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Research Article

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The Other Side of Socialism: History and Cinematic Memory of Socialism

Nevena Daković*

The aim of this paper is to explore the cinematic history and memory of socialism and broadly of Yugoslavia throughout XXth century as narrativised and represented in the films of Mila Turajlić *Cinema Komunisto* (2010) and *The Other Side of Everything* (Druga strana svega, 2017). Accordingly the cinematic texts are understood as: 1) the texts of cultural memory that construct the remembrance of the past and history of Yugoslavia; 2) as cinematic *lieux de memoire* or field of tensions of memory and history, textual and metatextual layers, fiction and faction; 3) as texts that brilliantly perform the turn from “film about history” to being a “memory-making film” while keeping the two facets. The two case studies are contextualized within the previous tradition of Yugoslav cinema as well as within the larger group of archive films made in 2010s.

Keywords: visual memory, cinematic representation, history, Yugoslavia

Introduction

“History is memory seen through and criticized with the aid of documents of many kinds - written, aural, and visual. Memory is history seen through affect. (...) Historians bring their own memories to bear both on the choice of subjects they study and on the character judgments they make about human behaviour. Stories about the past that we remember are collages, complex and shifting mixtures of narratives, some of which arise from historical writing and history as visualized in a dizzying variety of films, plays, museums, and websites[...].”¹

November 22, 2017, Hague Tribunal 12a.m. “Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb military commander (...) was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity.”²

November 22, 2017, Amsterdam, IDFA, 7p.m. “*The Other Side of Everything* by Mila Turajlić won the IDFA Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary.”

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¹ Winter, Jay. 2010. *Introduction. The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity*, in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Tilmans, Karin \ Vree Frank van and Jay Winter. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 11-35, 12.

² Foster, Peter. 2018. [Ratko Mladic Sentenced to Life in Prison for Srebrenica Genocide, After he is Dragged From Court Over Outburst](#). *The Telegraph*, 22. November 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

The ironic coincidence of events marked the precious moment of coming to terms with both sides of the Yugoslav and Serbian past. The two coalesced into one almost complete, comprehensive and intense collaged narrative of opposing aspects and facets of (hi)story. On one side are brutal conflicts, war crimes and the authoritarian rule of Slobodan Milošević. It is the historical chronicle of the breakup of Yugoslavia presented in official legal and judicial terms. The other side - offered in the film of Mila Turajlić - is given as the memory narrative told about and from “the other side of everything.” It is the memory - also understood as the other side of history - of the fight for democracy and Yugoslavia; and, afterwards, against the fury of nationalism and raging wars that devastated SFRY. The narrative - of almost a century long story of Yugoslavia and Serbia - approached from opposite perspectives mirrors the destiny of a country that has always been and still is deeply divided; of a people unable to be united and live peacefully; of us and others coming to terms with the past through different *optiques*.

The Other Side of Everything, following the model set by festival favourite *Cinema Komunisto* (2010, Mila Turajlić), proves films to be an arena for confrontations of different images of the past which are eventually reconciled; which merge both sides into the one dense weaving of documentary cinematic narrative. Together with other films made in Serbia after October 5th, 2000 - from *Partizan Movie* (Partizanski film, 2009, dir. Igor Stoimenov) to *Yugoslavia, How Ideology Moved our Collective Body* (Jugoslavija ili kako je ideologija pokretala naše kolektivno telo, 2013, dir. Marta Popivoda)³ - they successfully negotiate between history and memory, different political stanzas, nostalgia and trauma in an attempt to give meaning to a turbulent and chaotic (socialist) past in the present. Paradoxically, the present time is in fact post time, in a sense that it comes after or follows historical turmoil and the remapping of the country and the region. The films recount the post-Yugoslav (after the breakup of SFRY), post-socialist (after the collapse of socialism) and post-national tales. The notion of post-national refers to the double, complex change when the identity of Yugoslavs - based upon brotherhood and unity in a multinational state - is replaced by the particular national identities (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes etc.) nestled within broader supranational identities such as European, Central European or Balkan. Thus, the stories “invariably generated by means of ‘medial externalization’ [...] broaden the temporal and spatial range of remembrance”⁴ that begins to include not only Yugoslav but also Serbian and European 20th century history.

The multiperspective and multimedia reading results in (hi)story trimmed with an (un)expected myriad of emotions; the one seen through the filters of (private, public, cultural) memory. Moreover, the decline and dissolution of

³ The innovative stories of the socialist past - mostly with the special place reserved for the lifelong president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito - are also offered in other media texts of post-socialist era - TV serials *Robna kuća* (2009-2010, dir. Igor Stoimenov), *SFRJ za početnike* (2011, dir. Radovan Kupres) or *Titova kuhinja* (2012, dir. Alek Conić); virtual museum (*Yugomuzej*, 1999-2007, Mrdjan Bajić); exhibitions (*Živeo život!*, 2013); (*Velika iluzija ili Tito i 24 miliona metara filmske trake*, 2014).

⁴ Erll, Astrid. 2008. *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Erll, Astrid \ Nunning, Ansgar and Sara B. Young. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 389-99, 389.

SFRY coincided with the “memory boom” in 1980s, characterised both by the intensive development of the new field of Memory Studies and by the proliferation of memory narratives. The violent passage from one epoch to other,⁵ and especially from socialism to post-socialism, left many voids to be filled in accordance with the needs of a contemporary moment or with the auteurs’ individual or generational poetics and visions. The gaps are closed in a multitude of ways, such as by posting official or revised (hi)stories, memory narratives, “mediated public history;”⁶ or by remembrance presented in cinematic or pop-cultural texts, all of which enable the past to circulate in both the present and the future or across and among generations. In this process, film images assert an almost tangible and persuasive past; redefine its meanings; reconstruct and reimagine it; reshape it as memory. Clarence Mondale emphasises the special link established between past and present in the process: “[e]very moment we remember we also interpret, reinterpret and change our past from the present moment.”⁷

The aim of this paper is to analyse the films of Mila Turajlić- contextualised within a larger body of related titles - understood as: 1) the texts of cultural memory that construct the remembrance of the past and history of Yugoslavia; 2) as cinematic *lieux de memoire* or field of tensions of memory and history, textual and metatextual layers, fiction and faction; 3) as texts that brilliantly perform the turn from “film about history” to being a “memory-making film” while keeping the two facets.⁸

The analysis is concerned with the film script understood as a filmic fact that, according to Cohen Sea, isolates “film as a localizable signifying discourse [...]”⁹ Here film comes into focus as an object of theory as a semiological fact that is distinguishable from the vaster social and historical terrain of cinematic phenomena.” The focus on the text - its structure, narrative mechanism, transtextual and intertextual references, emotional and affective work - implies analytical decontextualisation or significantly reduced research of the films as cinematographic facts. Cinematographic fact refers to the study of cinema as a social phenomenon through a range of elements “some of which intervene *before* production (economic and legislative infrastructure, studio organization, technological invention and innovation, biographies of creative personnel), others *after* the film (audience and critical response, ideological and cultural impact of the film, star mythology), and others *during* the film but *apart from*

⁵ The historical time line of Yugoslavia - throughout XXth century - encompasses passage from epoch of monarchy (1918-1944) to socialism (1945-1992) and then to post-socialism (1992-). The last epoch is marked by permanent transition without the end point. The political transformations are visible not only in the territorial remapping and shrinking but also in the changes of the name of the country - from Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to Kingdom of Yugoslavia than to Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963), than to Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro, 1992) and afterwards to Republic of Serbia (2006), and other ex-Yugoslav republics that in the meantime became independent states.

⁶ Tosh, John. 2010. *The Pursuit of History. Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. Fifth Edition. London: Pearson Education Limited, 12.

⁷ Mondale, Clarence. 1994. *Conserving a Problematic Past*, in *Conserving Culture. A New Discourse on Heritage*, edited by Hufford, Mary. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 15-23, 15.

⁸ Erll, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*.

⁹ Cohen-Seat, Gilbert. 1946. *Essai sur les principes d’une philosophie du cinéma*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

and *outside of it* (the architectural and cultural context of movie viewing, and so on).¹⁰

The material condition of production - that suggests films to be a larger ideological construct - are rather standard and uniform. The two films,¹¹ as well as other contemporary titles, are documentaries made with a modest budget, joint ventures of private film production companies, international film funds; with symbolic participation of local film funds and with the support of the local archives of Radio Television Serbia, Filmske Novosti, Avala film or the Yugoslav Film Archive. With the exception of *The Other Side of Everything*, they have not made into the cinema distribution, but were shown and praised at festivals. The success of *Cinema Komunisto* encouraged filmmakers to the films aimed at an elite, festivals and an international audience able to grasp the deeper meanings and theoretical premises. However, it also inspired them to make very personal films, film essays about own their imagining and understanding of the past; to make films conceived as cultural memory narratives. I would like to claim that the reconstructed past is imbued and mainly oriented towards emotions and affects, as well as it is less preoccupied with its political and ideological premises (with the possible exception of *Yugoslavia or How Ideology...*) or with the relations with historical truth.

As rich, emotional, personal and private insights into the past, the films raise to be open structures; open texts able to accommodate diverse interpretations and readings. The research of the variety of readings is pertinent to the methodology of “Grand Theories” when the rethinking of films is “framed within schemas which seek to describe or explain very broad features of society, history[...].”¹² To deploy the “big doctrine” approach means to use films as simple mechanical examples or exponents of political, ideological and other theories. The reading of the text is (ideologically and politically) instrumentalised and manipulated to prove already made conclusions and firmly taken stanzas. Consequentially choosing the text centred approach, I would not try to explore the ways the films work when reframed for political projects - from the nationalist, right-wing to subtler liberal democratic ones.

The thesis allows me to explore the films as the dominantly (and almost exclusively) realm of memory and memorialisation of the authors and directors of postgenerations;¹³ to map out the ways they (re)construct memory from the

¹⁰ Rodowick, David. 2017. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 17.

¹¹ *Cinema Komunisto* is produced by Intermedia Network, 3K Productions, Dribbling Pictures; *The Other Side of Everything* is made as coproduction of Serbia's Dribbling Pictures and France's Survivance.

¹² Bordwell, David. 1996. *Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory*, in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, edited by Bordwell, David and Noel Carroll. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 3-37, 3.

¹³ The term postgeneration (Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press) is taken in the simplest meaning. It refers to the generation living after and succeeding those who directly experienced and lived the past events. Nonetheless, the paper does not use the related basic term of postmemory (Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*) as it, essentially, denotes basically the trauma of the past. The memory in the analysed films is not limited to traumatic events but is also infused with nostalgia and interspersed with the recollection of the happy moments. Thus instead of as postmemory the paper explores the films as cultural memory.

facts and fiction of the era. I would like to argue that their (hi)stories are told with certain political and ideological detachment. The reconstruction of the era is read through emotional and affective lenses, in search for the (hi)story reflected in memory. In the words of Jay Winter taken as the motto of the paper “Memory is history seen through affect.”¹⁴

The films offer (cultural) memory perpetuated by the generational curiosity and rooted in the idea that the life in socialism was very exciting and interesting and not only subservient to political concerns.¹⁵ The project of the imagining and reconstructing of the past intertwines with the ongoing fascination with the archives of socialism and with the theory of memory. The two finally coalesce in diversely elaborated images.

This paper is primarily concerned with the cinematic narrative and discourse about the past history and memory; and mostly carefully keeps apart text and the context. Its subtitle, the other side of socialism, implies, in addition, history and memory are two sides of cinematic narratives of socialism. But also the two sides might be two temporal dimensions of past and present. The past (hi)stories “reflect the attitudes and needs, the uncertainties and fears of the present.”¹⁶ The affectionate cultural memory narratives venture into a rearticulating of the past aimed at providing new explanations for the turbulent present. The interstitial position between past and present reveals the films and their auteurs to be memory makers researching the beliefs, revolt or desire for the past as well as memory makers in cinematic history.

The film text centred approach is further underpinned by Astrid Erll’s¹⁷ claim that “the ‘cultural mind’ is in many ways a ‘medial mind.’”¹⁸ In other words, the cultural memory is always mediated and re-mediated. “It is the patterns derived from the media cultures we live in, especially (albeit often unintentionally) from fictions, that shape our idea of reality and our memories.”¹⁹ The cinema and films featuring both as the source of the patterns and as media shaping the memory exercise a strong memory making and memory marking effect, as already noted. According to Erll, the memory making function prevails as the films convert from being about history (of Yugoslavia and Serbia) into focussing on memory making (cultural, individual, public, media, generational memory). She delineates the process as media controlled and performed.

“All those advertisements, comments, discussions, and controversies constitute the collective contexts which channel a movie’s reception and potentially turn it into a medium of cultural memory. Moreover, all these expressions are circulated by means of media. Therefore we call these

¹⁴ Winter, *Introduction*, 12.

¹⁵ Conversation with Želimir Žilnik, Wiesbaden, 12. April 2013.

¹⁶ Greene, Naomi. 1999. *Landscapes of Loss: the National Past in Post War French Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 3.

¹⁷ Erll’s theory is used as the wide and universal basis for the research of the relations between media and memory and, as such, it does not oblige us to point out to, if any, specificity, regarding the memory of or in post-Yugoslav space.

¹⁸ Erll, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*, 396.

¹⁹ Erll, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*, 396.

contexts 'pluri-medial networks'. To sum up: While the potential of fictions to be turned into media of cultural memory is developed by certain strategies on intra-medial and inter-medial levels, those potentialities can only be turned into actualities within pluri-medial contexts. The 'memory-making film' as well as the 'memory-making novel' are made in and by the media networks surrounding them."²⁰

The analysis which follows outlines the *pluri*-medial networks that mediate cultural memory and those *in and by* the memory-making films are made. As made *a posteriori*, the analysis is part of the *pluri*-medial context that channels the reception (of the films) and the mediation (of cultural memory). However, it confirms the films - evoking and using other media in their recreation of the past - to be already mediated cultural memory and the *pluri*-medial network positioned *apriori*. The films work both as already given mediated cultural memory and as the *pluri*-medial context which assures the conversion into cultural memory narratives.

Cultural memory text and lieux de memoire

Ranciere's quote "The history of cinema is the history of the power to create history" highlights the interventions performed by cinema in writing the past. It also invites us to think about the fascinating role films and other media and images play in shaping history into cultural memory which is one of the memory "formats" (social, cultural, political) defined by Aleida Assmann.²¹

*"Political and cultural memory, on the other hand, are mediated and, in order to become a kind of memory, they both need to be re-embodied; both are founded on durable carriers of symbols and material representations. (...) political and cultural forms of memory are designed for trans-generational communication, involving not only libraries, museums, and monuments, but also providing various modes of education and repeated occasions for participation."*²²

The richness and the controversies of the cultural memory²³ are reinforced by its ability to provide an interplay of present and past as well as to include multiply mediated images, objects, stories, behaviours, and affects passed down among individuals; within the family, society and culture at large. Astrid Erll developed a list of cultural memory constituents:

"broad spectrum of phenomena as possible objects of [...] studies - ranging from individual acts of remembering in a social context to group memory to

²⁰ Erll, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*, 396-97.

²¹ Assmann, Aleida. 2010. *Re-framing Memory. Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past*, in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Tilmans, Karin \ Frank van Vree and Jay Winter. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 35-51, 40-44.

²² Assmann, *Re-framing Memory*, 41-42.

²³ Assmann, *Re-framing Memory*; Erll, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*; Kantsteiner, Wulf and Claudio Fogu. 2006. *Conclusion: The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History*, in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, edited by Claudio, Fogu \ Kantsteiner, Wulf and Richard Ned Lebow. Durham: Duke UP, 284-310; Halbwachs, Maurice. 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books.

*national memory with its 'invented traditions,' and finally to the host of transnational lieux de mémoire such as the Holocaust and 9/11.*²⁴

The hybrid text construed “of intertwined images and imagining of personal, collective, public pasts”²⁵ is recognised as the place of the crystallisation of the memory and history that richly resonates not only with the concept of cultural memory but also with Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire*. *Lieux de mémoire*²⁶ is defined as a “significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in kind, that has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of a given community, as a result of human will or work of time.”²⁷ Accordingly, films are cinematic *lieux de mémoire*, where the blanks of memory are completed by the visual narratives put in the place of missing or deleted surroundings (*milieus de mémoire*). The film text marks the semantic space spreading from the time of a historical event to the time of actual memories. Film as a time space media, even more so, becomes wider *lieux du passé* (places of the past) that encompass *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) and *lieux d’histoire* (places of history), arguing in another theoretical register that the narratives of past encompass both history and memory in a permanent transformation. *Lieu de mémoire*, therefore, metaphorically refers to the film as a mediated public history and cultural memory interlaced in a dialectical rational and emotional interplay of documentary, fiction, nostalgia and trauma.

The stories of the SFRY reloaded

The combination of fiction and documentary footage edited in a manner of Serbian cutting features in the wide range of films, from Kusturica’s *Underground* to contemporary docu-fiction. All titles critically explore Yugoslav history and memory in variety of genres and auteur’s premises.

One of the first films to investigate the myth of Yugoslavia and its leader - coincidentally the last one produced in former Yugoslavia - is 1992 *Tito i ja* (Tito and me) directed by Goran Marković. It ironically comments on the 1950s personality cult through an amalgam of fiction and documentary footage used in sequences depicting Zoran’s (Dimitrije Vojnov) dreams about Tito. The archive material performs a twofold function: it provides a framework for the nation’s present and past (hi)stories and it gives a particular hue to the world of (individual and collective) dreams and memories. In the documentary, shots of Tito’s travels around the world - especially in the exotic, third-world countries of Africa and Asia - the habitual omniscient God-like voiceover is replaced by the Latin-American arrangements of Yugoslav folk songs (*Lepe ti je Zagorje zeleno* from Tito’s birth region). Vivid and dynamic music *defamiliarising* the original footage suggests Yugo socialism as akin to a social masquerade tailored for the *plaisir* and *jouissance* of a political elite. It emphasizes the similarities between

²⁴ Erll, Astrid. 2008. *Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction*, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Erll, Astrid \ Nunning, Ansgar and Sara B. Young. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1-45, 2.

²⁵ Daković, Nevena. 2010. Cinematic Belgrade and the Unfinished Modernity. Paper presented at the NECS conference Urban Mediations, Istanbul, Turkey, June 24-27.

²⁶ Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations* 26, *Special Issue: Memory and Counter-memory*, 7-24.

²⁷ Greene, *Landscapes of Loss*, 7.

Tito and Latin American dictators as well as between unstable “banana republics” and new Balkan states analogously called “tomato republics.”

Only three years later, the documentary edited sequences of *Underground* would reveal the eroded myths, nevertheless, wrapped up in an ironic fairy tale reverberating both with nostalgia and melancholy. For many who faced the break-up of the country, wars, the economic crash of the 1990s and eventually NATO bombing, Tito’s rule came to be seen as a period of wealth, stability and happiness. This two-faced remembrance announces the inscription of history into myth and of memory into fairy tale, further reinforced by the film’s ambiguous ending. The documentary sequences bring in another, different reading of the past. The musical (leit)motif of the famous Nazi song *Lili Marleen* accompanies both the original footage of the 1941 German invasion of Yugoslavia and 1980 Tito’s funeral, opening a huge and new spectre of potential interpretations and historical revisionism²⁸ along the lines of the thriving nationalism and the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Similar interplay of different film materials is found in films made after 2000. *The Land of Love, Truth and Freedom (Zemlja istine ljubavi i slobode, 2000, dir. Milutin Petrović)* is set at the time of the NATO bombing. A film and TV editor (Boris Milivojević) sinks into neurosis and is sent to an asylum, temporarily situated in a claustrophobic underground shelter. “The film, cantered around the editor’s consequent experiences, has an elaborate, and highly metacinematic quadruple structure, comprising the main/frame film,” intertextual reference to earlier Yugoslav cinema, an imaginary film” unravelling in the hero’s imagination and aerial docu-shots of Belgrade as targeted from the NATO planes.”²⁹

Another film, *Beogradski fantom* (Belgrade’s Phantom, 2012, dir. Jovan Todorović), frames an urban legend with documentary shots of Tito’s visit to Cuba for the Summit of Non Aligned countries, turning “the joyride into the political rebellion.”³⁰ In an attempt to make a coherent narrative the film combines documentaries from the past with the contemporary material and reconstructed fictional parts.

Two films that followed the concept of *Cinema Komunisto*, Marta Popivoda’s *Yugoslavia or How ideology* and Andrej Aćin’s *Valter*, employ opposite poetics while working on the unstable territory of cultural memory, official history and

²⁸ Contrarily to the dominantly affective reading of history in the contemporary films, the older films - from Black Wave classics to Kusturica - work toward politically and ideological determined historical revisionism. The Serbian cutting, as the combination of the footage of diverse origin, shapes the distinctive and harsh social criticism (left wing polemic and deconstructive mode of the Black Wave) or the historical revisionism compliant with the contemporary political context and atmosphere (nationalist right wing to centre right political positions). The implied memory narrative is accordingly politically intoned. However as my claim is that in the new films prevails cultural memory as affectively filtered memory the historical overview of the editing concept does not include the research of the rational-ideological, political, social - critical, historical and ideological constructs.

²⁹ Daković, Nevena. 2004. *War in the Hall of Mirrors*, in *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other, 1945-2003*, edited by Hammond, Andrew. Aldershot: Ashgate, 199-213, 209.

³⁰ Sudar, Vlastimir. 2009. *Jovan Todorović: The Belgrade Phantom (Beogradski Fantom, 2009)*. *Kinokultura* (accessed: 29. January 2018).

personal interests in the past. Thus, the film's full title, *Valter. Myth. Legend. Hero*, charts the analytical *optiques* (myth, history, and popular culture) through which a multifaceted phenomenon is examined. It puts together the roughly sutured pieces of the puzzle that is Valter: a mysterious agent and dangerous witness whose assassination is organized by the new government which wants to eliminate him; the world renowned (from Balkan to China) pop cultural figure; and the epiphanic role of the actor Velimir Bata Živojinović (*Valter Defends Sarajevo/ Valter brani Sarajevo*, 1972, dir. Hajrudin Krvavac). Along the way, Aćin and the author of the script, Vuk Ršumović, fail to fulfil credo "[w]hen the legend becomes *fact*, print *the legend*" (*The Man who Shot Liberty Valance*, 1962, dir. John Ford). Eager to deconstruct the myth, they attempt to transcend a simple human story with a message for eternity - *via* hidden history to the reconstruction of the myth - but do not succeed in doing much at all.

At the other end of the spectrum to Aćin's awkward but affectionate toward-the-theme story stands the "experimental documentary" directed by Marta Popivoda. The film "by other means" targets the elite circle of fans and connoisseurs and „combines the theoretical concepts of social choreography and social drama, transposing them into film language."³¹ The (hi)story of Yugoslavia told in the slowly edited scenes of mass performances (the golden era of work actions: May Day parades, celebrations of the Youth Day; the decline and dissolution: '68 protests, student and civic demonstrations in the '90s, 5th October revolution) demonstrates how ideology was expressed in the public space. The chronologically structured tale follows the disappearance of the worn out utopia of communism and the naissance of the altered ideas of the European left. The emotional impact of the flow of images is strengthened by the trembling voice-over - impregnated with intimate confessions and memories - implied to be of the author herself. With the help of emotional and very private comments, the exclusive archival docu text languidly writes out a personal and generational life story that eventually is recognised as autofiction.

Cinema Komunisto for ever

*"You always dream of another cinema, one gathering like a summer storm, approaching majestically, and raining on your upturned face. Such a cinema would moisten your parched imagination and root your life in life itself. [...] In any case the cinemas you live with day to day will never do. It belongs to someone else, to a corporate nonentity. The mirage it tenders in its better moments only makes you dream further. And you dream not of some unimaginable holographic cinema, but of the past."*³²

Cinema Komunisto is an "intricate text dedicated to the golden age of Yugoslav cinema used as a metaphor for the history of former Yugoslavia its raise and

³¹ [Film Marte Popivoda na 63. Berlinalu / A film by Marta Popivoda will premiere at the 63rd Berlinale](#), 2013. (accessed: 30. January 2018).

³² Dudley, Andrew. 1995. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

fall under Tito's presidency."³³ The film is made of "more than 60 clips from various feature films, mixed with the bittersweet memories of the storytellers, with plenty of funny anecdotes and remarkable."³⁴ The film's theme is schismatically identified by international and regional audiences. The former sees it as the (hi)story of ex-Yugoslav cinema and mention Tito as the supreme *metteur-en-scene* of politics, history and life in the country.³⁵ Criticising the lack of the celebrated titles - as the chosen clips, *a tour force*, are not from the emblematic master pieces of the Yugoslav cinema but mainly are strong visual memories of the era gone by - Philip French notes:

*"This sad, but fascinating story is illustrated by newsreel material and numerous clips from the mostly indifferent films (including several grandiose epics featuring the likes of Yul Brynner, Richard Burton and Orson Welles that were made to aggrandise Tito himself). There's little here to equal the achievements of the Polish, Czech and Hungarian cinemas from the same time."*³⁶

Obviously, he misses the point that the film is multi-layered text of past - memory and history, narratives and discourses - presented as a "collected cultural output."³⁷; or that it dissects a "unique chapter in the fashioning of a culture,"³⁸ written over and above the history of society and cinema. For the ex-Yugoslav audience, the film is primarily about history of SFRY seen in the mediated images.³⁹

I would like to propose another option - of reading and analysing the film as an example of historiographic metafiction, as developed by Linda Hačion.⁴⁰ Historiographic aspect refers primarily to the innovative rewriting of the Yugoslav past; to coming to terms with the past - every day private and public life - seen through the cinematic history and cultural memory filters. The metafictional - or metacinematic in this case - perspective is created through self-referential, narcissistic discourse about cinema and popular culture. The model of "refractive cinema"⁴¹ - a sort of ready-made art work - constantly engaged in self-examination and re-thinking, assures a key shift in the view of the Yugoslav past. Furthermore, just like *lieux de memoire* and cultural memory, the historiographic metafiction connects past and present while Linda Hutchion points to two times "of the past and of the dialogue with it in the light of the present."⁴² Storytelling of *Cinema Komunisto*, thus elegantly pierces through layers of time, linking the epochs - from the national liberation war

³³ Cinema Komunisto.

³⁴ Cinema Komunisto.

³⁵ See the reviews in *Screen Comment*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Guardian*, *Studio Cine Live*, *Le Monde*, *Time Out*, available [here](#).

³⁶ French, Phillip. 2012. Cinema Komunisto - Review. *Guardian*, 25. November 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

³⁷ Jenkins, David. 2012. *Cinema Komunisto Review*. *Little White Lies, Truth and Movies*, 23. November 2012 (accessed: 03. January 2018).

³⁸ McGill, Hannah. 2012. *Cinema Komunisto*. *List Film*, 03. January 2018 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

³⁹ *Screen International*, *Variety*, *Nacional*, *E novine*, *Politika*, *Teledrama*, *Jutarnji list* available [here](#).

⁴⁰ Hačion, Linda. 1996. *Poetika postmodernizma*. Novi Sad: Biblioteka Svetovi.

⁴¹ Corrigan, Timothy. 2011. *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴² Hačion, *Poetika postmodernizma*, 43.

and revolution, golden sixties and seventies to the nineties and the time post NATO bombing. The comprehensive re-telling of the Yugoslav “episode” links the two time dimensions (past and present) with the future which is predicted to be the repetition of the past. George Santayana writes that those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it,⁴³ describing in a nutshell the destiny of Serbia and its people. The description points out that they have never managed to come to terms with the past, learn from it and make it a consonant and not dissonant memory.⁴⁴

Saving the past at a time when “there is little left of it,”⁴⁵ *Cinema Komunisto*, quite literally brings together various memory sites - historical, as well as those of cinematic or other forms of institutionalized memory - while the text as a whole becomes a site of constructed memory narrative. Watching the film, the spectator actually walks along and through a line of cinematic (the *Avala film* production company, film sets, hotel *Metropol*) and real *lieux de mémoire* (*House of Flowers* - *Kuća cveća*, and a war monument dedicated to the 1943 Battle of Neretva⁴⁶) while the discovery of these meeting points with past becomes a revelatory experience. “By its persistence in the present, the landscape gives visible testimony to what cannot be represented in the voice,” argues Libby Saxton. In turn, voice excavates a past entombed in the landscape and hidden from the sight.⁴⁷ The relationship between the characters talking in the foreground and the scenery in the background conjures a notion of history and memory as activation and selection from the bank of data stored in the landscape. It is a reach analogous to the concept of the choice from the past that “is necessarily a matter of continuous negotiations among all interested parties,”⁴⁸ placed across and between generations of filmmakers and spectators.

The entangled themes are chronologically listed in segments entitled: *Introduction, New Yugoslavia, IB/The Tarzan Triumphs, Leka, Military Museum, Sit and Wait, Nema problema!, Ruins, Chasing Films, Brioni Connection, Neretva, Being Tito, Tito's Triumph, Last film/Epilogue: taking the pictures of the wall*. The cinematic *fil rouge* for all of these, is of course, Tito, as a film aficionado and clever politician who understands that the cinema is the most important sort of social spectacle as well as the proof of the (illusional or real) political power and importance of SFRY in the world. Even more important and omnipresent is Tito's projectionist Leka Konstantinović who discreetly, but nonetheless smoothly and emotionally, orchestrates the overall

⁴³ In fact the correct quote is “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” in Santayana, George. 1905. *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common*. New York: Scribner's, 284.

⁴⁴ In a sense, the films develop also as metamemory fiction, exploring various theories of Memory Studies that are, in return, used in this analysis.

⁴⁵ Nora, *Between Memory and History*.

⁴⁶ On the place of great battle, Turajlić explains: “A special moment was the shoot on the Neretva river in Bosnia, where we found ourselves in the middle of a pilgrimage of both veterans from the actual historical battle and extras from the recreation of the battle on film. In a kind of bizarre double world, reality was turned into fiction, and fiction back into reality,” in *Cinema Komunisto*.

⁴⁷ Saxton, Libby. 2008. *Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust*. London & New York: Wallflower Press, 32.

⁴⁸ Mondale, Clarence. 1994. *Conserving a Problematic Past*, in *Conserving Culture. A New Discourse on Heritage*, edited by Hufford, Mary. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 15-23, 15.

narration. He is the almighty eyewitness of diverse – public and private – moments of Tito's cinephilia; and the one able to bring the cinematic (hi)story to an end. One of the most poignant scenes of the film is Leka holding the tin boxes filled with the film reels - sitting by the piano in the middle of Tito's bombed residence in Belgrade - is an epitaph to time, space and stories of real and celluloid Yugoslavia.

The other figure successfully cutting through epochs and stitching the worlds together is one of Tito's emblematic fiction *doppelgangers*, the actor Velimir Bata Živojinović. In the scenes at the Military Museum on Kalemegdan, Bata appears both as himself and as the hero of *red westerns*, evoking a number of real partisan (super)heroes led by Tito. He is the perfect symbolic image of the great leader of the real revolution, transferred onto the silver screen. The story he tells - a mixture of facts and memories (dis)placed between reality and film - enables him to effortlessly move between realms of history and public/private/cultural memory.

The conversion of history into versatile memory narratives by virtue of the simple fact of its being seen through camera lenses is supported, as already noted, by the rich metacinematic layer of the film text. In the clip from the film *Tri karte za Holivud* (Three Tickets to Hollywood, 1993, dir. Božidar Nikolić) - at the beginning of *Cinema Komunisto* - we see the characters carrying Tito's bust and placing it on the pedestal and posing for the photographer, all through the objectivity of the apparatus with the slogan *Tito-Partija* (Tito-The Communist Party) arched over them. The gaze of the cinematic apparatus focuses and reverses the image from the 1950s, while the 2010 film thematic outline *Tito-Partija-Film* (Tito-The Communist Party-Cinema) emerges with a soft focus. The final image instantaneously becomes a concrete and metaphorical realization of Bergson's memory terms: focusing, *memoir-image* or *image-souvenir* as the embodiment of true and pure memory.⁴⁹

Moreover, being an object of the view of the camera, the scenes from old films gain new meanings. After the initial sequence of edited shots from the old films, the camera directly looks into the light of the projector, reveals the spectator (Ivica Vidović) beside it and subsequently follows the direction of his gaze to an animated map showing the break-up of Yugoslavia. An "obituary shot," boasting dates of birth and death is followed by a quote from the film *The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Uloga moje porodice u svetskoj revoluciji, 1971, dir. Bahrudin Čengić) - of a group of people holding a photo of a meeting at Yalta where the geopolitical map of the new Europe was drawn up. The image of the "film gang" gathered around the photo within the frame suggests that the (hi)story of the country born at this meeting, would be told through the stories of the people from the image within the image.

As the supreme narrator, the system of film controls the cognitivity of memory and history shown in different footage as well as emotionalism and the affectivity of the personal remembrance. It regulates the conversion from being a film about history into a memory-making one, as well as playing

⁴⁹ Bergson, Henri. 2012. *Matiere et memoire*. Paris: Flammarion, coll.GF.

interchangeable roles of documentary and fiction footage that eventually coalesce into a dominant archival-documentary structure. Divested and ripped off from its original context, the footage acquires different and inverted roles - fiction turns into documentary, documentary footage into fiction. The fiction of popular culture becomes another kind of document of the past, just as set of signifiers is emptied of references to the (f)actual past to be filled with those of docu-fiction. The narration develops by neatly suturing visual materials with or without audio, working either as commentary or an illustration. Thus, the images of fiction are accompanied by the (audio) commentary of the invisible witness or participant, the one whom they "illustrate." Scenes from Fadil Hadžić's 1964 film *Službeni položaj* (Official Position,) cover the interview with Gile Đurić about his fall from power; *Prekobrajna* (The Overnumbered One, 1962, dir. Branko Bauer) illustrates the remembrance of youth work actions. Conversely, the seams and frictions of various footage and interviews eliminate the expected voice-over, assuring compact narrative and adequate narration. The juxtaposed editing of the docu shots of the closing of the last Festival in Pula and scenes from feature fiction film *Little Soldiers* (Mali vojnici, 1967, dir. Bahrudin Čengić), showing the end of the hunt for the little intruder with the gas mask under the blazing sun, stands as a powerful and outstanding prediction of the devastation of the war about to come.

Probably the most obvious metacinematic and refractive moments are the scenes when the film within the film becomes the object of the gaze of multiple audiences. The characters, as an intradiegetic audience, are looking at the screen or are peeking around the corner in the darkness of the cinema while we, as an extradiegetic audience, identify with them - logically watching both *Cinema Komunisto* and all the films within it. In the scene half way through the *Cinema Komunisto*, taken from the film *Tople godine* (Feverish Years, 1966, dir. Dragoljub Lazić), the girl (Ana Matić) asks the projectionist (Bekim Fehmiu) *who owns the cinema?* He replies that it belongs to the people and she looks through the opening for projector into the people. There she sees the images of the mass performance for Tito's birthday and of Tito and Jovanka who carefully survey it. In the position of the audience of the event in the film within the film they might be identified as a secondary intradiegetic audience. However, the editing cut make them seem as if they are also looking - from the sheltered and superior position on the screen - at all of us in reality. The superimposed meanings of the attentive looks in all directions become the meta-image of the *closely watched* past of socialism; of history and memory liberated and thriving only after Tito's death and the crises that then escalated into the dissolution of the country.

The whole era is seen either with nostalgia for the glorious days and happier lives, or as a locus of trauma or revolt. The cinematic narrativisation of the past of Yugoslavia thus often slips from the mists of nostalgia into the research of trauma. Kantsteiner explains that traumatic or catastrophic events have an increasingly central place in the collective memory since the 1980s whilst "the legacy of relatively benign events is only rarely considered in contemporary

studies of collective memory.”⁵⁰ The sequence of traumatic events - from Tito’s death to the civil wars - provides a privileged vantage point for the research and reconsideration of the Yugoslav past in a double attempt “to establish the historical record of the events ‘8’(…) and the desire to facilitate collective remembrance and mourning.”⁵¹ The historical record works toward trauma while the impulse to facilitate memory and soften regrets relates it to nostalgia buckling the emotional circle of the narrative.

Pair of binaries trauma/nostalgia is also embodied in the film’s Janus-faced attitude toward Yugoslavian socialism as a mixture of the totalitarian paradigm and various nostalgias. The cinematic text plays Yugonostalgia,⁵² Titostalgia,⁵³ and normalostalgia which Teofil Pančić defines as the emotional response to the Yugoslav past in a form of desire to go back to a “normal life.”⁵⁴ They are all nurtured by the feeling of irrecoverable loss - of SFRY, its cinema, way of life - and constant longing for return into the past even through ephemeral cinematic images. On the other hand, the film manages the opposite: to act out the trauma or to work through it.⁵⁵ Acting-out is understood as being “related to repetition, and even the repetition-compulsion” or “a tendency to relive the past” - without any distance. It refers to the personal, collective or even social revisiting of the site - which is not only a physical place but as in this case film text, museum etc. - of trauma. Nonetheless, ultimately it implies the impossibility of coming to terms with the trauma or the particular moment of the past. Although a successful attempt of coming to terms with the past, *Cinema Komunisto* likewise contains the traumatic spots that are not resolved on any of the levels. Such a moment is the end of the film - the scene at the arena in Pula and the fireworks over it suggesting that the trauma of the recent past is perpetually acted out. The other kind of relationship to history, proposed by La Capra, is “working through.” It involves a certain distance from trauma which allows for the possibility of healing, acceptance and political progress. That certainly much-needed distance is introduced by the films within the film or the work of *Cinema Komunisto* as a cultural memory narrative.

The other side of everything

The Other side of everything is founded upon a spatial metaphor of the history of Yugoslavia and Serbia - upon an apartment shared by different families throughout the XXth century.⁵⁶ In the revolutionary frenzy of 1945, “like many

⁵⁰ Cited in Lorenz, Chris. 2010. *Unstuck in Time. or: the Sudden Presence of the Past*, in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Tilmans, Karin \ Frank van Vree and Jay Winter. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 67-102, 69.

⁵¹ It is persuasively argued by the notion of traumatic place “with many meanings, as the sense of historicization comes to its edge,” in Lorenz, *Unstuck in Time*.

⁵² Jovanović, Nebojša. 2012. *Bosnian Cinema in the Socialist Yugoslavia and the Anti-Yugoslav Backlash*. *Kinokultura Special issue 14* (accessed: 29. January 2018).

⁵³ Velikonja, Mitja. 2010. *Titostalgija*. Beograd: biblioteka XX vek.

⁵⁴ Pančić, Teofil. 2004. *Knjiga smeha i pamćenja*. *Vreme*, 27. May 2004 (accessed. 29. January 2018).

⁵⁵ LaCapra, Dominick. 2000. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁵⁶ The theme of the apartment metaphorically and literary divided along many lines defines the novels of Svetlana Velmar, Janković (Velmar-Janković, Svetlana. 1990. *Lagum*. Beograd: BIGZ) or Slobodan Selenić (Selenić, Slobodan. 1980. *Prijatelji*. Beograd: BIGZ).

large apartments, under communism, the home” of Mila Turajlić was divided “to accommodate multiple families. A double doorway in her living room has remained locked ever since.”⁵⁷ For Mila’s mother (Srbijanka Turajlić), the apartment almost ceased to exist as a whole, while the family stoically accepted the violation of their privacy and property as something inevitable that was bound to happen. It became the amputated space but not the amputated or forgotten (hi)story. Mila begins to research the mystery of what is on the “other side” of the door; of everything opposed to her world and the worlds of her family and friends. On one side was “an anti-Communist, pro-Democratic, pro-Yugoslavia household” under the surveillance of Secret Police where friends had to ring three times as UDBA (Uprava Državne Bezbednosti) was ringing only once.⁵⁸ In the other smaller households were those obedient and respectful to all the regimes - from the times of Communism to Milošević’s era or to the consolidation of centre-right populism that followed.

The door thus provides a view of a remarkable family history and an insight into the violent and complicated history of Yugoslavia, while both amalgamate into a “political ghost story” as pointed in the film’s tagline. The narrator and the guide through the labyrinths of history, projected onto the topography of the apartment, is charismatic prof. Srbijanka Turajlić, uncompromised political activist and public voice of opposition “to multiple regimes.”⁵⁹ She generously shares with her daughters - and with the audience who watches the film - the mixture of nostalgia, sadness, revolt and desperation - her opinions and comments about life, politics, ethics of memory and the concept of collective guilt. Above all, she courageously asks the difficult question about moral responsibility of every generation to fight for own future. The latter issue introduces another split in the film - the one between the generations who live in the apartment. Mother is the voice of the politically engaged elders, fearless and critically outspoken about everything including themselves. The children are apparently apolitical, reluctant and hesitant. In the broader context, the reactions to Srbijanka’s political commitment are, as usually in Serbia, opposed and divided. She is admired and reviled but the film undoubtedly honours her “legacy of activism and brings her spirit of honour and responsibility to a new generation and a wider audience.”⁶⁰

The much awaited second film of Mila Turajlić is seen in continuity, in opposition and complementing her *Cinema Komunisto*. Put together, the two titles map out continuous time line of history of Yugoslavia and Serbia from 1920s to today - *The Other Side of Everything* being both the prequel and the sequel to *Cinema Komunisto*. The new film briefly tackles the Unification (1918) and the pre-WW2 history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. *Cinema Komunisto* continues with the chronicle of II Yugoslavia only to end in 1991 with the cancelled Film Festival in Pula followed by the *Epilogue* that drafts the (hi)story until 1999. The 2017 film picks up from the 1992 film and portrays the other side of the turbulent history at the turn of millennium. For

⁵⁷ Thom Powers. 2017. *The Other Side of Everything*. *Tiff*, 07. September 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

⁵⁸ Simon, Aliss. 2017. *Film Review: ‘The Other Side of Everything’*. *Variety*, 22. September 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

⁵⁹ Powers, *The Other Side of Everything*.

⁶⁰ Simon, *Film Review*.

the people around the world, Serbia in the 1990s was synonymous with the unconditional support and adoration of Milošević and his government. *The Other Side of Everything*, conversely, recounts the story of the “other Serbia” and its political revolt and resistance - civil activism, anti-war and democratic protests. It also tells a tale about what ordinary people - on the other side of those in power – endured during the darkness of the 1990s (hyperinflation, empty shelves in the supermarkets, shortages of electricity etc.). The historical resume ends October 5th, 2000, while the film continues to rethink the “last revolution in Europe” and its aftermath. However, it almost completely refrains from an analysis of the actual regime. Prof. Turajlić notes that the ideas of the revolution are rarely put in practice afterwards; that the dream never turns into reality. Rather than fulfilling an impossible dream, it is more important to have at least one dream throughout your life.

Both films manage to connect past and present on rational and irrational, cerebral and emotional, public and private levels; as well as to make us learn history through a powerful memory narrative. Seen from the *optique* of our time, the past becomes an elusive superimposition of personal and collective memories that reach across generations. *Cinema Komunisto* addresses several generations of those born but also of those who died in SFRY; those who lived through the golden era of the country and its decay; or those who only - like the author of the film - just brushed against the years of its breakup. In *the Other Side of Everything*, the characters are from different historical eras and countries (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, SFRY, Republic of Serbia); they belong to several generations of one family who come together in this re-presentation of history. The prevalence of memory and archives as the stuff the films are made of and their generational span allow “history to be more appropriately defined as a particular type of cultural memory.”⁶¹

Conversely to *Cinema Komunisto* which narrated the history of Yugoslavia as seen through its cinema and “cinematic illusion it created”⁶² *The Other Side of Everything* is tucked in the family apartment. The family space, historical time and film narration are not dominated by the figure of historical proportions such as Tito but rather by fascinating yet ordinary woman, wife and mother. Hitherto, “the only revolutionary aspect here lies in the personality of Srbijanka herself: flinty, questioning, confrontational, unapologetic, a voice from yesterday which inspiringly refuses to be silenced.”⁶³

On *the other side* of the multi-layered set of *lieux de mémoire* in *Cinema Komunisto* we find one and only, central and undisputable *lieu de mémoire* - the apartment in the building that once upon a time was family villa in the centre of Belgrade. The film is discovered to be site specific (hi)story as the whole of Yugoslav history and Serbian nation and state building are refracted

⁶¹ Kantsteiner and Fogu, *Conclusion*, 288; *Cinema Komunisto* and *The Other Side* explore the trauma of the revolution which is the twofold break-up: in society and between history and memory. The two latter are reunited in cinematic cultural memory text arguing the subordination of history under the broader notion of cultural memory.

⁶² *Cinema Komunisto*.

⁶³ Young, Neil. 2017. *The Other Side of Everything* ('Druga strana svega'): Film Review | IDFA 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

in the events and discussions going on in the home. The metaphor of the family's apartment that stands for the country and its people is sustained by the rhythmically inserted shots of the exterior of the house in four seasons - metonymical historical eras. The lovely edifice is seen against the gathering of stormy clouds; in the winter idyll or with wide-open windows longing for a breath of fresh air in the summer heat. *Lieu de mémoire* limits and defines the range of *pov*. The outer world is seen through the windows of the apartment or it is flooding from the screen of a TV - a different kind of window to the world. The interior of the building is visible through the spy holes and key holes of the doors of the apartment, as the camera rarely leaves the building.

The Other Side works as a discreet combination of fiction and faction. The documentary footage is there to initiate the narration about the past as a personal memory narrative that hardly becomes fiction as in the previous film. The expected voiceover comments are successfully replaced by the intimate conversation between mother and daughter and more importantly by the permanent dialogue between Srbijanka from the present time and Srbijanka from the past. Srbijanka looks at the old VHS tapes, watches TV and vividly comments, emotionally relives and criticises what she sees. At one point, she is truly amazed by her own speech delivered sometime in the 1990s.

Mila Turajlić skilfully experiments with diverse yet complementary modes of narration of the past which haunt the present. The history of society is compressed in the history of the *Avala film* production company (*Cinema Komunisto*) as well as in the story of one family and its home (*The Other Side of Everything*). The ghosts (political, historical and other) of the past are seen on a silver screen, photos or even in the signatures on the documents from the family archive. *The Other side* - differently to the big spectacular narration of *Cinema Komunisto* - opts for a subjective family memoir inspired by "classic generation-spanning novels like John Galsworthy's *The Forsyth Saga* and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*."⁶⁴ It offers (a)typical profoundly personal *cinéma vérité* focused on Srbijanka Turajlić as its heart and core. From there it grows to include the history of the family, Belgrade and a number of states we lived in.

The cinematic encounters of past and present underline the circular model of time. *Cinema Komunisto* unravels in a linear way and provides a sense of closure of (hi)story. We simply emotionally look back on the past left behind. The end of *The Other Side* hints that the time of the divisions lasts forever; that we have entered into a new circle of doomed mythical time of national rifts, dissonances, conflicts and traumas.⁶⁵ The concept of circular time underpins the chaotic temporality of the narrated events. Instead of the strict chronology of the first film, *The Other Side* offers a random time line construed by the associative linking of personal memories. The comprehension of the

⁶⁴ Macnab, Geoffrey. 2017. *Beyond the Locked Door: The Other Side of Everything*. *IDF*, 18. November 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

⁶⁵ The circle of time "punctuated" by the rhythmical explosions of the Balkan powder keg permits Žižek's reversal of time - "perversely paradoxical" travels and travails enjoined upon those who have to dream the past in order to remember the future," in Elsaesser, Thomas and Warren Buckland. 2002. *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 248.

hectic moves back and forth in national history for the foreign audience is facilitated in two ways. The author punctuates the narrative with the most emblematic moments of the recent history - the signing of the Dayton agreement, the rally on Kosovo in 1989, the NATO bombing of Belgrade - which figure even in the European's patchy knowledge of Serbian history. Furthermore, the immersive affectionate atmosphere sustained by Jonathan Morali's great score and Srbijanka's rhetoric skills and infectious storytelling make the audience intuitively fill the gaps and affectively recreate the chronology of the events.

Conclusion |

“Temporal secretions very often combines memories and fantasies with material from films and other media sources.”⁶⁶

The case studies analysed so far demonstrate that the role played by cinema in the creation of cultural memory and the reconstruction of the national past is versatile and complex. On one hand, the films recreate national history; on the other they write out cultural memory as a combination of the ready-made elements previously codified through popular culture. In between the two, they languidly switch between the processes. Although the cultural memory is essentially ahistorical, even anti-historical, the films succeed to write out parallel, alternative, unofficial or mythical versions of history. “History with a capital H [is] fabricated by historians,”⁶⁷ while the other forms belong to other domains and authors. To borrow the powerful metaphor of Naomi Greene, cinema helps us fill the “landscapes of loss” as well as recreate lost landscapes of history that appear as *lieux de memoire*.⁶⁸

The relation between two facets of the past, history and memory, is often seen as oppositional,⁶⁹ abusive⁷⁰ or denigrating for memory. Memory is rarely given the upper place as the one “we should turn (to) in order to reveal ‘what really happened.’”⁷¹ But Mila Turajlić explains her resistance towards the concept of only one truth (of what really happened) that is universally accepted. “I hesitate in front of any pretention to the truth. What really exists is some kind of poetic truth; or our attempt to stay faithful to ourselves, our emotions; to the

⁶⁶ Burgin, Victor. 2004. *The Remembered Film*. London: Reaktion Book, 15.

⁶⁷ Dudley, *Mists of Regret*, 294.

⁶⁸ Greene *Landscapes of Loss*.

⁶⁹ Halbwachs, Maurice. 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books; Nora, *Between Memory and History*.

⁷⁰ Lowenthal, David. 1998. *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ricoeur, Paul. 2009. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Hall, Stuart. 2005. *Whose Heritage? Un-settling ‘the Heritage,’ Re-imagining the Post-nation*, in *The Politics of Heritage: the Legacies of ‘Race’*, edited by Littler, Jo and Roshi Naidoo. London: Routledge, 23-35; Assmann, Jan. 2006. *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁷¹ Hodgkin, Katharine and Susannah Radstone. 2003. *Introduction: Contested Pasts*, in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, edited by Hodgkin, Katherin and Susannah Radstone. London: Routledge, 12-24, 12.

emotions caused by the known events revived in memory.”⁷² She confirms in words and films that memory has to triumph over history, even more in the times when history comes to an end.⁷³ The films as cultural memory sustain the triumph of memory and bypass the danger of being (mis)taken for “reality” or “truth” of history.

Congruent with the above premise is the abstinence from direct involvement with the reconfiguring imposed by the present-day political establishment. Answering the question who locked and closed the door in the apartment, Mila Turajlić points to the wheel of history understood in a Shakespearean way as persistent hegemony and merciless force who in various guises defines our lives.⁷⁴

Connecting different layers of time into one specific and historically relevant place, as an important articulation of memory, the films are addressing crucial episodes of the past and uncovering sediments of meanings and emotions. The two films - and the others mentioned in the text - are a brave attempt to grasp dispersed elements of innovatively told history; to organize these into one exciting memory narrative that sheds light on nostalgic and traumatic episodes. The mosaic structure argues their controversial and intriguing nature of the medium of cultural memory.

“Their memory-making effect lies not in the unity, coherence, and ideological unambiguousness of the images they convey, but instead in the fact that they serve as cues for the discussion of those images, thus centering a memory culture on certain medial representations and sets of questions connected with them.”⁷⁵

Analysing medial representations and being part of *pluri*-medial networks, the paper makes a paradoxical move delineating the system of concentric circles with the film texts placed between the outer and inner circle. Thus, within the films, in the innermost circle is the *pluri*-medial network by which the films become memory-making ones. It is a network made of cited films that create a polysemic and ambiguous text and offer a system of cues for a variously contextualised discussion. The textual patchwork also stands for the recursive or refractive *pluri*-medial context made *apriori*. The outer circle is the one *in* which the memory-making films come into being and this analysis is part of it. It is identified as the *aposteriori* made *pluri*-medial context.

The analysis offers the conclusion in the beginning and vice versa: in the conclusion, it returns to the beginning, encircling the territory of memory-making films. Likewise, the collage structure of the films asserts that history be revived and retold - in all richness and diversity - mainly as cultural memory that lasts throughout the epochs, drawing its own circular paths. *Avala film* and the apartment in Birčaninova 20a - with their until recently

⁷² SEE. 2017. Mila Turajlić: Bez pretenzija na istine. *Seccult*, 28. November 2017 (accessed: 29. January 2018).

⁷³ The end of history is confirmed in the traumatic places “with many meanings, as the sense of historization comes to its edge,” in Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 287.

⁷⁴ Kott, Ian. 1974. *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. New York: W.W. Norton.

⁷⁵ Erlil, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality*, 396.

undisclosed histories - are saved from oblivion. They do not become “amputated geography” as long as the all-encompassing cinematic (hi)stories made in a genuinely alluring way keep their cultural memory for the post Yugoslav, post-socialist and eventually post-national times.

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