literary and film production.

Those protagonists, as seen through the lenses of Serbian movie directors, are representing the urban, alternative culture which was suppressed by the war and authoritarian ruling establishment. Very often, though, a significance, or a societal position of this (sub)cultural stratum is overestimated and idealized, both by the film and literary authors, but also in the context of everyday life. As Eric Gordy has asserted,

people who were denounced participation in public sphere of culture, praised values of the alternative culture as something capable to recuperate for their lost identity, often overestimating the potency and relevance of this imagined cultural space. And here could lie the answer why the phenomenon of urban life holds a special narrative status in the works of Serbian authors. Those *cultural* prerogatives serve as the identity markers which are both constituent to these urban people own feeling of a meaningful existence, but which, on the other hand, establish novel social borders, towards those who are not coming from an urban milieu, are not well educated or perceive culture in different terms.

This important film narrative about urban culture is actually in most of the cases narrative of Belgrade, which is even a kind of its metonymic substitute. Young Serbian director Stefan Arsenijević⁶⁵ also staged his version of the urban narrative in his film *Ljubav i drugi zločini (Love and Other Crimes, 2008)*. Mise-en-scene is New Belgrade, its geometric landscape made of gray buildings, concrete and huge boulevards.

So, the story is about people living in a postmodern Belgrade suburbia. Following destinies of the protagonists author is disclosing how their lives are shaped and influenced by the criminal, which is a dominant force in a corrupted, impoverished and almost totally devastated social and economic milieu of their times. The image of New Belgrade with its high rises, gloomy gray colors and unfriendly narrowness of the concrete buildings bending over is the stage of the film story, but in a way, it is a protagonist itself.

Another recent Serbian film *Sutra ujutru (Tomorrow Morning, 2006)* grasps all the main aspects of the *lost generation* narrative: disillusioned young people living on the margins or living abroad, the impossibility of return and of involving in the standard life the others lead, identity problems.

Yet, another film- *Tamo i ovde (Here and There, 2009)* - treats similar topic in a different way. A stereotyped fable would focus on an individual who doesn't belong anywhere anymore and hence his/hers destiny is in a way missed. Yet, unlike interest in telling a story about one's failure to overcome traumas of identity interruptions, the fable of this film unfolds in an optimistic perspective. In this film world is seen as shared, and not isolated place. In two parallel stories we follow an American who came to Belgrade, and a young man from Belgrade working in a removal company (which is basically himself alone) in the US. Both of them face obstacles in the novel environments, but they also experience transformation and a kind of an emotional fulfillment.

Both their destinies and film stories are skillfully intermixed. After a young man has paid him for the favor, an American is coming to Belgrade in order to marry the young man's girlfriend, who needs papers to move to the US. Nevertheless, his stay in Belgrade will result in a romance with a young man's mother, which will affect the change in the fable, but, more importantly, the change in protagonists themselves.

The American is deciding to marry boy's girlfriend without any compensation,

⁶⁵ Winner of numerous prestigious awards for his short antiwar feature (*A)Torzija* (Golden Berlin Bear and a nomination for the Oscar in 2004).

and they happily arrive to America. Yet, besides the happy end of a love story, there is an emblematic scene before closing shots of the movie. It takes place at the most memorable New York's panorama. Young man is excitedly showing remarkable view to the city to his girlfriend as they cross the famous bridge. This situation is a genre scene representation of a newcomer to America. He/she faces the beauty and the immense visual power of the panorama which represents new life and a whole new world of opportunities for the novice. It is in a way a site where an emigrant meets the ideal of his quest, imagined target of his journey. Yet, in the midst of their commenting on the beauties of the city, the American utters: 'Yes, but it is not Belgrade'. An emigrant-envisioned affection towards the country of origin has been attributed here to the indigenous, the American. I would argue that the emigrant nostalgia felt by the non-emigrant makes the object of nostalgia even more distant and impossible to reach. As if the country which is being longed for exist mostly as an *idealized fantasy*. This is also one important aspect of the aesthetic envisioning of the feeling of home and belonging displayed in the works of post-Yugoslav authors which will be discussed later on.

There are also few movies which are dealing with the recent war past. In one of them, borders of a city are crossed and the war is being reported about from *the outside*. Namely, fable takes place at the battle field, the war and people *in* it are in the center of the narration. This is rather atypical perspective in the Serbian cinematography which has been pretty self-centered after the nineties in general, so this is one of the few movies which made a kind of a break-through in the topic.

Turneja (The Tour, 2008), a film by one of the most influential Yugoslav and Serbian directors Goran Marković is conceived as the cinematic journey which is 'the treasury of the symbolic inscriptions of the quest for the identity'.⁶⁶ The frame story, besides complying with its narrative function (outlining protagonists' characteristics, social ambience and an epilogue of the fable), actually alludes to the way people in Serbia used to, or even still understand the war and their own responsibility or role in it. Protagonists, a group of actors, are sitting in a theatre foyer, presumably after the play, drinking and discussing the invitation to come and perform a play on the front (Republika Srpska Krajina, an independent entity formed by the Serbs within Croatia during the war). Not only that they are not concerned about the war which is escalating, but they are not at all informed about the scale of the conflict and the danger they might put themselves into. They initiate the journey anyways, motivated mainly by the possibility to earn some extra money while performing on stages in provincial theaters.

The journey for them begins carelessly, but it will exceed the confines of a cozy and safe theatre hall. The troupe would experience ferocities of war (masterfully directed documentary style scenes) in which their own lives were threatened and which would finally make them realize what the reality they were obviously neglecting or denying looked like. They would return home safe, but defeated, for this experience challenged their beliefs not only in the beauty and meaning of art, but in their own status as artists and citizens in the times of war.

⁶⁶ Nevena Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr / The Balkans as the Film genre*, Fakultet dramskih umetnosti, Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, Beograd, 2008, p. 46

Therefore, this film poses the important question about the artist's engagement and responsibility, particularly in the period of war. Moreover, its implied interest is the assumed ignorance and a carefree attitude of people in Serbia towards the war in ex-Yugoslavia, similarly to the literary transposition of the issue in the afore mentioned novel by David Albahari.

Final scene illustrates rather convincingly artists' disillusion. It points to the fact that without explicit political and social engagement, particularly in the times of crises and suffering of other people, artists and their works don't make much sense, that is, their endeavors stay out of politically and aesthetically relevant and, finally, humane reach. Film ends with the scene in which protagonists sit still on the stage after the play had ended, looking as if they wear masks, or are some kind of puppets, but not the real actors. They are speechlessly staring in the direction of the empty seats in the audience, and suddenly, the lights are turned off.

Not only Serbian, but also Croatian film is narrativizing 'contemporary traumas of the uricide, poverty and the isolation'.⁶⁷ *Sex, piće i krvoproliće* (*Sex, drink and bloodshed*, 2004), *Fine mrtve djevojke* (*Fine Dead Girls*, 2002)⁶⁸ and *Metastaze* (*Metastases*, 2009) are some of the most captivating among the range of movies relying upon the mentioned topic.

Recently awarded by the most prestigious Croatian (earlier: Yugoslav) film prize of the Pula Film Festival, Branko Schmidt's film *Metastaze* is a story of violence, death, apathy and cowardice, which all unfold as we follow the life stories of four friends. Indicating his diagnosis of the contemporary Croatian society in the title of the movie, the director has designed a pessimistic image of the popular youth culture which centers on the irrational football hooligan euphoria, alcohol, drugs, and violence targeted against women or other ethnicities, but mostly manifesting without any reason whatsoever.

However, corrupted and degraded human communication and decaying behavior are combined with the sublime feelings of patriotism and national belonging. Ethno-national symbols are venerated to the degree when they become tabooed. This is masterfully shown in a memorable scene of young men's visit to the Altar of the Homeland, the monument built to commemorate the dead in the Homeland war. Drunk and uninterested they are sitting or lying down on the carved pieces of rock which form a recognizable symbol of the *šahovnica* (checkerboard), an integral part of the Croatian flag and coat of arms, thus making a remarkable image which evokes strong sense of cynicism and discomfort.

Similarly to agenda of Croatian writers, film authors are predominantly interested in representing the reality and everyday life of common people in contemporary Croatia. Interestingly enough, this interest is marking authors' endeavors all over the region and so the 'great realistic narrative of the Croatian film is developing similarly

67 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 96

68 All mentioned films will be further discussed in the Chapter IV.

to cinematography of ex-Yugoslavia in general.'⁶⁹

Nevertheless, simultaneously with the realistic narration, *comic* stylization is also an emblem of the post-Yugoslav cinematography. *Što je muškarac bez brkova?* (*What Is a Man Without a Mustache?*, 2005) by Hrvoje Hribar conveys a story about Croatian province and its inhabitants. Focus of the narration is a romantic comedy-style plot about a forbidden love between a local priest and a young widow. Yet, priest's twin brother, a Croatian army officer, a type of a boastful soldier suddenly appears in the story and brings in confusion and comic. Twin brothers as film protagonists open possibilities of various fable plays and intrigues, such as their eventual substitution or mirror-effect comparisons. In this way deliberate political and social allusions, such as these which point out to the latent affinity between the institutions of the army and the church, are wrapped into the cheerful and amusing series of anecdotes. *Indirect ridicule* is but a preferred and powerful mechanism which post-Yugoslav authors employ in order to subvert seriousness and sacredness of the ruling structures and their ideologies.

Authors from the region continue traditions of critiquing and destabilizing the mainstream and by doing so they are expressing a noteworthy accordance. This applies above all to their attitude towards and interpretation of the war and an imprint it inevitably made on post-Yugoslav reality. By bearing in mind that 'post-Yugoslav literature (is) the complex of motifs which originate in the common intellectual heritage and which mutually communicate'⁷⁰, and by expanding this to the complex of post-Yugoslav arts, we could bring to a close that post-Yugoslav authors form an *unauthorized*, but irrevocable cultural and political affiliation.

69 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 18

70 Dragoslava Barzut, *Pristojan život*, lezbijske kratke priče sa prostora Ex YU, Labris, 2012, p. 10

2. The Emigrant

'They say a passenger is inevitably departing either from the place of residence or the place of birth; these two spots I placed somewhere deep inside my being, so I could be an outsider and a native at the same time at any place.'

Mirko Kovač, Kristalne rešetke

As Dina Iordanova has emphasized when discussing Balkan film authors' interests and topics they engage with, exile, displacement and problematic, interrupted identities⁷¹ are dominant preoccupations of the artists from the Balkans. The Balkans itself has been subject to various migrations and borders changes throughout its history, which is why this theme became interesting also for the film and literature authors region-wide. Nevertheless, the region within the Balkans I'm investigating, the so-called Western Balkans, that is its three post-Yugoslav states, have been recently and violently experiencing new interruption of the cultural and political space, and consequently, its identity concepts. The question of an exile, displacement and their protagonist- *the emigrant*- is ultimately connected to the concept it structurally and existentially opposes- to the concept of a *nation*.

The concept itself 'arose from the 18th-century Germanic philosophical premises of J. G. Herder, in which a "people" or "nation" shares a primordial unity, defined by language and culture'.⁷² However, political and intellectual elites of a dissolving Yugoslavia radicalized the aspects of national distinctiveness, essentialized the concept of ethnicity and, importantly, denounced the foundations of the *common* Yugoslav identity and constitution of a Yugoslav nation.

In his distinctive study *The Myth of Ethnic War* Chip Gagnon has introduced polling data from the Yugoslav newspapers and sociological surveys collected at the very end of 1980s. Not only that the great majority of the interviewees didn't list ethnic differences as a main problem in Yugoslavia, but the majority of people who were interviewed, particularly the young, described Yugoslav identity in affirmative terms. That is why Gagnon has radically twisted previously existing interpretation of Yugoslav conflict according to which different ethnic identities had brought to conflict. He showed that the *existing identities* were the obstacle for the conservative elites to achieve their

71 Dina Iordanova, round table *Women Directors in South-Eastern Europe*, held in Belgrade on the 26th of February 2009.

72 Bette Denich, "Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1994), p. 372

goals. That is why they needed to transform the way people felt about themselves and fill this new self-perception with different political and cultural content. Political elite was the one who had forcefully broke into the spontaneous way (different) Yugoslav identities were emerging, and imposed its own identity politics, which served as the main ideological instrument for provoking hostilities and conflicts.

Therefore, by successfully discrediting dominant scholarly discourse on Yugoslav conflict which saw ethnic identity as the power which mobilized people to violence, Gagnon had shifted the attention from the assumed *innate* characteristics and identities of people, to the strategies of the ruling Yugoslav elites. Those strategies were directed towards finding the solutions to preserve their privileged political and economic position and remain in power.

Mainstream political and cultural discourse in ex-Yugoslavia produced the specific notion of ethnic communities which 'are perceived in an obscure reduction of eighteenth-century Romanticist goals as living collectivities for which the universal rules and ethics do not apply'.⁷³ Certain intellectuals though, many of which prominent and internationally recognized writers, have chosen to oppose the concepts of nation and identity which were subject to forceful re-traditionalization⁷⁴. Due to political and societal circumstances which induced massive migration and displacement, they themselves very often found a refuge outside (ex-Yugoslav) countries in which they were previously living and working. Moreover, living in an exile became a symptomatic feature of many relevant and influential post-Yugoslav writers' literary and factual biographies (some of them left after the war has ended, some already by the end of the eighties). As Richard Swartz has noticed in the afterword of his anthology of the Eastern-European writers: '*I suddenly realized what the list [of writers] looks like: many of those who contributed to the creation of this anthology don't live any longer in their countries, many of them have left their countries and now they live in an exile.*'⁷⁵ (*Drugi pored mene: antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope / The Other One Next to Me: An Anthology of the Eastern-European writers*, 2007). Authors who have conceptualized the complex of post-conflict cultural and political phenomena, thus creating novel imagery of post-national or non-national literature, have been very often themselves experiencing ambiguous and unsteady (existential, social, cultural) situation of an exile.

Mirko Kovač, a writer of a Montenegrin origin, whose experience of living in Belgrade is evident in his prose and coincides with the most prolific period of his writing (but also establishment's disapproval), is now living in the Croatian coastal town of Rovinj where he moved after Milošević came to power in Serbia. Defining

73 Siniša Malešević, "From 'Organic' Legislators to 'Organicistic' Interpreters: Intellectuals in Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav States", *Government and Opposition*, 37 (1), 2002, p. 73

74 Schierup, Carl-Ulrik, "Quasi-Proletarians and a Patriarchal Bureaucracy: Aspects of Yugoslavia's Re-Peripheralisation", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, (1992)

75 *Drugi pored mene: antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope / The Other One Next to Me: An Anthology of the Eastern-European writers*, p. 273

himself as a Croatian writer⁷⁶, he is in a way deliberately renouncing his earlier cultural 'residence'. This explicit and self-exposing 'intervention' into the extensive practice of identity politics makes Kovač a paradigmatic literary figure, detached from the comprehensive realm of nationally defined literature, culture and language.

His relationship towards the notion of national origin and belonging has been forged negatively. He has denied the possibility of having origins or knowing one's identity, thus virtually problematizing any attempt of the *static* definition of one's identity: 'I don't have any origin and I don't know who I am'.⁷⁷ His refusal to identify himself is a meaningful act of condemning the confines of essentialist social and political discourse. Yet, Kovač is not breaking up with the tradition or discrediting its relevance (a process which has been and still is the venture of the artistic Avant-garde). He is more interested in reiterating the customarily, conventional understanding of the word: 'My tradition is everything I take with my heart'.⁷⁸

Mirko Kovač opposes the notion of a tradition which is being established and filtered through historically-oriented disciplines tending to create the continuous line of national development and tradition which are practically followed by and reflected in literature. For him, tradition is *subjective* and *individual* fusion of spiritual and emotional impressions and experiences.

Kovač's literary stile and poetics are complex; his strategies are unpredictable and polysemantic. His distinctive literary devices are simultaneous construction and de-construction of assessments and assumed values, alternations of the perspectives, ambiguous nature of characters and their actions. His understanding of nation and culture has been also deliberately made paradoxical, generating the effects of provocation and controversy: 'Yes, that precisely is the charm of this culture influenced by different worlds, so to create a particular nuance and a color which then become something unique, Serbian'.⁷⁹ Kovač is subverting the idea of the national idiosyncrasy, conceptualizing the notion of the 'unique' as something manifold, 'impure' and heterogeneous.

On the other hand, Kovač is contextualizing the possibility of travelling, which is for him either temporal or permanent dislocation, within disturbing and unstable (historical) circumstances. The possibility of a journey (even though it is an illusionary journey, which could refer to the mental, emotional dislocation and distancing) is seen as an existential performance of, most likely, both physical and mental *salvation*: 'Yes, I'm talking about the illusion of a journey. It is a way to flee the catastrophe. Go travel, traveler'.⁸⁰

Finally, Kovač is tracing the idea of a homeland by challenging its fixed definition and by bringing it closer to the, seemingly incompatible, human condition of an exile. This author is again introducing the conception of a (human) heart, which represents the

⁷⁶ By considering the taxes and insurance regulation as the main criteria of his belonging he is mocking the essentialist, ethnic concept of a nation which is present region wide.

⁷⁷ Mirko Kovač, *Kristalne rešetke*, LIR BG, Beograd, 2001, p. 34

⁷⁸ Mirko Kovač, *op. cit.*, p. 68

⁷⁹ Mirko Kovač, *op. cit.*, p. 128

⁸⁰ Mirko Kovač, *op. cit.*, p. 251

individual, his/her complex set of ideas, emotions and impressions which are shaping his/her (private, individual) world. Yet, true to his literary principles, Kovač is again fashioning the narration paradoxically: 'Longing for the homeland is coming from the heart, it has been always like this, those are delicate and secret feelings, they torture a man and make him travel'.⁸¹ A homeland is perceived as something agonizing and disturbing, but, at the same time, as a thing which initiates the motion, the change. It is left open whether an individual, hunted by the ghosts of the homeland tries to flee the homeland, or the feeling of a homeland is a substantial persuasion of a man's destiny, compelling and inspiring his quest for a home. The symbolic of Ulysses's return home is thus being incorporated into the phenomenon of the modern emigrant condition, which becomes an embodiment of the *fluid and indefinite identity*.

Another allusion to Ulysses journey and his eventual reaching of his homeland of Ithaca is conceived in the novel of the emblematic title *Predosećanje građanskog rata* (*The Presentiment of the Civil War*, 2000) by the Serbian writer of younger generation Saša Ilić, who is also one of the editors of the aforementioned magazine *Beton*.

In this novel the home is imagined as a boat which is being firmly tied to the ground by the spiritual and emotional anchor of shadows-memories: 'They [shadows] are constantly flowing down like rapids and sinking into the foundation of our house, making a whirl which is, during the storm, foundering deep into the ground, like an anchor'.⁸² Being a place which is described as the immovable center, a magnet which is making the main protagonist / narrator come back 'no matter how far'⁸³ he might go, the home is imagined as the only certainty in the vexed war times. But, importantly, even though a home is a solid basis of one's identity, it is envisaged as the place of the spiritual, metaphysic foundation of the multilayered past which all together transcend the significance of (material) possession or belonging: 'Every building, my father said [...] is, above all, a home of the shadows, and only after, that of people'⁸⁴.

A writer whose biography and literary work has become a paradigm of the ex- and post-Yugoslav culture and art is a Bosnian-American writer Aleksandar Hemon. He is one of the few post-Yugoslav writers acclaimed internationally, the winner of numerous (mostly American) book prizes, and influential intellectual, both in the US (where he is collaborating with various respectable newspapers as a columnist) and in Bosnia, as well as in the whole post-Yugoslav space. Curiosity of his literature is enhanced by his decision to write in a non-native language- English. Therefore, his emigrant position has been made even more complex, for it doesn't only manifest spatially or culturally altered position, but it calls into question the possibility of (artistic) self-expression.

It is thereupon particularly interesting to analyze the way Hemon conceptualizes the feeling and the notion of a home. In his recent, acclaimed novel *Projekat Lazarus*

⁸¹ Mirko Kovač, *op. cit.*, p. 162

⁸² Saša Ilić, *Predosećanje građanskog rata*, K. V. S., Beograd, 2000.p. 11

⁸³ Saša Ilić, *op. cit.*, p. 13

⁸⁴ Saša Ilić, *op. cit.*, p. 9

(*The Lazarus Project*, 2008) he tells a story about the Jewish boy and his sister who fled Ukraine, running away from pogroms, to again face the threat, and eventually the death, in the American conservative and xenophobic society of a time. Throughout the narration, which is being structured as the parallel story describing the original event and the process of writing a novel about it, one sentence is being obsessively repeated: 'Home is where somebody notices your absence'.⁸⁵

I would argue that this poetically and conceptually tempting (poetic) definition of a home, that is, of a homeland, of a native country, conveys a profound philosophy of (physical) distance but also of a *condition* of a modern man. Forging it in a very simple manner, the author has invested remarkably meaningful content into it. By defining the home, that is, the subject ('your'-you) negatively, he has exceeded the primary message of a nostalgic and deeply emotional relationship among the close ones. Hemon has actually created a fluid, ambivalent concept of a home.

Firstly, it is a place we are *not* present at. This leads to the idea about the initial impossibility of having a home. So, it is something which exists in its *absence*. It exist as an idea of home, not a concrete spatial or even temporal denotation. Secondly, the stress is not on the home, as the spatial category, but on an *agent*, performer of the action, somebody who is noticing someone else's absence. Therefore, the notion of home has been designed as the relationship, as the interaction, together with all of its spiritual and emotional aspects. I would argue that Hemon has conceptualized the notion of a home as a *feeling* we share with the others. It is a feeling of a *community*. Also, following the modal usage of the present simple tense we could assert that if the home is the place you are not present at, it could be a place you can not or will not ever be present at. Simply, the home and the subject (you, me, us) are mutually exclusive.

The idea of home is being reinvented as the modern *locus amoenus*. Even though far from being a pastoral landscape of the isolated countryside, it is certainly a site of safety and ease. It seems that for the generation which endured the war annihilation and suffering, home had lost its spatial significance, exceeding to the territory of nostalgic / traumatic memory, artistic and philosophical exploration.

Many of post-Yugoslav authors have articulated the poetics of distancing and being absent from the world in its temporal and spatial manifestations. This artistic, but also political pursuit has enabled the authors to oppose the rhetoric of political extremism and nationalism, but also to challenge traditional models of artistic representation. One of the most famous post-Yugoslav emigrants, writer Dubravka Ugrešić, has in her own way introduced the situation of an exile. In her novel *Ministarstvo boli* (*Ministry of Pain*, 2004) she plays with the convention of the introductory note in which the authors are outlining the character of their narration or address certain people relevant for their writing. Intending to protect their literary (and legal) status they are guaranteeing that the assumed similarity between the fictional and the real characters and events is just accidental. In more recent film and literary production it has become common to claim

85 Aleksandar Hemon, *Projekat Lazarus*, VBZ, Zagreb, 2009, p. 39

the opposite, in order to provoke the audience and maybe bring out some more serious claims. Yet, Ugrešić here employed the conventional literary tool, but has inverted its role. By ironizing her own position as the narrator and by questioning all other instances of the text, she has not acknowledged that the literary product is fictional. Her intervention is targeting the other way- to the ontological questioning of her own self, her writer's identity and the reality surrounding her. The conventional introductory note has thus become a way to challenge all of the postulates which encompass the discourse of reality. Simultaneously, she has opened the field for the confrontation with the standardized, widely accepted categories and levels of reality: 'In the novel which stands before the readers everything is made-up: the narrator, her story, situation, characters. Even the place where the story takes place, Amsterdam, is not too real.'⁸⁶

Almost identical narrative and existential situation has been conveyed in the novel of a young Bosnian-Canadian writer Ivančica Đerić: 'Allegedly everything around existed- street and the shops, schools and the benches in the park, people and their shadows- allegedly all.'⁸⁷ (*Bosanci trče počasni krug / Bosnians run the last lap*, 2006) Those authors are narrativizing the (post-war) reality as a chimerical substitution of life which has been fundamentally altered.

2.1. An Emigrant and the Yugoslav Conflict

Buick Rivera (2009) is a film directed by Croatian director Goran Rušinović in which personal experience of an exile and ethnic conflict are main aspects of protagonists' destinies. However, film story follows lives of a Serb and a Bosniak after the war, revealing new problems, but also old conflicts and beliefs. Interestingly enough, conflict in a way continues, but as the contrast and rivalry among main protagonists, and not as the revival of ethnic tensions. On the other hand, in Miljenko Jergović's⁸⁸ novel of the same name (*Buick Rivera*, 2002), which inspired the movie, the author is interested in protagonists' ethnic and social background. They are displays of their motivations and actions. Therefore, although Jergović often sees the situation of an exile as an eye-opening possibility for the liberation ('once you emigrate, you realise your country is just one out of many'⁸⁹), he also explores it as a space of contested memories, problematized identities and traumatic struggle.

Director of the movie has engaged two well known actors from the region⁹⁰,

86 Dubravka Ugrešić, *Ministarstvo boli*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2004, introductory note.

87 Ivančica Đerić, *Bosanci trče počasni krug*, Rende, Beograd, 2006, p. 144

88 Jergović is another author whose biography and literary activity are also interlinked with his emigre experience. Even though he didn't leave the region, but moved to Zagreb from his native Sarajevo, he is experiencing similar problems in a non-native environment, after new boundaries were drawn. This experience is decisive for his interest in the topic of migration and belonging.

89 Dina Iordanova, *Women Directors...*, op. cit.

90 One of the actors is one of the most acclaimed (post)Yugoslav actors, Slavko Štimac.

assigning them fictional ethnic identities (Croatian actor is in the role of a Serb, whereas Serbian is Bosniak). Since they are both well known region wide, I would argue here that the author has intentionally made this ethnic ‘confusion’, expressively showing how ridiculous and misleading would be to construct protagonists’ characters based on their ethnic origin. In the novel, though, Vuko is presented as the unambiguously negative character. He is a Serb, a war criminal who was hiding in an orthodox monastery and fled the country under suspicious circumstances after the war. Even though another protagonist, Hasan, has changed less in the script adaptation⁹¹, his actions are also in a way narrative-predetermined. Therefore, instead of exploring depths and complexities of a relationship, their contact is perceived as a collision of two almost stereotyped-good and bad- characters.

In the movie Hasan’s character has been displayed in series of excellent dialogues and, even more significant silent shots of either snowy winter scenery or long shots of protagonists’ faces without much words or motion. But, what gives a movie an unrepeatably atmosphere and poetic charge is masterfully conceived associative montage of Hasan’s *memories*. Since they are transposed as visual fragments lacking particular individual features, I would argue that they represent not only Hasan’s memories, but certain *collective depository* of the past. Black and white images of hills in an unrecognizable landscape, a man, an army officer driving a *fića*⁹² are synthesizing this vision of the past.

Yet, those images are charged with deeper symbolic. A simple but meaningful detail of the distinctive car model, together with some other elements of those oniric visions are telling us something about Hasan’s past and country he lived in. The car is driven by an army officer, who could, representing both the real and the symbolic authority, represent not only his father but also the army itself, thus simultaneously embodying an all-embracing Yugoslav emblem and an omen of war. Importantly, father’s figure gathers and solves moral and emotional doubts of the main protagonist. In a decisive moment for Hasan, father’s voice, which was once recorded on the tape, advises him that he should think good of people and harm no one. This voice represents both the real and the virtual time and affects protagonists present life, despite the fact he feels his life was irrevocably interrupted and cut off its spatial (native country) and temporal (past/present paradigm) dimensions.

Jergović’s literary pursuit is also marked by his exploration of the recent past, and an effort to understand it. Basic antagonism among characters is displayed also against the background of their individual relationship towards the *past*. Whereas Vuko is inventing his own version of the past and manages to prosper from it (he transforms from a war criminal to a peace activist), for Hasan, main protagonist of the novel, past is not something which could be exploited or recycled for the needs of a personal progress. Importantly, all of Vuko’s memories are exclusively revealing his ethnic

91 The script was written by the writer Miljenko Jergović himself and the director Goran Rušinović

92 A type of a small car produced in Yugoslavia under the license of Italian *Fiat*, hence the Yugoslav nickname *fića*, or *fičo* (it was very similar to its Italian contemporary Fiat 600/770). Definitely one of the most recognizable and unifying icons of Yugoslav popular and everyday culture.

frustrations and prejudices, and his engagement in the war. His profile and actions have been consistently explicated against and motivated by the war.

On the contrary, Hasan’s memories are sentimental, personal recollection in which war exists solely as the overtone. On the level of the plot this fact is explained by his arrival to the US before the war has started. Nevertheless, he is obviously well informed about the war. It is present in his perception even though he is not mentioning it, which reveals the depth of his trauma. In one moment he feels that past is irrevocably lost and thus has no value or meaning, so he starts throwing various old belongings and souvenirs inside the garbage bag. As if past is as a useless and redundant thing which should be thrown away and destroyed like we throw away and destroy the waste.

Yet, interestingly, the list of all the items he is throwing away represents a narrative retardation, which stands out the fable and is becoming a poetic fragment about the past of the main protagonist, his travels, beliefs and his long-ago gone everyday life. Thus, the moment Hasan decides to do away with his memories, denying their value and subsequently the meaning of his own earlier and present life, transforms into a sentimental and benevolent recollection of the past. The abstract to follow is envisioned as a genuine *catalogue of nostalgia*:

‘...he threw a shoe box with family photos from Bosnia and Herzegovina into the black garbage bag, continuing then with throwing [...] postcards of his birthplace, [...] a small cloth flag of a football team *Velež*, [...] old diplomas, his parents’ death certificates, [...] an old Yugoslav army ID, a collection of wine stickers from Dalmatia and Herzegovina, crumbled t-shirt with an image of Duško Bajević⁹³, [...] a guidebook through the mountain hostels of Yugoslavia, *Kraš* chocolate wrap papers, [...] stucco cast of the Počitelj⁹⁴ tower, a tourist brochure of Makarska Riviera⁹⁵ for the year 1973, [...] retouched and black and white colored photograph of the Old bridge⁹⁶, [...] a torn cover of the *Oslobođenje*⁹⁷ with a heavy lead heading: Our comrade Tito has died, [...] a video tape with the movie *Valter brani Sarajevo*⁹⁸, [...] a Communist Party of Yugoslavia membership card, [...] a photograph torn out from the Newsweek with the sights of the people massacred while queuing for bread, [...] a hundred dinar red bank note, [...] an LP of the ensemble *Mostarske kiše*⁹⁹. When the bag was full he stopped collecting things around him, although he had forgotten some of the most important ones. Everything that was him could fit inside one bag.’¹⁰⁰

Last sentence indicates the coincidence between one’s experience, memories and feeling of one’s own self. The past is narrativized as an integral and constituting point of

93 A famous football player from *Velež* (a Mostar football club) from the sixties and the seventies.

94 An old Bosnian town with remarkable 16th and 17th century Ottoman monuments, heavily damaged during the war. A cast represents the 17th century clock tower.

95 A part of Dalmatian coast.

96 Famous Mostar bridge destroyed during the Bosnian war and rebuilt after it.

97 Big name Yugoslav and Bosnian liberal leftist newspapers founded in 1943.

98 Legendary Yugoslav movie *Walter Defends Sarajevo*

99 Yugoslav pop band *Mostar rains*.

100 Miljenko Jergović, *Buick Rivera*, pp. 165-166

one's identity. It is, however, interesting that the last sentence could be understood both as a pessimistic account of one's life, and as a paraphrase of the nomadic and maverick philosophy of one's possessions and needs.¹⁰¹

Another emigrant author, Serbian-Canadian scientist and writer Vladimir Tasić has directly conveyed similar skepticism in his novel about the group of friends, a war generation, who are trying to recollect and recover the pieces of their lives and of the reality called *Kiša i hartija* (*The Paper and the Rain*, 2004). In a form of a rhetoric question he describes a phenomenon of belonging, that is, of the impossibility of belonging: 'Where from did we get the idea that we belong somewhere, that something belongs to us'.¹⁰² Yet, I would argue that we shouldn't understand this impossibility as an affirmation of uncertainty, but as an articulation and promulgation of the idea of *freedom*.

As Rosi Braidotti has asserted '[The nomadic subject is] a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. This figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity.'¹⁰³ Therefore, being a nomadic subject is not being dislocated or misplaced, but being *free from dominant narratives* (of homeland, nation, language, and belonging). Situation of an emigrant is the one enabling and confirming the potentiality of that fluid identity.

Finally, this fluidity also includes emigrant's perception of the past, which has been *forcefully* interrupted and is thus seen as *unfinished* and thus changeable. Past is certainly always susceptible to subjective and vague impressions, but in an exile, which means, as we saw, crossing both spatial and temporal borders, this relationship with the past is fundamental. I would argue that in an exile *past* is seen as something which has been left on the other side of the *physical* border, and thus the impel of revisiting it is a common feature of these narratives. The quest for the past is a permanent and fundamental imprint of an émigré habitus.

3. Remembering the past

'It was evident all the time that it was not possible to go back to the previous state. My mom was going around those new rooms constantly running into some pieces of furniture, for the proportion of our existence- the thing which was supposed to be identical- turned out to be different [...]. I remember my mother sitting at the table, mindful, sorting out what she should do to recover the image of our days, old days, and of our destiny.'

Bora Ćosić, *Drugi* (*Others*)

The official, that is, institutionalized historiography (performed in education, media, and political discourse) of three countries has been concerned with and engaged in recovering, maintaining and promulgating the image of the national past. Its main function has been constituting the historical and political continuity of the modern nation state in order to ensure its legitimacy. On the other hand, unofficial, private history is manifesting in *recapturing* the imagery of past in a polysemantic space of cultural and personal exploration. Therefore, whereas the first one 'invokes national past and future', the other one is 'connected with individual and cultural remembering'.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, both of the memory strategies, as Svetlana Boym has demonstrated, are nostalgically forged. But, while the first type gravitates towards the collective, and advocates for the *restoration* of national symbols and myths, second one is directed towards individual conceptualizations and *reflections* on the past, which are 'vague and fragmentary'¹⁰⁵. Boym's introduction of restorative and reflective nostalgias has been notably concluded by the interpretation which defines restorative nostalgia as tending to *spatialize the time*, and reflective one as aiming at *temporalizing the space*.

I would argue that the spatialization of time refers to political and cultural strategies of re-introducing certain symbols, values and iconography of a particular historical period into the public sphere of the present. The main goal is to employ this set of values and images to occupy contemporary cultural and social space by using the ideas and practices originating in the chosen historical epoch, which is seen as the 'true', 'idiosyncratic' and 'our own original' tradition. This type of social, political and cultural re-traditionalization and strong exploitation of history are basic ideological tools in the dominant cultural discourses in these three post-Yugoslav countries. Or, more

101 The philosophy reflected in the Latin saying *I carry all my things with me*.

102 Vladimir Tasić, *Kiša i hartija*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2004, p. 20

103 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 22

104 Svetlana Boym, *Budućnost nostalgije* / Boym, Svetlana, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Beograd: Geopoetika, 2005, p. 98

105 Svetlana Boym, op. cit, p. 99

precisely, particular, significant historical periods are pretty much what has become an integral part of, I would argue, imagined collective memory, and thus contemporary national identity, be it the Second World War, the First World War, nineteenth century liberation movements, resistance to Ottoman empire and *salvation* of Europe from Turkish invasion, Middle Ages, or even prehistory- it sometimes seems the further the better. In the best manner of Eric Hobsbawm analysis of modern societies which are inventing (all of) their traditions, post-Yugoslav political and cultural mainstream is for the most part striving to place new states in the continuum of the imagined ethno-national past.

On the other hand 'nostalgic practices differ from reactionary politics whose agenda is precisely to reconstruct the past in the present, thus denying that anything of value can be irrevocably lost'¹⁰⁶. The alternative cultural endeavors in the space of memory show that the sense of loss and the impossibility of its recuperation define one's relationship towards the past. It is impossible to go back, as Proust had shown us, yet that is why the quest for the lost epoch is an utmost individual (and so only after that a collective) undertaking. For that very reason *temporalizing the space*, which is a type of fictionalization and subjectivization of reality, means reinventing both past and present, without letting them remain subject to political and cultural codifications or even deifications. Those alternative aesthetic and political strategies involve 'opening up' of the *fixed* cultural and political discourses, which rely strongly upon the narratives of the past. Bringing in of the temporal element into the perception of reality means rethinking it, making it fluid and subject to infinite perspectives of *individuals* actors. Memory too is then recognized as multilayered, complex, and, importantly, difficult to be safeguarded only within the confines of a ruling (conservative, nationalist) ideology.

Consequently, the common topic in the works of post-Yugoslav authors is the contrast between the reality of private memories and the attempts of the official establishment to appropriate them. The afore mentioned author Ćićo Senjanović has stated in one interview: 'When my book *Dorin dnevnik* was released in 1997, I said it was my revolt against the erasure of past.[...] It was all part of me, and then some authority comes and says: 'Erase everything!'. Well, you cannot erase my past! You simply can't! [...] Leave my memories and my childhood fondness to me: it is sad that I need to have a visa to go back to my youth or childhood.'¹⁰⁷

Many of literary and film works from the region are directly dealing with the defence of the individual, private version of the past. Therefore the past and its evoking is often the topic of author's narratives, the past is often 'narrativized'¹⁰⁸.

106 Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko, 'The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices', *Ab Imperio* 2/2004, p. 493

107 Đermano Senjanović Ćićo, an interview, Dani, 2001, <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/206/t20602.shtml>

108 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 65

3.1. Metaphor of Garbage: Between the Past and the Future

'A flea market is a metaphor of world without limits.'

Dubravka Ugrešić,

Nikog nema doma

(*Nobody's Home*)

Previous chapter was concluded by the fragment from a novel about protagonist's relationship towards his own past, which was shown both a space of creating and questioning one's identity. Forged as a collection of souvenirs from his own past which were successively transforming into a waste of his life, protagonist's quest for the past and for his own identity demonstrated also traumatized consciousness and evidenced restrictions and difficulties of an emigrant identity.

However, the metaphor of garbage is not only frequent, but one of the most potent tropes in the works of the authors circumscribed by this study. It embodies a complex of contemporary phenomena and contests a fixed picture of reality. 'As a diasporized, heterotropic site, the point of promiscuous mingling of rich and poor, center and periphery, the industrial and the artisanal, the organic and the inorganic, the national and the international, the local and the global; as a mixed, syncretic, radically decentered social text, garbage provides an ideal postmodern and postcolonial metaphor'¹⁰⁹. Nevertheless, this trope takes different forms and its usage depends upon individual author's preferences and intentions.

In Mirko Kovač's novel *Kristalne rešetke*, narration is initiated by the motif of collecting old things, antique, precious pieces of furniture, lamps and porcelain dishes. The narrator remembers how his friends and him used to be the collectors of old 'junk', obsessed and completely dedicated to their search for the old objects, representing actually the artifacts of some previous life. Being nostalgically and emotionally preoccupied with the past in this novel, Kovač is multiplying its layers, by perceiving it as the main activity of the protagonists (collecting the past) and then by leading us even deeper than his private story goes (those object, being already antique, evoke earlier times). In an infinite chain of *the past within a past*, former times, sparkling occasionally through the antiquities (which the author calls the *precious junk*) are seen as space of beauty and virtue which without difficulty transcends the present time.

Nevertheless, garbage is often projected realistically, far from being a trope of a sublime envisioning and celebration of the past. In Viktor Ivančić novel *Vita activa* (2005), waste is the ultimate *mise-en-scène* of protagonist's destiny, of the plot and

109 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'Narrativizing visual culture: Towards a polycentric aesthetics', in: Mirzoeff, Nikolas, *The Visual Culture Reader*, New York & London, Routledge, 2003, p. 53

of the author's poetical and political message. Main protagonist Edmord, an anti-hero whose main agenda is wire tapping and interfering with the life of one writer, allegedly dangerous for the proper functioning of the totalitarian apparatus¹¹⁰, fails to achieve his goal of incriminating and discrediting his opponent- the writer. Disillusioned and defeated, Edmord comes to the city waste in order to throw away and destroy the evidences which turned against himself (documents which prove he transgressed his authorities and started being obsessively, and latently homosexually, interested in the life of the writer).

In an extended description of a city waste, rich in peculiarities and vivid details (an episode with the rat, which is generating the feelings of horror and repulsion, but is also establishing a metaphorical connection between the animal and the main character: a rat as a slang word for the informer), we are introduced the panorama of waste, which effectively embodies author's concept of a (totalitarian) society he had lived in. 'As the quintessence of the negative, garbage can also be an object of artistic... ironic reappropriation... Garbage, like death and excrement, is also a great social leveler... As the lower stratum of the socius, the symbolic 'bottom' of the body politics ... it is the... ultimate resting place of all that society both produces and represses, secretes and makes secret.'¹¹¹ Therefore, Ivančić's narrativization of the phenomenon of a garbage has been employed both as a comment to Edmord's character and agency, and as the criticism of the system this character fully represents.

Hence, garbage is a powerful social and societal metaphor. Nevertheless, it can also be assumed as an allegory of (post)modern global progress, which is marked by the shortcomings of urban life and consumer society. It is interesting, however, that this negative understanding of progress could be integrated into the personal story about the forceful loss of the everyday life as the protagonists knew it, which is then followed by the definite detachment from one's own past.

In Muharem Bazdulj's short story a Bosnian refugee is returning to his home town for a short visit. He is taking a walk down the town streets, wanting to see the landmarks of the town, that is, of *his past*. Yet, his re-visit to places of his previous life ends in a non-recognition. The space has transformed together with the time, reasserting the impossibility of the recovery of the past: 'Don't tell me there's no more 'Džez'. Instead of the café, there is some stupid shop there, the most ridiculous store in the world, the shit shop called 'All for 3 marks', a waste room where people buy disposable Chinese umbrellas, [...], tin ashtrays [...], plastic flowers [...], bad pencils, false Swatch watches, [...], whistles [...], all for the same price.'¹¹² (*Izdrži / Hold on*, in collection of stories *Čarolija / Magic*, 2008). Accumulation of worthless commodities is employed as an axiological metaphor of the present, inapt to establish any kind of continuity between *now* and *then*. Past which exist not even in the scattered spatial traces had obviously been irrevocably lost, but is still enclosing more meaningful and

110 Autofictional elements are spread throughout the novel since the fable is a direct allusion to biography of its author, Viktor Ivančić.

111 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, op.cit, p. 53

112 Muharem Bazdulj, "Izdrži" / "Hold on", in: *Čarolija*, p. 25

joyous spirit for the narrator.

Similar understanding of the past could be found in one of Ivančica Đerić's stories, in an episode about her mother's agenda with fragments of her handwriting and small portions of text- various trivia, market shopping expenses, and some of her thoughts. It is a collection, both literally and metaphorically, of her (past) life. As if the author is suggesting that the past

is redundant and useless, reduced to material objects, souvenirs, or, at best, to certain vague traces of one's existence. The past exists only in the small objects and emotional souvenirs- leftovers of the previous life, which is impossible to continue.

On the other hand, 'as a place of buried memories and traces... garbage exemplifies... the 'time-space compression' typical of the acceleration produced by contemporary technologies. In Foucault's terms, garbage is *heterochronic*; it concentrates time in a circumscribed space... As time materialized in space, it is coagulated sociality, a gooey distillation of society's contradictions.'¹¹³ So, symbolical charge of the garbage metaphor lies not only in its polysemantic, multifold and ambiguous nature, but in the capability to scope and absorb temporal aspects of the present and the past. As Dubravka Ugrešić has written 'Flee market is a space of disillusion, but also of comfort, exactly like the cemetery: among mounds of dumped books, photographs, family albums, old LPs, household gadgets, moth-eaten clothes, we will find our own past, but also see our own future'.¹¹⁴ (*Nikog nema doma / Nobody's Home*, 2007)

So, it is interesting here how the notion of one's life, of one's identity is being reduced to material leftovers, simultaneously allowing for the kind of an existential renewal. Marginalized, dumped, forgotten is seen as the space of alternative or altered (re-)construction of one's own self. Therefore, the metaphor of collecting old, seemingly redundant things could be a tools of personal redemption. It establishes and fosters the continuous relationship between the present and the past. In Nenad Veličković's novel *Konačari (Konačari / Lodgers*, 1995) we follow the story told by the teenage girl Maja who lives with her family and neighbors in the cellar in the besieged Sarajevo. The young couple, Maja's brother and his wife who are expecting a baby, are in the focus of the story teller. Their story clearly evidences the irregularity of the everyday life, its leftovers actually, and, also, an absurdity of their attempt to continue to live that kind of life. I would argue that this novel is precious for its insider's perspective which reveals those subtle, individual perspectives and activities which compound the complex imagery of the everyday life during the war time.

The leitmotif of an old suitcase, in which the grandmother has stored the old baby clothes functions as a metaphor of the life which continues despite dwelling in the dark cellar. However, since nobody but her knows what is hidden inside of it, the suitcase issue and its content become the main dilemma for the protagonists. Paradoxically organizing the plot around this old suitcase, the author is revealing its symbolic in the very end of the novel, which functions as the beginning of the new story, but also, of

113 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, p. 53

114 Dubravka Ugrešić, *Nikog nema doma*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2005, p. 12

the new life: 'Julio is opening the suitcase. He is excited, it falls from his hands twice. He finds a bundle of white cotton cloths and laces. He unwraps them. They are empty. He checks again, but now more slowly and carefully. Again nothing pops up. Then he realizes what he is holding in his hands: a baby dress. I recognize it too. My grandma, mom and I were wearing it. And now the little princess will, God willing, wear it too.'¹¹⁵

3.2. Negotiating the Past: From Nostalgia to Parody

'When he heard I was from Yugoslavia- at that time all of us who were born in Yugoslaviawere still from Yugoslavia- he cheered up.'

Slobodan Šnajder,

Živjele male razlike! (Long Live Small Differences!)

Film of the renowned Croatian director Vinko Brešan *Maršal (Marshal Tito's Spirit, 2000)* was one of the first to address communist and Tito's legacy, that is, shared Yugoslav past, after the Yugoslav conflict had broke out. This author has chosen to tell a story about the Yugoslav epoch by inventing the eccentric fable of the alleged Tito's ghost seen in an isolated Adriatic island. Tito's persona, an all-embracing symbol of (what used to be) Yugoslavism, has popped up as to highlight post-socialist political and cultural ambience in the newborn state of Croatia. By confronting two historic time lines (contemporary one and that of Tito's time), director has succeeded in illuminating phenomena of political and economic transition, novelties of market economy and privatization, which are all followed by general societal confusion, or even apathy. Importantly, Brešan has not opposed Tito's epoch to modern times, but has also challenged its idealized evaluation. He has used the theme of a generation gap to show the differences in assessing past and present times. The young are presented as inert and uninterested, whereas elders act as crazy idealists. Therefore, both of the mutually incompatible groups have difficulties to accept or adapt to *reality*.

Comically stylized suspense will reveal that the ghost is actually a patient of the local psychiatric hospital. Yet, both the alleged supernatural experience of meeting a ghost and a deviated patient's fantasy obviously point to the irrational nature of the relationship towards Tito- the Yugoslav object of veneration. We can thus immediately see that the preferred perspective of this author's story telling is *mocking* the ideologically predisposed reality. Present day authorities are ridiculed by using similar cinematic instruments. An inspector coming to investigate the suspicious case is actually one of the locals- Stipe- who has advanced in his career and apparently deserted the island long ago, but is being back to work on the case. A couple of senior intelligence service

115 Nenad Veličković, *Konačari/Lodgers*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 1998, pp. 207-208

officers (who are intervening after Stipe failed in decoding the conspiracy) are shown through a persiflage of the characters well known from the popular SF television serial *The X-Files*. Therefore, various comical situations, quotations from the popular culture and general de-stabilization of the narrative are basic cinematic tools of the film text.

It is interesting how Tito's and Yugoslav legacy in general are seen by different generations, and how they are filtered through perspectives of opponent political options and understandings of the past. There are three main groups of protagonists: pensioners- old Tito's partisans and communists; then, the young- indifferent towards any political or ideological concept; and, finally, there is only one character, representative of the new social group of entrepreneurs, who is interested exclusively in the possibility to benefit from any type of a lucrative project, be it a privatization of a local tavern or exploitation of Tito's legacy. His name is Luka and he is a mayor, owner of most of the island's property and a kind of a chief of the place¹¹⁶.

Luka triggers the plot by sending an emergency letter about the ghost to authorities and revives the atmosphere of a sleepy town and its few inhabitants by discovering touristic potentials of the fact that Tito's ghost dwells on the island. However, Luka's vision of the past is market-oriented, which might allude to the nature of a modern society which centers mostly around commercially masterminded narratives.

Yet, a group of Second World War partisans comes to an island provoked by the rumor that there is Tito's ghost residing in the island.¹¹⁷ Luka grabs an opportunity and founds *political tourism* by reviving a recognizable Yugoslav atmosphere in the organization of the May Day parade. Or at least in its parodied version.

Communist times are mocked at and staged as a carnival. Grotesquely disguised older and overweight people are enacting human sculptures of workers and peasants. Those quasi-proletarians look as if they suddenly fell into the reality which is emptied of previous political ideology, but also of idealism needed to admire something apparently unsuitable and old fashioned. Luka's voice from the background supports this impression. He is ecstatically exclaiming phrases and slogans of communist times, wanting to make the show for the new tourists as authentic as possible. Yet, he actually points out to the bubble of the (staged) ideology and its detachment from reality, be it the Yugoslav one or the contemporary transitional phase which also employs its own political constructs, that is imagined narratives and symbols.

Tito's partisans- nowadays pensioners- who came to the island as tourists are also guests at the evening concert organized to honor Yugoslav times. The concert is a part of the new touristic offer- locals are singing the legendary *Druže Tito, mi ti se kunemo (Comrade Tito, we make our vows to you)*¹¹⁸ in a reggae arrangement. Similarly to old partisans' impression that something weird was taking place while the May Day

116 Memorable role performed by Yugoslav and Croatian actor Ivo Gregurević.

117 BCS here allows for the pan on the word, denoting both the *spirit*, and the *ghost (duh)*.

118 One of the most famous partisan songs from NOB (Yugoslav People's Liberation War), whose refrain served as an inspiration for this popular song from the end of the seventies. Lyrics were written by famous Yugoslav poet Mira Alečković (also a participant of the NOB) and sang by one of the most popular Yugoslav singers ever Zdravko Čolić. The song was performed for the first time on The Yugoslav Festival of revolutionary and patriotic songs in Zagreb in 1977.

procession was moving down the main town square (we can see their confused and puzzled faces in a succession of close-ups), they are puzzled while they watch the band performance. They slowly start leaving the audience until musicians are left all alone on the stage.

Deformed cinematic imagery is the characteristic of this film. Standard shots are very rare, whereas strategies which invoke comical or ironic meanings are dominant. Low-angle shot, classical tool of presenting certain protagonist as imposing, threatening or dominant is here over-used and inconsistently edited implying confusion in the *authority attribution* and general comic ambience, reaffirming also that reality is multilayered and susceptible to various interpretations.

Importantly, this enables film *Maršal* to be 'a film of nostalgia [which] differs from the broadly understood historical movie because it doesn't visualise 'the image of the past [...]'; it does not reconstruct but rather invents 'the feelings and the shapes [...] in order to evoke the feeling of the past. Textual and mise-en-scène elements 'inspire the feeling of the past related to those objects' functioning, among other things, through metonymy, pastiche and parody.'¹¹⁹

Therefore, Brešan's film is envisioning the past in a creative way, allowing for both comic stylization and latent nostalgic sentiments, corresponding to Boym's term *reflective nostalgia* in the best way. Final scene of (false, but still captivating figure) of Tito who is departing in a small boat is conveyed as a romanticized vision of a symbol of the shared past, which is slowly disappearing.

However, shared Yugoslav heritage can be evoked through direct cultural quotations. By 'quoting the famous sentence from the end of the movie *Valter brani Sarajevo* [...]' Bosnian film *Milky way* 'associates with Yugoslav brotherhood and unity.'¹²⁰ This quotation refers to a famous panoramic view of the city and a line from the mentioned movie which made a kind of a Yugoslav popular culture *chronotope*. As Pavle Levi has elaborately shown in his study on Yugoslav disintegration and its film, *Valter brani Sarajevo* carries symbolic of the authentic, non-institutionalized *feeling* of Yugoslav identity, which is why it is being commonly referred to in the works of both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav authors.

Bosnian film *Nafaka* (2006)¹²¹ establishes identical connection to Yugoslav popular culture. Father of one of the main protagonists is working as the movie operator. He continues playing movies in his theatre in the besieged Sarajevo all until his son decides to emigrate. At that very moment he is getting killed by the grenade which hits the theatre. The following scene, shot at one of Sarajevo graveyards shows a panoramic view to the town, immediately associating the legendary sight from the film *Valter brani Sarajevo*. We can see the name *Hajrudin Krvavac* inscribed on the *nišan* (a Muslim gravestone)¹²². By interpolating fictional and real imagery of Yugoslav

119 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 175

120 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 182

121 A Turcism denoting a fate, or a predestination.

122 The name of the author of the famous movie.

cinematography, authors of this movie have made an homage to common Yugoslav heritage, but also disappearing Yugoslav cinema and, inherently Yugoslav 'idea'.

Nevertheless, recalling the past can end up in (an unintended) comics. Dedicating the whole fragment of the story to all-Yugoslav dish *sarma*, writer Ivačica Đerić intended to evoke the past and life she lived in her homeland, contrasting them to the alienated society and life without too many rituals she lives now. The whole episode is initiated by the graffiti: 'cabbage rolls, man, it's gross.'¹²³ The narration is revolving around the meal which has become a cult of the Yugoslav everyday mythology- cabbage rolls, or *sarma*. For the author this dish symbolizes the loss of simple everyday life, but also the loss of common past and culture. However, poetic description of a dish, even though it is a specimen of Yugoslav cuisine culture, ended up being banal and funny.

Remembering Yugoslav times can be directly associated with reflecting upon Yugoslav identity. Muharem Bazdulj's *Trobojka (A Tricolour)* is the story about football championship, subtly imbued with the feelings of nostalgia, but also disillusion. Deciding to name the story after the flag and then to follow series of implications national flag might entail, Bazdulj has engaged in creative interpretation of the feeling of belonging, which is fatally embedded into the story of Yugoslav split up. This event though marked narrator's growing up. Identification with the Yugoslav flag has been transforming along with the violent dissolution of the country, which is why the author sees the symbolic of the flag as the *illusionary* representation of people who were unified under it when they cheered for the Yugoslav representation football team. Therefore, his pondering would bring him to a conclusion about the arbitrariness, and hence changeability of national symbols, flag being one of them. Yet, he goes even further and discredit any kind of group belonging and reject misleading collective identities.

In Pjer Žalica's feature film *Kod amidže Idriza (Days and Hours, 2004)*, everyday life of contemporary Bosnia, those traditions and habits which characterize its specific ambience, has been remarkably displayed. The film is conceived as an indirect homage to past which is (only) seemingly lost. However, it is still present by being connected to the realm of contemporary Bosnia through numerous visible and invisible ties. The author is revealing the continuities of everyday life rituals, but also the point of their sudden interruption. The movie follows individual attempts of people to comprehend and somehow harmonize with the new political, cultural and social circumstances. Politics are relevant to the extent they concern protagonists' everyday lives, their families, emotional or social relations.

Film narrative leaves out political explanations and analyses about the war. Yet, it is set against the background of Bosnian war and its effects, which are deliberately made absent from the discourse. All that happens is influenced by war in one way or another, but never is it explicitly evoked. For, the war already became an integral part of everyday life, memories and protagonists' destinies.

Main protagonists are Fuke, a nephew who came for a visit to an old couple, who

123 Ivačica Đerić, op.cit, p. 52

are living in the outskirts of a Bosnian town. We are shown peculiarities, various little rituals and fine fiber of their lives, mediated through the plot which, paradoxically centers around the banal event: broken boiler which Fuke came to repair.

The underlying difficulty is, however, the death of old couple's son who was killed in the war. Below seemingly relaxed and simple *mise-en-scène* is the loss which ultimately shaped their lives. The death of their son triggers the main conflict in the film, the one between the old couple and their (ex) daughter in law who wishes to marry another man. This conflict is an obstacle for them to meet with their granddaughter.

The motive of the allegedly broken car which, besides being a humorous episode touching upon local mentality and showing funny characters which resemble those from the well known Bosnian jokes, is a narrative bond for the following events. It will enable the conversation with the neighbor in which Fuke finds out about the secret problem. His repair of the boiler will end in fixing the real problem when he makes a phone call to old couple's daughter in law. Eventually, she would pay a visit, together with her new partner and her daughter.

Furthermore, 'the house interior, and especially the room of the cousin killed in the war, is the substance and spatial framework of the family melodrama channeled by the history. The space contributes to the quality of the poetic realism'.¹²⁴ Therefore, the film is rich in symbolic imagery of the unsaid and absent, which forges the atmosphere of a latent conflict, but also of those nostalgic reminiscences.

The final scene of the movie is forged in the manner of the antique comedy. A celebration of grand daughter's birthday becomes the opportunity for family members to reconcile and all others (mainly neighbors) to come and enjoy music and good company. They all sing and play, transcending existing problems and conflicts to create and experience atmosphere of happiness and relief. Even though this could be just a moment of a short-lived oblivion, it certainly brings catharsis.

3.3. Trauma and Memory

In Miljenko Jergović's novel *Mama Leone* (1999) past is disclosed as an album of childhood memories, intimate and poetic recollections of family life in a small coastal town of Drvenik and in Sarajevo. In the world seen through the eyes of a child, main protagonists are mother, father, grandparents and a few adults, family friends or neighbors, all of various ethnic backgrounds and political orientations. They all shaped boy's little universe and gave a special flavor to that nostalgically decorated childhood ambience. Interestingly, the author who became internationally acclaimed for his short stories book about the besieged Sarajevo (*Sarajevski Marlboro/ Sarajevo Marlboro*, 1994) doesn't touch upon that topic whatsoever.

Nevertheless, war has been mentioned few times, like an almost accidental

124 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 183

flashback or a narrative digression, forged as a personal and emotional comment by the narrator as the adult man. One of those comments conveys a deeply traumatic perception of war which eventually resulted in the abruption of the narrator's / author's identity: 'the war of my life, in which I will die'.¹²⁵ There is obviously the sharp cut in the feeling of one's own identity, which has been also recognized as the psychological phenomenon in people who endured some kind of trauma. As Susan J. Brison has demonstrated 'survivors of trauma frequently remark that they are not the same people they were before being traumatized'.¹²⁶

The effect of the multiplied narrative perspectives is intensified by the contrast between the realms of the childhood idyll and the war. In this way narration develops as the quest for the childhood past as an ideal epoch. Importantly, the story of childhood is not forged simply as the undisturbed and pleasant experience of constant joy. The most frightening and disturbing, and at the same time, the most important issues of human life, such as separation or death, are an integral part of the fable. The narrator as a boy is experiencing the death of his uncle, his grandparents, young cousin, as well as pain and suffering due to his parents' relationship and separation.

Death, cruelty and chill are experienced in the early childhood as they sharply contrast comfortable childhood ambience. Jergović had chosen to reveal the secret sufferings and disturbing sides of one's growing up – themes of belonging and rejection, dying and deaths of the close ones, morbidity of death (the episode with the organs kept in a formalin which his father, who was a doctor had shown him), fear, pain, killing (the episode with the kittens killed by his beloved grandmother), illness, good-byes, aging. The story about the war has been deliberately omitted, but it has been metaphorically, indirectly traced and felt as the boy's fear and unease.

This kind of narration has been also applied in Aleksandar Hemon's short story *Mljet* (*Islands*, in collection of stories *The Question of Bruno*, 2000). The story about the summer vacation on the Adriatic island of Mljet has been imbued with ambiguous presentiments and trembling feelings of future disastrous events. Mediterranean ambience and beauty of nature are sharply contrasted to the disturbing stories young boy is hearing from his old cousin, who is recounting the horrors of Stalinist camps, speculating further on their repetitive and regular historical occurrence: 'So that's how it is, he said, it's all one pest after another, like revolutions. Life is but a succession of evils, he said, and then stopped and took a pebble out of his left sandal'.¹²⁷

Worthlessness of life and the awareness of the evil which is the essence and the final outcome of a man's destiny are shared sentiments among post-Yugoslav authors, virtually revealing their encounter with the war which had recently ended. As Vladimir Tasić has also wrote in his novel *The Paper and the Rain*: 'The earth does not exist in

125 Miljenko Jergović, *Mama Leone*, Rende, Beograd, 2008, p. 156

126 Susan J. Brison, "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity", in: Constance L. Mui, Julien S. Murphy, *Gender struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 2002, p. 137

127 Aleksandar Hemon, "Mljet" / "Islands" in: *Pitanje Bruna*, Lingva Franka, Beograd, 2003, original text at: <http://aleksandarhemon.com/bruno/bruno/excerpt.html>

the times of the Deluge [...] Life is anyway a delusion, be it in war or in peace, it is all the same.¹²⁸

The indirect, latent narrativization of Yugoslav war in the story *Mljet* is captured by powerful imagery of death and destruction, manifest in short episodes and details spread out in the fable: a visit to a restaurant which triggers the story about pirates who were torturing children in that place, a throbbing heart of a mongoose caught and dismembered by a dog, a neighbor who was watering flowers and who died before they came back from a summer holiday. Disturbing memories have become an integral part of the nostalgic reiteration of childhood, which is thus being seen as a single period existing *prior* to a downfall brought by the collapse of regularity and war atrocities.

Dominant features of the traumatic experience are its 'unspeakability' and 'unrepresentability'.¹²⁹ For this reason I would argue that many of post-Yugoslav authors are employing indirect narration and associative discourse to express their traumatic bond with the war. This bond often manifests as the catastrophe anticipation. Borivoje Adašević in his aforementioned story has described the war presentiment as an integral part of protagonist's inner self, forged as visually powerful inventory of war, even though the protagonist himself is a student in a peacetime Belgrade: 'for long time only the silence was surrounding him, silence which was hiding the canons' booming, the noise of the belligerent drums and the screams of the shattered, the silence which, full of the sound and the fury, has become more sonorous and explosive than ever'.¹³⁰ The anticipation can also be more directly displayed, as in this philosophically intonated author's resignation: '...it is more likely an allegory of the future ferocity, of cruel and dark epoch which is coming down on this miserable ground'.¹³¹

Feelings of fear, upset and warning are embedded in the vision of the past which has thus become a dystopian spatial-temporal occurrence. The past itself, even though it is being retold or reinvented as the period of the immense personal, private (dominantly childhood and youth) joyful memory, encloses the chill of the future disaster, a violent end to the untroubled life one had led before. The past in the works of many post-Yugoslav authors is not an idyllically composed still-image of the earlier life, but rather a space of the dynamic and imaginative research inside the private and the collective memories. Importantly, they stick not to the ready-made narratives of the good old days offered by the dominant culture. We are thus offered interesting insights into those perceptions of the past which are hindering the attempts to uphold the polished picture of reality.

In a Namik Kabil's film *Čuvari noći* (*Nightguards*, 2008) a furniture showroom during one night in a city of Sarajevo, which is equally deserted and left to its few regular oddballs is a stage of the story. The night and an abandoned city seem to be

128 Vladimir Tasić, *Kiša i hartija*, p. 15

129 Cathy Caruth in: Ann E. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2005, p. 37

130 Borivoje Adašević, op. cit, p. 112

131 Mirko Kovač, op.cit, p. 10

the only option also for those who do not have much choice, but to work the night shift in a furniture showroom. Place itself evidently shows a modern culture of consuming and the accompanying optimism associated to brand-new things and their possession. However, despite representing a new standard of living, the showroom is also a manifestation of economic and social transition. For, movie explores traumatic experiences of war and postwar everyday life together with the unsolved frustrations and complex relationships of main protagonists.

The strategy of *invisible presence*¹³² is denoting the traumatic landscape of the seemingly abandoned city, and is used to convey protagonists' problems and fears.

There are no people in the town; there is actually no town in the film. Unlike other movies, here we see almost none of the Sarajevo landmarks. Two protagonists, Mahir and Brizla, good friends and colleagues (one is safe guarding the furniture store, the other one the next door sanitary ware showroom) are trying to consume another idle night at their absurd working places. Relationships with their wives, their everyday's taunts and serious frustrations are displayed through their night telephone conversations. Their women are also present in their *absence*- they are voices we hear over the telephone or personas in protagonists confessions. Therefore, not only external, but also emotional, inner relationships and feelings are suppressed and difficult to deal with.

On the balcony of the building across the street a war veteran, holding a megaphone in his hand and a stocking on his head, yells out traumatic truths about Bosnian society and its recent past. Those are conveyed as the hallucinatory declamations to a non-existing audience. So, war is not being mentioned directly, but as a mad man's stream of consciousness distorted burst.

An empty furniture showroom and a seemingly abandoned city could be spatial analogues to the post-traumatic ambience of modern Bosnia. Even though this could suggest that Sarajevo is a city which cannot exist after horrors and devastations of war, it being an underlying component of Bosnian reality, the film brings a cathartic ending. Morning, which is, symbolically, both the end of the day for two protagonist, and the end of the film, brings the ray of optimism and harmonizes complicated protagonists' stories. To convey this, authors of the film have chosen a simple close shot of a kitten drinking its milk in a café in which two friends have come to take their first morning coffee. A non-verbal comment about the fragility and vulnerability of contemporary Bosnian society, it is also a consoling metaphor of a new phase in the lives of two protagonists.

132 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 184

4. The Other

The concept¹³³ of the Other, essential in establishing and effecting the feeling of one's own identity, has been profoundly and diversely contested in the ex/post-Yugoslav cultural and political discourse. Fostering and provoking ethnic tensions had brought to radicalization of the concept of the Other through the process of *producing of the enemy*. This strategy was indubitably essential in upholding mechanisms of war.

The notion of the Other was particularly important when it was applied to discredit (what used to be) Yugoslav identity. A radical redressing of all hitherto stable notions, such as common heritage, culture, language, and other constituting symbols of a common identity became the tool of a violent and radical political manipulation. Through this strategy the very meaning of a nation was altered. It set the *ethnic* criteria to be the cardinal point in defining the nation, thus successfully creating the series of ethno-nationally based *othernesses*. As Richard Swartz has put it: 'The shared, almost identical [...] would become the dividing[...]. This anthology is founded on that acknowledgement.'¹³⁴

However, the complex and ambiguous post-conflict ambience of Yugoslav successor states to this day did not allow for a social recognition or at least a mitigation of the extremist nationalist position towards the 'excluded'. The current period has been characterized, instead, by the standardized 'post-socialist radicalization of the collectivistic denial about the society being heterogeneous and imbued with antagonisms'.¹³⁵ Instead of cultural, political and social pluralization, we are witnessing reaffirmation of the forcefully 'homogenized societies inclined towards the stigmatization of all forms of otherness.'¹³⁶

Building on Pavle Levi's work, I was interested in various understandings and conceptions of 'otherness', which go beyond the ethnonational Other. I will focus on the representation and interpretation of 'the outnumbered', that is gendered, political, social and ethnic minorities and marginal groups in film and literature. Arguing that they are represented in the mainstream discourse as the inner or less visible, *local* 'Other', I will try to pursue the perspectives of the authors who are focusing more specifically on this topic.

133 Or, as Aleksandar Hemon has put it, the *instinct* 'for self-legitimizing which demands permanent presence of the other, different' in: *Drugi pored mene*, antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope, p. 89

134 Richard Swartz, Afterword, in: *Drugi pored mene*, antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope / Anthology of the Eastern-European writers, p. 271

135 Pavle Levi, op.cit, p. 17.

136 Pavle Levi, op. cit, p. 18

4.1. Female otherness and its (dis)contents

'It seems to me sometimes that only a woman can truly understand what does Eastern Europe mean.'

Viktor Ivančić, *Vita activa*

The metaphors of family have been traditionally employed to construe the idea of a nation, and one's belonging to it. Originating in patriarchal social order this approach relies on *naturally* assigned roles which are then being transferred to functions performed within a national community. We were born in a certain nation, which should be understood as our extended family, and we are expected to fulfil our *family* functions and subordinate to a *paternal* power. We are obliged to fulfil our duty, since it is our inherited role, and refusing to carry it out is equal to a betrayal of a community we belong to¹³⁷.

Gender roles are divided according to those assigned in the family: women are sisters and mothers / wives, whereas men roles are limited to those of brothers and fathers. Not being adequate for either of these roles can easily stigmatize the individual, who is eventually being perceived as the opponent and, therefore, a threat for the very survival of nation. Most commonly, women who are not conforming to the preferable social roles will be considered whores, whereas men who rise up against this regime are dominantly seen as deserters, traitors, weaklings or even homosexuals, for their identity is acutely disturbing macho cultures of the region.¹³⁸

A 'homogenising discourse'¹³⁹ imposes notions of a 'proper' family, and consequently a 'proper' nation, by introducing certain order and hierarchy which have to be obeyed to. Thus, in the same way that men are supposed to be bread-winners and heads of households, they are expected to contribute to their nation, or, more precisely, their *motherland*, by protecting it and defending it from the intruders. Consequently, women's place in the nation is identical to the one they hold in the family, that is, inferior, and, to a certain extent, withdrawn and passive.

137 This model of understanding a group identity is very productive and establishes basic social divisions. The one who doesn't fit, or refuses to be a part of a group or a community, is considered to be either naturally disadvantaged, or rebellious, which will end in some kind of expulsion from a society. These are the prospect for the physically or mentally disabled people, homosexuals, (so called) deserters, poor, homeless, members of different national, religious or cultural groups etc.

138 Offensive denotations of the word are used as the insulting qualification, to allude to a deteriorating (masculine) features of the opponent.

139 Mostov, Julie, "Our Women"/"Their Women" Symbolic Boundaries, Territorial Markers, and Violence in the Balkans", *Peace & Change*, Volume 20, Issue 4, p. 515

By inheriting the concept of a woman as the inferior ‘Other’ in a society¹⁴⁰, strategic discourse of nationalism, paradoxically, identifies woman both as the minor in the family hierarchy or the *inner* ‘Other’, and as the *sacred* symbol of the homeland. An archetypal female attributes of fertility, passivity and fragility make a powerful bond between a woman and a threatened homeland. This progresses as an urge to defend one’s own *motherland* and, conversely, violate that of the enemy’s.

Women are not active defenders of the nation, they are mothers who *produce* the nation, and sisters who cherish and take care of their close ones. Everything is, thus, settled to function efficiently, as a perfect and undefeatable ready-for-war machine.¹⁴¹

Moreover, family values and roles are often associated with rural milieu and the private sphere. This, however, could be conceptualized as the space of emancipating opportunities for women, who manage to transcend stereotyped gender roles and transform what used to be seen as backward or discriminating against them.

Film *Snijeg (The Snow, 2008)*, by a young Bosnian director Aida Begić tells a story about ‘the losing side [that is]... the story of women’¹⁴². Several Bosniak women, widows or mothers whose children were murdered in the war (along with one man, apparently the only one surviving) live in a remote village in eastern Bosnia, shortly after the war has ended. Their life in the aftermath of war is narrated through sophisticated and meaningful imagery of everyday, simple life. Their basic occupations- a small plum jam manufacture plant and a rug-weaving workshop- are transposed in poetic, colorful and rich images. In this way the simplicity, pseudo emptiness and ‘traditionalism’ of their life which, on the surface has little motion or happening, reveal as meaningful rituals of life they try to restore.

However, two separate events challenge their daily routine and bring the possibility of greater change. Positive spur arrives with a young man the women accidentally met. He proposes to distribute their manufactured jam, which could eventually provide their income and make their life in a village easier and less isolated. The second, more ambiguous and challenging event is the arrival of a foreign investor who wants to buy the land owned by the villagers, so he could build a new settlement there. It is interesting that both actors disturbing the status quo of the village life are *men*. Playing with the archetypal perceptions of feminine as passive and masculine as an active principle, young director is negotiating gender issues in an interesting and refreshing way.

A young Bosnian man’s proposal for distributing the plum jam is welcomed as a good opportunity. Young widow Alma optimistically expects that the development of their business would connect the village with the rest of the world. On the contrary, foreign investor’s proposal is seen as negative by the villagers, for it would destroy

140 Iveković, Rada, “Women, nationalism and war: ‘Make love not war’”, *Hyppatia*, Fall 93, Vol. 8, Issue 4, p. 120

141 This is why, particularly in times of war and emergency, actors who challenge legitimacy of the ruling regimes are in danger of repression and violence. Experience of all non-governmental and peace organisations, particularly feminist ones, in the period of Yugoslav wars evidenced this fashion.

142 Dina Iordanova, *Women Directors...*, op. cit

women’s attempt to prove that life they were leading in the village was possible. Therefore, movie story centers on women’s expectations and ways they cope with new circumstances.

Interestingly, these ‘women [...] are not discussing the matters of the past’¹⁴³: it is being untold and absent, reflecting the traumatic ambience of war memories and an uncertain reality. Yet, their dedication to handiwork, cooking, taking care of children and household are being forged in a way which is challenging gender-sensitive perspective about these activities, which are seen as imposed upon women in a gender division of labor. These women transcend confines of the private sphere and demonstrate that household-oriented activities need not be inferior or undermining women’s capabilities. When performing those activities women can, however, recreate their private realm as the space of *creativity* and meaning in which subtle moments of happiness and fulfillment could be generated. That is why the image of their reality is conveyed in an intense multicolor mise-en-scene, which is illuminating every detail and making it a symbolic object. ‘De-realization and mythologization of the concrete have been accomplished by the rare ‘factual references’ [...] while the existing emptiness of the ‘absent images’ [...] has been imbued with the images borrowed from the collective memory’.¹⁴⁴ This film is not only rethinking gender discourses, but it also debunks negative connotations notions of collectivity hold. I would argue that this movie has re-framed the traditional concepts of both *femininity* and *collectivity*. Importantly, unlike nationalistic discourse in which these concepts were abused, in this film they are represented as creative and empowering potentials for affirming and lifting from obscurity the existing *alternative*. This alternative is *female otherness* which is pushed-aside and silenced by the conservative ruling ideology. However, it has been simultaneously rejected by the progressive-liberal understanding of communal and political space, in which this type of agency is depreciated and seen as irrelevant.

An old lady, who is weaving a rug repetitively throughout the movie, is doing it by combining small parts of old clothes or various fabrics she finds on around. I would argue that she is not only recycling parts of old fabrics and making new rugs, but that she is symbolically reinventing their reality, by making the bridge between painful past and reality. One of the most traumatic experiences would be *bridged* by one of grandma’s rugs- she would use it to cross the river and enter the cave which was hiding the remains of the villagers killed in the war. Grandma’s magical handwork communicates the mysterious and the spiritual. In one of the episodes, Alma was dreaming of a scarf which mysteriously was incorporated in a rug grandma was waving the next day.

This film is unique for its folklore-like visual poetry and the rural milieu-focused narrative. For, as it was already shown, the great majority of contemporary post-Yugoslav films are focusing on urban culture, which ‘has been recognized as the

143 Dušan Makavejev, *Women Directors in South-Eastern Europe..op.cit*

144 Nevena Daković, op. cit, p. 107

opposite to rural, folklore (Balkan traditional heritage)'.¹⁴⁵ Yet, urban surroundings also offer complex scenery for women to try to find their own way in the post-war ambient.

Another young Bosnian director Jasmila Žbanić has triggered one of the public controversies¹⁴⁶ when making an internationally acclaimed movie *Grbavica (Esma's Secret / The Land of My Dreams)* about a young girl who was born after her mother was raped in a (Serbian) war camp. Establishing a 'strong parallel between the destroyed city and individual destinies, the public and the private, emotional and political',¹⁴⁷ director has depicted the traumatic experience of war which is intertwined with the complexities of growing up.

Main plot of this movie centers around Esma's daughter Sara's excursion trip, which is expensive, but for children without a parent, or whose parent-the father-died in the war (he is a martyr- shahid) the trip is free. Children only need to bring the certificate confirming this, which is the moment triggering the plot. Whereas all of her life Sara was told she was a shahid's daughter, the actual truth is that her mother gave her a birth in a war camp, after she was raped.

In this film otherness is, on one hand, originating in a social order, and, on the other, in the core of the ethno-nationalist ideology. Not having, or knowing of a father is an *error* which disturbs patriarchal norms, and thus must be regulated. Nevertheless, in this film the *damaged identity* is being further stigmatized because of its connection to the worst of all enemies- the ethnic Other. As it was already stated, 'nations are gendered' and 'women's bodies become symbolic and spatial boundaries of the nation.'¹⁴⁸ To protect one's own, and violate enemy's *motherland body* is the top demand in the war agenda. That is why 'the rape and violation of individual woman becomes symbolically significant in nationalist discourse.'¹⁴⁹

So, who does this mother and her daughter belong to? They are at the same time enemies, but also victims of an enemy. They are alien in the homogenous national body, but at the same time its most sacred spot- a victim. However, in this film, this 'ambiguity' is being resolved not within the social matrix, but through the intimate relationship between a mother and a daughter, who overcome a social shame and eventual social expulsion. We are shown one private and intimate history of a two-member female family, in which their own reconciliation and acceptance of their 'impure' identities is of greater importance than the ideologically prescribed ethnic and gender identities.

Finally, I would argue that the 'absence of reconciliation [as] the message of *Grbavica*',¹⁵⁰ is a politically powerful act, together with the revelation of the tabooed and silenced identities and 'othernesses'.

145 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 162

146 In Iordanova's opinion it is an authoritative assignment of female film authors.

147 Nevena Daković, op. cit, p. 184

148 Iveković, Rada, Julie Mostov (eds.), op.cit, p. 10

149 Iveković, Rada, Julie Mostov (eds.), op.cit, p. 11

150 Nevena Daković, op. cit, p. 184

'Women centered'¹⁵¹ narratives therefore tell not only the story of the 'other' side, but are displaying various cultural and political issues, which are very often tabooed and absent from the dominant culture. Frequently though, women authors also exclude the dominant, politicized discourse from their narration. They need to rely upon different strategies because male-dominated public arena would deny them the possibility of an authentic expression and articulation.¹⁵² Women authors rely on specific artistic strategies since the established cultural discourse offers models and poetics which already contain discriminating cultural patterns and gendered narratives. However, it doesn't mean that female writers are avoiding confronting those taboos of cultural hegemony. Only that the main task of creating a female individuality temporarily precludes a recognizable political literary engagement.¹⁵³ Hence, female authors are inventing novel characters, stories and realities which are constantly contesting traditionally established literal and film discourses.

Novel *Baltimor (Baltimore, 2003)* by the Serbian writer Jelena Lengold has been structured as the parallel narration about the main protagonist / narrator's visits to her psychiatrist and reminiscences of the childhood past. In dialogues with her psychiatrist throughout the novel, her individual world and problems unfold. We can follow her actual life (relationship she has with her husband and mother) and her, though virtual, secret experience. She is watching on line a man from Baltimore (hence the name of the novel) going to his work everyday, thanks to a camera posted in front of his building. Individualized perspective from which she observes events and people discloses questions which are occupying a woman in her forties. Challenging the traditional prescriptions of canonic literature, the author focuses on the allegedly ephemeral problems of an *unreliable* narrator (unlike omniscient narrator inherited from the epoch of realism and still being considered the main instance of narration in mainstream Serbian literature). Hence, both the theme and the main character are somewhat peculiar: a childless woman, an intellectual, evokes her erotic-adventurous fantasies, without placing any of her considerations within a historic-political context. Nevertheless, this novel deals with the topic of (post)modern alienation (her virtual 'friend'), while the poetic interest is personal and emotional consciousness and preferences.

Lamija Begagić is one of the most noticeable authors of Bosnian short-story literary scene. Her book *A Class Reunion* is a collection of 23 short stories named after personal names of protagonists, fictional author's classmates. Every story, signed by their imaginary names and places in the classroom they were sitting at, is forged as a short narrative of their lives, wreath in the mixture of sentimental and mildly ironic narrator's voice. Narrator is interested in what their lives look like now when they are 'grown- ups', after ten years have passed. Stories are designed as personal, intimate

151 Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999, p. 231

152 Sabrina P. Ramet, ed, op. cit, p. 240

153 Sabrina P. Ramet, ed, op. cit, p. 240

life accounts of narrator's peers. Some emigrated after the war, some are married, have families and are facing everyday problems of such a life, whereas the others are still in search for their true love, meaning of life, and a 'grown-up' identity. Interestingly, none of the stories has a direct narrative connection to Bosnian war. A few of them which touch upon this thematic maintain it over various associations and protagonists' own understanding of war and consequences it had on their lives, without necessarily exploiting its wider political or historical implications.

The opening story of the collection *Edin: Sejo, ne ljuti se* (*Edin: Sejo, don't get mad*) is about a guy named Edin who is living his life in the US, which is not too different from the one he could have led in his native Bosnia. He plays a board game 'Čoveče, ne ljuti se'¹⁵⁴ all day long with his American friend and generally enjoys a kind of leisure time untypical for the Western way of life, especially as 'Easterners' perceive it. Yet, the thing which interrupts his latently anarchic and bon vivant lifestyle is a phone call from his old friend Sejo, who is now also living in the US, and is inviting Edin to be his best man on the wedding.

A strong contrast between his nostalgic memories, supported by his obviously deliberate and almost teenage way of revolting against the imposing (Western) life style, and his sudden decision not to go to his best friend's wedding is shocking. Narrator is revealing his reasons: 'those four years of being apart are cut in between us and they turn over their back like a cat on the sun, staring at us not friendly at all'.¹⁵⁵ There is no reason for Edin not to go. Maybe there are many. But what we are shown is the unique situation of one's life, vivid detail of one's personality. Edin obviously feels he is the 'other' of the world he lives in, but is not capable to go back and assemble his old self which would probably help him feel less an alien in his own skin and his own life. Hence his oddness is also connected with the time which passed, and not only with the spatial remoteness. The emigration is, therefore, set out as a framework of the story about friendship, growing older and hardships of nostalgia.

It is interesting that the writer herself does not belong to the generation of people who were teenagers when the war broke out. As she once explained, it was interesting and inspiring for her as a writer to try to literary transpose lives of the generation whose youth was suddenly interrupted by war. Unlike her generation, born in 1980, those people remember the old country and refer to its values and culture. Therefore, it seems that this author conceives a story about the generation of (ex)Yugoslav youth as a literary narrative which would enable getting across important cultural and social implications of the Yugoslav dissolution.

154 One of the most popular children games played with a dice and figurines, based on competitiveness, but also on a pedagogic philosophy of learning to lose, hence the name ('Man, don't get mad'). Even though it is an international game, it is charged with nostalgic associations to Yugoslav popular culture and its everyday practices.

155 Lamija Begagić, *op.cit.*, p. 15

4.2. Otherness and Its Cultural Concepts

'At that time I couldn't know that one day ... I would see myself as a foreigner who ... is uttering prayers on his de-signified language, and is asking those long-ago retired gods of Europe, the Levant, or some other, equally illusionary homeland, for help.'

Vladimir Tasić, *Oproštajni dar*

As Vanesa Pupavac has asserted in her study on language rights in post-Yugoslav states, 'language has been an important aspect of nationalist politics in the region. Indeed, disputes over language rights prefigured the ethnic divisions of the war. Yet, ironically, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) had one of the most extensive provisions for language rights in the world... The break-up of the SFRY has involved the break-up of Serbo-Croatian as an official language and the designation of distinct Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian official languages'.¹⁵⁶ Thus, as it was highlighted in the introduction of the chapter, political elites initialized and capitalized on the renunciation of shared culture and its components, placing those issues at the heart of the conflict, which thus become the *ethnonationalist* conflict. It is interesting, however, to try to understand why this cultural instrument, which is basically a means of communication or of literary production, was appealing to that extent for nationalist ideologists.

Bosnian writer Nenad Veličković offers his view to the language as an important component of achieving the required political agenda: 'Language, unlike colors or tones, is not nationally neutral. Why did Serbo-Croatian (Croat-Serbian) language fall apart and why did national elites expressly purged the dictionaries simultaneously with staging the armed conflict, and defined those languages' norms and grammars all over again? Because language can be an instrument of identification, an instrument of expressing one's belonging. The same moment a language becomes this kind of instrument, it is no longer necessary to be able to express one's thoughts in it'.¹⁵⁷

Besides the ironic and ridiculing closing turn of this paragraph, which is a characteristic of Veličković's prose, it is made clear that language is not politically insensible. On the contrary, it can serve as means of effectuating one's own cultural and national belonging. So, employing language as 'a symbol of identity rather than a means of communication'¹⁵⁸ was one of the state and nation-building strategies in the region. This strategy, however, implies political maneuvering which foresees deeper psychological and emotional implications of one's belonging: the 'commonality of

156 Vanesa Pupavac, "Discriminating language rights and politics in the post-Yugoslav states", *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2006, p. 113

157 Nenad Veličković, "Bedel", p. 222

158 Vanesa Pupavac, *op. cit.*, p. 121

language is one of the major sources for the feeling of security-through-belonging that ties individuals to nation-states'.¹⁵⁹ To refer to Hobsbawm again, languages are emerging only after nation-states have been differentiated, languages come after nations, which opposes the teachings of the ruling nationalisms which see the language as one of the essentials of the particular nation.

Nevertheless, traditionally defined and nation-based concepts of language, literature and culture are critically confronted in the works of the authors presented in this research.

Dubravka Ugrešić is a writer whose personal and professional biographies are a display of political and cultural changes in the disintegrating Yugoslavia of the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties. She is the author of a whole compendium of concepts which help understand the nature of post-socialist and post-Yugoslav¹⁶⁰, but also, postmodern literature, language and culture in general. In her numerous novels, articles and nonfictional prose she is proposing for the unconventional and untraditional understanding of culture, simultaneously opposing the ideas exploited in the ex/post-Yugoslav nationalistic ideologies.

An emblematic media and political purge of five women writers in the newly born nation-state of Croatia in the early 1990s is what forced Ugrešić to emigrate. Nowadays, even though political changes took place in 2000, and Croatia started gradually democratizing and shifting away from the politics which forced Ugrešić to leave in the first place, she is still highly critical towards it, not planning to go back and choosing instead a life of an intellectual and cultural nomad. Nevertheless, she is also constantly negotiating Western lifestyles and values, by particularly focusing on various forms of Orientalism and obsolescence of the economic and political system (of Capitalism) we live in.

Even though she wanted to escape nationalistic appropriations and classifications, this author came across essentialist and reductionist cultural definitions in her new place of residence as well. Ugrešić has been often introduced as the Croatian writer, female writer, or, at best, Eastern-European writer. As she herself has written, it is not possible for her to be classified as belonging to a certain genre or style, but she has to be a (geo)politically defined author. This fixing of the emigrant's position and making it 'the Other' in the resident culture, guarantees his or hers continual exclusion from the cultural, political and social collective. This fact, however, which is often the topic of her essays and interviews, had opened a space for negotiating not only the vulnerability of (unprotected, unattached) emigrant position, but also for *endorsing one's 'otherness' by implying in the very definition of his or her identity*.

Dubravka Ugrešić has been persistently discussing and formulating strategies and processes of what she calls the 'contemporary de-territorialized or transnational culture' which is a 'dynamic and strikingly complex process'.¹⁶¹ She has likewise classified the

159 James Tollefson in: Vanesa Pupavac, op. cit, p. 124

160 She herself has coined the term post-Yugoslav.

161 Ugrešić, Dubravka, *Nikog nema doma / Nobody's Home*, p. 191

notions which constitute this cultural discourse, composing a genuine *catalogue of transnational culture*: 'archiving ethnic, language and national memory, dislocation and displacement, cultural advances and translation, transplantation and translation of cultures, narratives of recollection, bilingualism, multiplied identities, exile, and many other things which, in a continuous process of interaction mutate, change, multiply and enhance their meanings'.¹⁶²

Furthermore, just a quick overview of the mainstream literary (and other cultural) narratives in post-Yugoslav space highlights the opposition between nationally acclaimed authors who stick to those narratives and the dissenting authors. Whereas the first ones often rely upon the revisionist interpretation of history (which falsifies historiographical facts and denies the war crimes), gendered discursive practices and obsolete national narratives¹⁶³, the second group of authors is engaged with the critical reconsideration of nation-based cultural model. They are interested in the articulation of novel artistic techniques and concepts. Simultaneously, these authors focus on questions of responsibility and reconciliation, which alone represent an avant-garde political and cultural commitment in the post-conflict Yugoslav setting.

4.3. An Individual as the Political Other

Viktor Ivančić's aforementioned novel *Vita activa* about secret police and its practice of wire tapping of the citizens is narrated from the perspective of one of the officers in charge of following a famous writer-activist and author of various anti-state and anti-regime writings. By disclosing the mechanism of the ruling ideology which is depriving people of their basic freedoms, one of which being their right to privacy, the author is focusing on the theme of state intrusion into people's private lives. In this way he is exposing the collision between the individual and a coercive state apparatus. Ivančić develops political theses in his novel by placing the story in the framework of Hanna Arendt's prominent philosophical analysis of the distinction between private and public sphere, and their third counterpart- social sphere- which is developing in their interaction. He is interested in her efforts to trace a potential for active participation of people in the life of a community.¹⁶⁴ Instead of expected relying upon the conventions of a detective genre, in which a central figure would be a writer who is being wiretapped and who would eventually, following various hints and traces, disclose the conspiracy against him, Ivančić has already revealed everything about the system of a totalitarian state by telling the story from the perspective of the perpetrator- the secret service officer Edmord (always referred to as 'the employee Edmord' to

162 Ugrešić, Dubravka, op. cit, p. 191

163 As Veličković has described it: 'Not the books which encourage an independent and critical thinking, but those rich in ethnographic fossils which evidence nation's ancientness and continuity are included into the school syllabus', op. cit, p. 223

164 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998

mark his inseparability from the system he works for). So the basic aim of the narration is to reveal habits, everyday life and character features of the secret service officer. Interestingly, the writer is almost a stereotype of the 'dissident victim' - an intellectual doomed to live in a collective which does not support him, but is also actively working on destroying his ideas, activities and, if necessary, his life.

Yet, we follow Ivančić's witty, deeply ironic twist of Hanna Arendt's idea about the active life (*vita activa*) versus the passive one (*vita contemplativa*). Whereas the writer, a dissident who should actively subvert the mechanisms of the totalitarian state is falling back onto defeatism and disillusionment, Edmord, the secret service employee, is actively working on the taping, following, and interfering in all parts of writer's private life. It seems that the author ridicules the society in which the 'snoops' who facilitate the functioning of the totalitarian systems have paradoxically become the only active agents, thus inventing the inverted conception of Arendt's *active* principle of a society.

Nevertheless, Ivančić is also interested in deeper grounds of Edmord's behavior. We are told about his youth, his poetry writing attempts, relationship with his mother and finally, sexuality. Yet, author's aim is not to show that Edmord's adult life is simply a kind of psychoanalytical exposition of his juvenile frustrations. Ivančić is demonstrating that perpetrating physical or physical violence (in the name of the higher order of the state) is not an emanation of a metaphysical evil, but originates in concrete actions of particular people or groups of people. This argument allows him to open questions important for post-Yugoslav political and social context of guilt and responsibility, which are therefore emerging within the realm of *individual* agency.

4.4. Absurdity of Violence: the Other in the Contemporary Society

Borivoj Radaković, one of the most exciting writers of contemporary Croatian literary scene, masterfully using slang and colloquial expressions and idioms in forging his literary world, has written a story in the first person, told by a young girl living in Zagreb: *Voajerka - teško je bit komad u Zagrebu* (*Voayer- it's hard to be a babe in Zagreb* in *Fak-ju anthology*, 2001). The author has chosen several literary instruments to convey the story as dynamically and provocatively as possible. A young female protagonist, who is the narrator at the same time, in a telephone conversation which resembles a stream of consciousness monologue, transmits the events she accidentally witnesses.

The starting point of this atypically gendered (female) narration further reframes the traditional, that is, suitable literary repertoire. The event which the young girl is retelling to her friend over the phone, and which constitutes the main story, is the sexual intercourse between two men. The girl stayed in the car because of the heavy

rain, and not knowing what to do she called her friend to chat. Meanwhile, her attention was attracted by a couple which arrives to the parking, and as the story develops she discovers that they are a homosexual couple. Though offering memorable and provocative descriptions of erotic scenes, the emphasis of the story is its sudden shift – a group of local boys discover the couple in the car, drag them out and beat them up.

The conflict ends in the trial to the bullies who beat up the homosexual couple, still the stigma of violence imbued the fable ambience. And yet, the story concludes lightheartedly. Through conversation she is having with her friend we see how the girl internalizes homosexual experience she witnessed to and makes it a part of her personal rebellion against the hostile social environment: 'And I don't know what I would do, I don't know... And those blokes I would, I would- I don't know. I would put.. I would put a bomb under their building. I would, Mirna, I would, with those two, out of spite in front of everyone [...]. Just, I mean, what for, it means nothing to them.'¹⁶⁵

A spontaneous, almost infantile reaction reflects the authentic understanding of life, unburdened by the conventions or prohibitions of patriarchal and conservative norms. She is a 'simple' young girl who is not representing any socially respectable group and is entering the 'scene' from a sub-cultural and sub-social margin of the male-centered and traditional society. She is thus being a perfect protagonist for the author to shed light on a vivid and fresh *alternative* to the mainstream discourse.

There is a range of various stylistic, poetic and genre examples of representing the Other in post-Yugoslav literature and cinema. The film of the Croatian director Dalibor Matanić *Fine mrtve djevojke* (*Fine dead girls*) applies techniques and elements of the horror genre to evoke various characters and phenomena of the contemporary society. The story is being constructed around the following plot: there is a child missing, his mother is looking for him, suspecting that an old woman, a tenant (and at the same time the landlady) in the building she was once living in, has kidnapped him. In retelling the story to a police inspector, when she is asked to explain her suspicions, we will be shown a twisted reality of the building inhabited by various characters, leading apparently 'normal' lives, but actually dwelling in a sort of a liminal space between the real and the terrifying.

The fable centers on the neighbors' discovery that the two new tenants (one of which is the narrator) are homosexual partners. Curiously, all other tenants could easily be protagonists of the horror story themselves: there is an illegally practicing gynecologist (his patients are nuns and victims of incest, which is why in this episode the 'sacred' institutions of nationalistic ideology- the church and the family- are ridiculed), an old man keeping his dead wives in the apartment, and, finally, the monstrous lady (and her family) who is renting the apartment to two girls. Nevertheless, since the landlady in a way rules the building and has a say in everything (she threatens, swears, indiscreetly asks about other people's lives), she claims also main moral authority. Importantly, her moral beliefs are what actually interested the author of the film, for her moral stance determines all the other characters in the movie. Her 'moral' guidance is crucially

¹⁶⁵ Borivoj Radaković, *Voajerka - teško je bit komad u Zagrebu* in: *Fak-ju anthology*, 2001, p. 45

influencing brutal and aggressive outcome of the forbidden relationship among the tenants.

The discovery of the lesbian couple will initiate an absurd chain of violence, rapes and deaths. Thus, the crisis of the dominant corrupt and hypocritical morale tragically ends in the annihilation of otherness, leaving the chilling atmosphere of the *social horror* behind.

Football and the phenomena it generates have clearly become a metaphor of the contemporary society. In an omnibus *Sex, piće i krvoproliće (Sex, drinks and bloodshed)* by three young Croatian directors Zvonimir Jurić, Boris T. Matić and Antonio Nuić, football is the interpretive background of three fascinating fables.

The first one is a simple fable about a father and a son, fans of the adversary football clubs, who are going to a football match in an improvised vehicle-bicycle which father has constructed especially for the occasion. Their alliance is depicted from the perspective of the generational gap misunderstandings and cultural differences, for the father is a Yugoslav born Bosnian, whereas the boy was born in Croatia after the war. Nevertheless, imbued with various details revealing their tender and loving relationship, the story stresses the old-fashioned understanding of football and its beauty. Besides other big themes, father is trying to explain to his son the noble, genuine way of cheering for a favorite football team. Yet, the story finishes when a group of the hooligans attacks them and ruins their vehicle.

The second story's outcome associates the elements of a classical tragedy and the Theatre of the Absurd. A simple plot of two friends going to a football game ends in a double murder, unmotivated and sudden. One victim is one of the friends who wanted to make a prank with the policeman, but was then shot to death, and the other is the girl passing by who was shot by the bullet which went astray. So, the story transposes dangers of monopoly of power exercised by the state officer, but also it questions the limits of freedom, illuminating the phenomenon of aggressive hooligans' behavior.

The third story, intersected with a documentary footage about football hooligans, is about four friends coming home after a fight they had with the adversary team hooligans. However, the stereotyped situation reveals hidden frustrations and conflicts among the group of friends themselves. Their allegedly unconditional friendship is tested: one of the boys fights with his wife and the others are forced to take sides. Yet, the fight becomes evolves into their own thing, and we can see their fragile and frightened side which is wrapped in the set of the strict group rules. Still, their individualities do not manage to come up to the surface, and they continue to dwell in their own small world of aggressive and inadequate behavior, which is becoming, as the film triptych has shown, progressively socially acceptable and even desirable.

Borivoj Radaković in his short story *Dobrodošli u plavi pakao (Welcome to the Blue Hell* in: *Fak-ju anthology*, 2001) managed to convey the message by exploring the possibilities of verbal expression of the protagonist / narrator. Radaković has created a young football hooligan's world solely on his drastically direct, vulgar and repetitive slang idiom. Everything we find out about the young man is contained in this

new (sub)urban way of communication, which only scarcely resembles conventional verbalization of thoughts, ideas and feelings. The slang performed here is more a gesture, or some kind of an acoustic image, which is invoking the inner complexities, or deep subconscious responses to the external events. The author has structured hooligan's character by exposing rude and aggressive nature of a man, and his inadequacy to comprehend the world around him. This protagonist reacts according to some arbitrary codes of his group, without actually being capable of any kind of interaction. Hooligan himself is barely individualized. We are shown the behaviour typical for a *mass*, which easily shows its violent face, and often acts according to unpredictable and absurd logic. It all centres around his fatal love for *Dinamo*: '...you see, I live for *Dinamo* and don't give a damn about anything else. I mean, fuck it, you know: who is from Zagreb, who is Croat, fuck, he cheers for *Dinamo*...' ¹⁶⁶, but at the same time he roars: '...we are not here for football, man, fuck it. We are nationalists, fuck it, we don't give a damn about the football [...] we are the army, fuck it [...] you can't fool around, man, everybody knows what he is supposed to do [...] It all has to be organized because we're not a herd, we're not, you know, in socialism, fuck it' ¹⁶⁷.

This story evidences how social and cultural norms are rejected by the young people who feel that they don't share anything with the rest of the community. Importantly, though, it also reveals that the protagonist is taking no notice of the alleged values hooligan collective obeys to. Therefore, it all culminates in an abundance of cursing and blasphemy delivered by the young man, thus exposing the state of an absolute annihilation, in which not only social, but human disposition of the protagonist and the group he belongs to are brought into question.

Describing how they were stoning the train in which the Belgrade Red Star fans were departing from Zagreb, he concludes: 'But it was not enough, it was a zero. We should have done things like the English [...] All this should be destroyed, fuck it, all should be fucked up totally. Kill, cudgel to death, fuck it, everything. We will make it, fuck me dead. If I die, I just want this to be inscribed on my grave- Božo Blum, *Bad Blue Boys*. We will be the blue death, for we won't let anybody fuck with us, fuck it.' ¹⁶⁸

Inter-ethnic antagonisms are substituted with the intra-football fans confrontations. The main protagonist hates all other football fans from Croatia: for him, they are equal to the hooligans from Serbia. Therefore, everything, except the vague and largely distorted idea about the favorite football team is being experienced as an unclear manifestation of an alien origin. He is surrounded by 'otherness' which he cannot and will not comprehend or identify with. Consequently, even though we are told various events which occurred, the narration itself is forged in the way which makes temporal or spatial references irrelevant. There is Božo Blum, his wrath and obscure gibbering which discloses his final determination to destroy everything, including himself.

Yet, the phenomenon of football can be drawn on as a center of a humorous film

166 Borivoj Radaković, 'Dobrodošli u plavi pakao' ('Welcome to the Blue Hell') in: *Fak-ju anthology*, 2001, p. 248

167 Borivoj Radaković, op.cit, p.252

168 Borivoj Radaković, op.cit, p.255

narration. In the film *Kad porastem biću kengur* (*When I Grow Up, I'll Be a Kangaroo*, 2004) by Serbian director Radivoje Andrić, the main conflict is being generated around the television broadcast of the football match. In Miroslav Momčilović's *Sedam i po* (*Seven and a half*) made out of seven separate short film stories, the story 'Greed' also treats the phenomenon of football. Two friends, local young men from the suburb of New Belgrade, decide to shoot a video which they would send to the football legend and their childhood idol, Argentinean football player Diego Armando Maradona. Their idea is to ask him to send them money which one of them needs for a surgery which would save his life. Very soon we realize it is all a farce- the wheelchair one of the characters is sitting in is just the calculated pitiful camouflage. Even though it is a naive and transparently manipulative performance which aims at softening football player's heart, it is a fraud meant to gain big money fast and easy. Their infantile expectation is that Maradona would send the money once he sees the heart-braking video. Yet, this is just the framework of the fable, but what is important is that football and its heroes had formative role in protagonists' growing up and understanding the world.

Whereas football as a cinematic theme could be employed to show both comical and dramatic situations, it has been recognized that violence is present and even increasing in contemporary post-Yugoslav societies. This is particularly important when set against the mainstream which is attempting to mitigate this problem: violence is always interpreted as something incidental. Since it is by all means connected to general social and political ambience, that is poverty, criminalized social milieu (as the consequence of war, transition, poverty), denial of war and war crimes and thus lack of processing various traumas, this social aggression is actually a manifestation of all the listed. Authors who are dealing with this problem are both revealing many of its symptoms and are compelling the public to face the reality they live in. And the reality inevitably consists of various *Others*, who are troublesome for the homogenising political and cultural agenda.

4.5. The Other Multiplied: Instability of Structure and Meaning

In a recent movie by a Serbian director Milutin Petrović *Jug-jugoistok* (*South by Southeast*, 2005) the notion of the Other has been incorporated in the film structure as its device of multifold and multilayered narration. The focus of the story is on main protagonist's search for the identity, which is taking place in the horrifying ambience of an authoritarian society, which started losing contours of reality.

Yet, even though *Jug-jugoistok* 'represents one of the films which opens the recent and unsolved history, and becomes almost momentary a performance of the historical experience',¹⁶⁹ it transcends its own political implications and functions also

169 Nevena Daković, op.cit, p. 128

as a universal fable about the individual and its destiny in a repressive society. Main protagonist is woman who is the victim of the invisible but omnipresent totalitarian system, whose officers are prosecuting her. In the best manner of the suspense genre film,¹⁷⁰ all those who are said to be assisting her in her attempt to escape, are two-faced actors who are actually part of the system which intends to destroy her.

But, this is not the only ambiguous layer. The director masterfully employs and intersects elements of the reality and fiction, which become interchangeable and finally absorbed by the film narration which seeks to erase the difference between the two. Main character is sharing the identity with the actress playing it¹⁷¹. They have the same name, they are both actresses, and there are even some elements of actress's biography which are incorporated in the story. Furthermore, the actress Sonja Savić was well known for her political activism and critique of the regime, which all together enhances the documentary ambience of the film and its tendency to incorporate true-life elements into its space. Therefore, film functions as a subversion of the film narrative formation, that is, this movie is in a way, *self-subverting*. This is supported also by appearances of many famous people, mainly artists, who were given both their own and a new, fictional identity. Symbolic montage of documentary-style narrated sequences about political murders from the period of Milošević regime reveal which authoritarian system is actually being indicated in the movie.

The narrative is uncertain and characters are ambiguous. The uncertainty of meaning is the main characteristic of this film text, it is being manifest in all levels of its structure, showing that fix identities and definite narratives are essentially impossible. So, 'the text is paranoid not because it is being written by the allegedly hounded, but because it is being revealed in the role of the one who hunts its own structure.'¹⁷² By exposing the topic of being hunted and not being able to trust anybody, the film touches upon the phenomenon of paranoia, and simultaneously that of the alleged paranoia. For, the question is if paranoia is a real mental process (which is, importantly, the extreme conceptualization of the *Other*, as threatening and being omnipresent), or it is the *diagnosis* from the 'above'. The letter seems to be alluding to political strategies of marginalizing and silencing the individual, by seeing him/her as not fitting the normal order, that is by pronouncing the individual to be paranoid- crazy.

Director Milutin Petrović thus created a piece which synthesized the experience of the artistic and political opposition, which was pushed on the societal and social margins and was ascribed features of the internal *societal Other*. Nevertheless, I would argue that by very *appropriation of the identity of 'otherness'* as tools of self-legitimization, artistic articulation, and promulgation of novel cultural concepts, post-Yugoslav film and literature authors succeeded in creating an alternative political and

170 The author expressively relies upon this tradition, paraphrasing famous Hitchcock's *North By Northwest*, in which the narrative also centers around the hunted individual and the invisible enemy, which remains unsaid (group of criminals is just a McGaffin), but subtly denoted. Memorable scene in the end of the movie takes place at Mount Rushmore (US presidential memorial), indicating the possible adversary Other.

171 Legendary Yugoslav and Serbian actress Sonja Savić.

172 Nevena Daković, op. cit, p. 129

cultural space. By being interested in and focused on exploring heterogeneous nature of social and historical realities, these authors have opened a variety of alternative responses to important questions, such as recent past, war, Yugoslav heritage, women and their position, authoritarianism, the young, thus unanimously challenging the authority of ruling nationalisms.

Conclusions

'Kad sam bio mlad, onda sam ja mislio da alternativna muzika, ili alternativna književnost može da mijenja svijet...ali..treba ove srušiti, treba ih skinuti s vlasti, to je alternativa./ When I was young I thought that an alternative music, or an alternative literature could change the world...but they should be toppled, they who are in power should be overthrown, that is the alternative'.

Aleksandar Hemon
(Kuhinja TV show)

This research could be entirely contested by Aleksandar Hemon's statement cited above. Furthermore, some important leftist authors, such as Frederic Jameson or Slavoj Žižek would claim that the true alternative is only the one which questions the overpowering system of capitalism and offers an alternative model to it. Yet, I would maintain that the alternative, be it of capitalism or any other *hegemonic discourse*, is always an effort to create a space of the *opposite* and, possibly even *subversive* agency. This *internal alternative* is a necessary field for articulating and negotiating the complex of cultural and political courses of action.

As Althusser¹⁷³ and Bhabha have demonstrated in their studies culture¹⁷⁴ is a space open for negotiations and expansions of marginalized identities. On one hand there is the force of the ruling class which is exercising its power and managing the state and societal apparatus by relying upon the *cultural hegemony*. As Gramsci also revealed, the concept of *norm* creates the set of values and ideological assets which hold the universal validity. Its inherent strategy is excluding the non-conformist and divergent cultural (and other) phenomena. But, importantly, 'minority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture ... as contentious space.'¹⁷⁵ In my understanding of this paradigm, the authors presented in this research are producing the minority or marginal discourse as compared to the *norm* of the ethno-national idea and from it evolving post-Yugoslav ethno-national states.

The discourse which originates outside the nation's center 'will not... celebrate the *monumentality* of historicist memory, the sociological *solidity* or *totality* of society, or the *homogeneity* of cultural experience. The discourse of the minority reveals the insurmountable ambivalence.'¹⁷⁶ That is why it is important to shed a light on those artistic practices which are mostly absent from the mainstream cultural scene. Hence,

173 I refer here to Althusser's categorization of *ideology* and its internal paradoxes which have enabled institutions belonging to the realm of *culture* to antagonize, question and finally subvert ruling ideology's postulates.

174 Since nation is a system of *cultural* ideas.

175 Hommi Bhabha, op. cit, p. 307

176 Homi Bhabha, op. cit, p. 308 cursive mine

culture is simultaneously the site of the mainstream ideology consolidation and the space of the alternative artistic and political proposals and articulations, it 'abhors simplification.'¹⁷⁷ Therefore, culture cannot be reduced to the project of nationalist ideologues. Their vision of culture is fixed, localized and pure, unlike the authorship and impact which has been made from the margins of the nation (or in our case: nations). Endeavors of (post)Yugoslav authors in anti-nationalist, and at times also non-nationalist discourse, their need to go beyond the ethno-nationalist, that is parochial, prerogatives of respective cultures are continuous. They thus attempt to cooperate and create the artistic realm which antagonizes the mainstream of respective post-Yugoslav countries.

For, Yugoslav has dominantly been understood in terms of culture. Popular music, film, common language and education performed in it, as well as literature, at the time called Yugoslav, the lot-about-written influence and significance of popular music to forming of Yugoslav identity among the young have all been of an utmost theoretical interest in the region. And indeed, the concept of Yugoslav identity could be best conveyed through the cultural definition: 'Yugoslav identity was, above all, a cultural definition, characterized by intellectual openness, diversity and mutual curiosity.'¹⁷⁸

Shared culture and one's identifying with it has been in the core of what it means to be Yugoslav. Therefore, this cultural identification has, I would argue, spread out and continued existing after the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia had broke out, exceeding politically envisioned and imposed boundaries. Importantly, what ethno-national understanding of culture had brought is the impoverishment¹⁷⁹ of single Yugoslav cultures. For, Yugoslav was not a simple blend on collection of particular sub-Yugoslav cultures, but had a comprehensive quality of its own¹⁸⁰. This quality and how it survived in the new socio-political ambience of Yugoslav successor states is at heart of this research. Cultural artifacts have shown to be a solid research material when trying to comprehend the character of *continuity* between ex-Yugoslav heritage and post-Yugoslav realm.

Moreover, I would reassert that the piece of art itself carries implications and meanings which could be even more powerful than expressive political activism. As Dina Iordanova has argued, 'stunning imagery, it seems, brings more to the project of understanding than rigid moral discourse.'¹⁸¹ Therefore I sought to extract and conceptualize aesthetic and political features of the artistic discourse in the post-Yugoslav realm, adhering to the distinguishing components of literature and film poetics.

We have seen how the complex realm of past finds its way into the not less difficult post 2000s reality. Also, we could see how a new, emigrant identity is being created and

177 Fanon's quote in Bhabha, p. 303

178 Klaić, "The End of a Multicultural World" as quoted in: Ana Dević, "Open Regionalism..", p. 198

179 According to Gordana P. Crnković, op.cit.

180 According to Gordana P. Crnković, op.cit.

181 Dina Iordanova, "Conceptualizing the Balkans in Film", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), p. 885

thought about within the artistic narrative. It was possible to follow the development of gender issues and its linkages to war, whereas *other forms of otherness* proved to be constant companions in post-Yugoslav authors' artistic explorations and creation of their protagonists' destinies.

I would stress that their cinematographic and literary approaches are *energizing alternative political and cultural options by enacting the solidarities which are incompatible with the strategies, instruments and discursive practices belonging to official institutions*. Their works are very often forged as a direct attempt to ridicule and subvert the narratives presented from the 'above' (I refer here to the imposing authoritativeness inherent to the dominant discourse which is inseparable from exercising power). Post-Yugoslav authors communicate 'new ways of seeing reality and new possibilities of being an individual.'¹⁸²

One of the aspects of this agency is also the role an intellectual can and should have in the public discourse, what many of post-Yugoslav authors presented in this research managed to reclaim. By discussing political and cultural phenomena and challenging most of the dominant social principles those authors succeeded in *re-binding the sphere of the artistic and aesthetic with the sphere of the political* both in their works and in their activist or simply public appeals. Authors like Nenad Veličković, Dubravka Ugrešić and Aleksandar Hemon are the most well known among many other influential intellectuals region wide.

The whole of an alternative production analyzed in this research, together with the individual activism, but also, importantly, emerging *collective activism* of post-Yugoslav authors as a group, functions as an active advocacy for a different political and cultural agenda: 'we mustn't understand the alternative culture as a state or static style, but as an active struggle and political strategy. Walter Benjamin's words about the need for strong politization of the aesthetic as means to confront the aesthetization of the politics, hold good today, maybe more than ever before.'¹⁸³

That is why this research was an effort to reinforce the *necessity of incorporating culture and aesthetics into the study of politics and ruling ideologies*. It was a quest meant to oppose 'the understanding of cultural domains based on the notion of identity, particularly on national identity [and instead] to make a shift from the paradigm of *art-as-representation* to *art-as-a-political practice*.'¹⁸⁴ Authors which are actively performing anti-mainstream attitudes throughout their works have been the main protagonists of this thesis. Instead of illustrating values from national pantheons, they have been questioning them and producing their own individual realities.

182 Gordana P. Crnković, op. cit, p.152

183 Dejan Kršić, "Alter-native", *Reč*, no 62/8, mart 2001, p. 217

184 *Izostavljena istorija/ Omitted History*, "Introduction to the Political Practices of (post-) Yugoslav Art," pp. 14-5 in: Ana Dević, "Open Regionalism..", p. 209

Bibliographical references

Primary sources

Films

- Andrić, Radivoje, *Kad porastem biću kengur*, Serbia, 2004
- Arsenijević, Stefan, *Ljubav i drugi zločini*, Serbia/Germany/Austria/Slovenia, 2008
- Begić, Aida, *Snijeg*, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Germany/France/Iran, 2008
- Brešan, Vinko, *Maršal*, Croatia, 1999
- Duraković, Jasmin, *Nafaka*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2006
- Hribar, Hrvoje, *Što je muškatac bez brkova?*, Croatia, 2005
- Jurić, Zvonimir, Boris T. Matić, Antonio Nuić, *Sex, piće i krvoproliće*, Croatia, 2004
- Kabil, Namik, *Čuvari noći*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008
- Longulov, Darko, *Tamo i ovde*, Serbia/USA/Germany, 2009
- Marković, Goran, *Turneja*, Serbia/Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008
- Matanić, Dalibor, *Fine mrtve djevojke*, Croatia, 2002
- Matičević, Mladen, *Jedan na jedan*, Serbia, 2002
- Momčilović, Miroslav, *Sedam i po*, Serbia, 2006
- Novković, Oleg, *Sutra ujutru*, Serbia, 2006
- Petrović, Milutin, *Jug-jugoistok*, Serbia, 2005
- Rušinović, Goran, *Buick Rivera*, Croatia, 2008
- Schmidt, Branko, *Metastaze*, Croatia, 2009
- Sokolović, Faruk, *Mlječni put*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2000

Sviličić, Ognjen, *Armin*, Croatia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/Germany, 2007

Šorak, Dejan, *Dva igrača s klupe*, Croatia, 2005

Vuletić, Srđan, *Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini*, Bosnia and Herzegovina/France/UK, 2003

Vuletić, Srđan, *Teško je biti fin*, UK/Slovenia/Serbia/Germany/Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2007

Žalica, Pjer, *Kod amidže Idriza*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2004

Žalica, Pjer, *Gori vatra*, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Austria/Turkey/France, 2003

Žbanić, Jasmila, *Grbavica*, Austria/Bosnia and Herzegovina/Germany/Croatia, 2006

Žilnik, Želimir, *Kenedi se ženi*, Serbia, 2007

Literature

Albahari, David, *Brat*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2009.

Albahari, David, *Gec i Majer*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2005.

Albahari, David, *Ludvig*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2007.

Bazdulj, Muharem, *Čarolija*, Gradac K, Čačak, 2008.

Bazdulj, Muharem, *Filigranski pločnici : bosanski tranzitorij 2004-2008*, biblioteka XX vek: knjižara Krug, Beograd, 2008.

Begagić, Lamija, *Godišnjica mature*, Rende, Beograd, 2006.

Drugi pored mene, antologija pisaca jugoistočne Evrope / anthology of the Eastern-European writers, Richard Swartz (ed.) , Samizdat B92, Beograd, 2007

Đerić, Ivančica, *Bosanci trče počasni krug*, Rende, Beograd, 2006.

FAK-JU!: antologija / anthology, Kruno Lokotoar, Vladimir Arsenijević (eds.), Rende, Beograd, 2001.

Hemon, Aleksandar, *Pitanje Bruna*, Lingva Franka, Beograd, 2003.

- Hemon, Aleksandar, *Projekat Lazarus*, VBZ, Zagreb, 2009.
- Ilić, Saša, *Predosećanje građanskog rata*, K. V. S., Beograd, 2000.
- Ivančić, Viktor, *Vita activa*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2005.
- Jergović, Miljenko, *Mama Leone*, Rende, Beograd, 2008.
- Jergović, Miljenko, *Buick Rivera*, Rende, Beograd, 2006.
- Karakaš, Damir, *Kako sam ušao u Europu*, LOM, Beograd, 2008.
- Kovač, Mirko, *Grad u zrcalu*, Samizdat B92, Beograd, 2008.
- Kovač, Mirko, *Kristalne rešetke*, LIR BG, Beograd, 2001.
- Lengold, Jelena, *Baltimor*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2003.
- Perišić, Robert, *Nema boga u Susedgradu*, LOM, Beograd, 2006.
- Pseći vek, šest pripovedača*, Saša Ilić (ed.), Beopolis, Beograd, 2000.
- Tasić, Vladimir, *Kiša i hartija*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2004.
- Tasić, Vladimir, *Oproštajni dar*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2001.
- Ugrešić, Dubravka, *Ministarstvo boli*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2004.
- Ugrešić, Dubravka, *Nikog nema doma*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2005.
- Ugrešić, Dubravka, *Zabranjeno čitanje*, Geopoetika, Beograd, 2001.
- Veličković, Nenad, *Konačari*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 1998.

Secondary sources

Volumes

- Althusser, Louis, *Ideologija i ideološki državni aparati*, Loznica, Karpos, 2009
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998

- Bart, Rolan, *Lekcija: pristupno predavanje na Kolež de Fransu (1977)*, Karpos, Loznica, 2009
- Benjamin, Walter, *Essays*, Beograd, Nolit, 1974
- Bhabha, Homi K. (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990
- Bojm, Svetlana: *Budućnost nostalgije / Boym, Svetlana, The Future of Nostalgia*, Beograd: Geopoetika, 2005
- Crnković, P. Gordana, *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film: Fires, Foundations, Flourishes*, Continuum International Publishing, 2012
- Daković, Nevena: *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, Fakultet dramskih umetnosti, Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, Beograd, 2008
- Falk, Barbara J., *The dilemmas of dissidence in East-Central Europe : citizen intellectuals and philosopher kings*, Central European University press, Budapest, New York, 2003
- Gagnon, V. P. Jr, *The myth of ethnic war: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, London, 2004
- Gordy, Eric D., *The culture of power in Serbia: nationalism and the destruction of alternatives*, The Pennsylvania State University, 1999
- Goulding, Daniel J, *Liberated cinema: the Yugoslav experience*, Indiana university press, Bloomington, 1985
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Problemi revolucije: intelektualci i revolucija*, Filip Višnjić, Beograd, 1974
- Iveković, Rada, Julie Mostov (eds.), *From gender to nation*, Longo, Ravenna, 2002
- Kaplan, Ann E., *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2005
- Kovačević, Nataša, *Narrating Post/Communism Colonial discourse and Europe's borderline civilization*, Routledge, New York, 2008
- Levi, Pavle: *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu / Desintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-yugoslav Cinema*, Biblioteka XX vek, Beograd 2009

Mirzoeff, Nikolas, *The Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, New York & London, 2003

Mui, Constance L., Julien S. Murphy, *Gender struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 2002

Paxson, Margaret, *Solvovo: The Story of Memory in Russian Village*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Washington DC, 2005

Pristojan život, lezbijske kratke priče sa prostora Ex YU, (ed. Dragoslava Barzut), Labris, 2012

Ramet, Sabrina P. (ed.), *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, Penn State University Press, University Park, PA, 1999

Rancière, Jacques, *The politics of aesthetics: the distribution of the sensible*, MPG Books Ltd, Cornwall, 2004

Vahtel, Endru Baruh, *Književnost Istočne Evrope u doba postkomunizma* / Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2006

Vahtel, Endru Baruh, *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije* / Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd, 2001.

Articles

Denich, Bette “Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1994), pp. 367-390

Dević, Ana, “Ethnonationalism, Politics, and the Intellectuals: The Case of Yugoslavia”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring, 1998), pp. 375-409

Dević, Ana, “Open Regionalism’ in the Cinema Production in Yugoslavia’s Successor States” in: Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz (eds.), *Towards Open Regionalism in South-East Europe*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012, pp. 191-210

Hayden, Robert M., “Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 783-801

Iordanova, Dina, “Conceptualizing the Balkans in Film”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), pp. 882-890

Ivanović, Nevena, “Zaposedanje Drugog i manipulacija *ženskim pismom*”, *Reč*, 59/5, 2000, pp. 199-243

Iveković, Rada, “Women, nationalism and war: ‘Make love not war’”, *Hypatia*, Fall 93, Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp.113-127

Jovanović, Nebojša, “Bosnian Cinema in the Socialist Yugoslavia and the Anti-Yugoslav Backlash”, <http://www.kinokultura> (accessed 15 December 2012)

Jovanović, Nebojša, “Breaking the wave: A commentary on ‘Black Wave polemics: Rhetoric as aesthetic’ by Greg DeCuir, Jr”, *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, Volume 2 Number 2, pp. 161-171

Jovanović, Nebojša, “Fadil Hadžić u optici totalitarne paradigme”, *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis*, god. 17 (2011), broj 65-66, proljeće/ljeto 2011, pp. 47-61

Koleva, Daniela 2007, “The Memory of Socialist Public Holidays: Between Colonization and Autonomy”, in: Ulf Brunnbauer and Stefan Troebst (eds), *Zwischen Amnesie und Nostalgie: Die Erinnerung and den Kommunismus in Südosteuropa*, Vienna: Böhlau, pp. 185 – 198

Kršić, Dejan, “Alter-native”, *Reč*, Vol. 62/8, mart 2001, pp. 209-217
Malešević, Siniša, “From ‘Organic’ Legislators to ‘Organicistic’ Interpreters: Intellectuals in Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav States”, *Government and Opposition*, 37 (1), 2002, 55-75

Mostov, Julie, “‘Our Women’/‘Their Women’ Symbolic Boundaries, Territorial Markers, and Violence in the Balkans”, *Peace & Change*, Volume 20, Issue 4, pp. 515-529

Nadkarni, Maya, Olga Shevchenko, ‘The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices’, *Ab Imperio* 2/2004, pp. 487-519

Pupavac, Vanesa, “Discriminating language rights and politics in the post-Yugoslav states”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2006, pp. 112-128

Ramet, Sabrina P., “Views from Inside: Memoirs concerning the Yugoslav Breakup and War”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 558-580

Sekulić, Dusko, Garth Massey, Randy Hodson, “Who Were the Yugoslavs? Failed Sources of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb., 1994), pp. 83-97

Schierup, Carl-Ulrik, "Quasi-Proletarians and a Patriarchal Bureaucracy: Aspects of Yugoslavia's Re-Peripheralisation", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, (1992), pp. 79-99

Internet sources

<http://aleksandarhemon.com/bruno/bruno/excerpt.htm>

<http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/206/t20602.shtml>

PECOB's Scientific Board

is an interdisciplinary board of directors, responsible for reviewing proposals and accepting international high quality scientific pieces of research with the assistance of the Europe and the Balkans International Network and the Association of Italian Slavists.

Only the scientific papers accepted after a blind review process will be published in the portal.

Members of the Scientific Board of Directors are:

- Stefano Bianchini (IECOB)
- Francesco Privitera (IECOB)
- Marcello Garzanti (AIS)
- Stefano Garzonio (AIS)

PECOB's Editorial Staff

selects and brings together the thinking of distinguished scholars, experts, researchers and interested people on Central-Eastern Europe, the Balkan region and the Post-Soviet space, by collecting scientific and information documents.

Ms Luciana Moretti

You can contact her for proposals and submission of scientific contributions for the Scientific Library (under the blind peer review). You can contact her for information about Newsletter, general requests, conferences and events, academic calls, communications concerning cultural and eco-tourism.

luciana.moretti@unibo.it

Mr Andrea Gullotta

He contributes to Pecob's Scientific Library, particularly with the "Papers, essays and articles in Language, Literature and Culture on Central Eastern and Balkan Europe.

andrea.gullotta@unive.it

Mr Michele Tempera

Is responsible of the Business Guide Section. You can contact him for communications concerning the economic and business section and for the Informative Area issues.

michele.tempera@unibo.it

Ms Elvira Oliva

Is responsible for the Energy Policy Studies branch of the Portal. You can contact her for submitting requests and to obtain information about the Energy policy Study section.

elviraoliva@libero.it



www.pecob.eu

CALL FOR PAPERS!

**The Scientific Board of PECOB
announces an open call for papers
to be published with ISSN 2038-632X**

Call for papers!

Interested contributors may deal with any topic focusing on the political, economic, historical, social or cultural aspects of a specific country or region covered by PECOB.

Potential contributors must submit a short abstract (200-300 words) and the full text, which can be in English as well as in any other language from the countries covered by PECOB.

Upcoming deadlines for submitting proposals are:

**January 31st
June 30th
November 30th**

All texts must comply with PECOB Submission Guidelines (www.pecob.eu).

All proposals, texts and questions should be submitted to
Ms Luciana Moretti
luciana.moretti@unibo.it



Supported by the University of Bologna, the portal is developed by the Institute for East-Central Europe and the Balkans (IECOB) with the collaboration of the Italian Association of Slavists (AIS) and the 'Europe and the Balkans' International Network.

You are free:



to Share — to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:



Attribution — You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).



Noncommercial — You may not use this work for commercial purposes.



No Derivative Works — You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

With the understanding that:

Waiver — Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Public Domain — Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by the license.

Other Rights — In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:

- Your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exceptions and limitations;
- The author's moral rights;
- Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.

Notice — For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do this is with a link to this web page.