

Time networks: history and synchronicity in contemporary Croatian cinema

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The paper demonstrates the prominence of network narratives (films with several autonomous storylines, globally popular since the mid-1990s) in post-Yugoslav, particularly Croatian, cinema, with examples such as *Metastases* (2009), *The Reaper* (2014), *You Carry Me* (2015), *The Constitution* (2016), *The Trampoline* (2017), etc. Unlike network narratives elsewhere, these films often thematize history, with parallel stories typically set during World War II and the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. This has been said to suggest as a circular, synchronic vision of history, a “transhistorical dance macabre” as a leitmotif of Balkan cinema. The films *Witnesses* (2003) and *The High Sun* (2015), together with a group of multi-narrative plays, i.e. *The Last Link* (1994), *3 Winters* (2014) and *Men of Wax* (2016), are analysed as vehicles of counter-memory to such self-Balkanizing representations.

KEYWORDS: network narratives, Croatian film, Balkan cinema, synchronicity, war, cultural memory

Network narrative is a type of storytelling in contemporary cinema that combines several storylines, mutually independent or only tangentially linked. Since its early manifestations in the 1990s, it has evolved into “the dominant principle of off-beat storytelling” in Hollywood and elsewhere.[1] Recent film theory has also discussed these films within the taxonomies of *multiprotagonist films* (Tröhler), *complex narratives* (Staiger, Simons, etc.), *modular narratives* (Cameron), *puzzle films* (Buckland), *post-classical narration* (Thanouli), etc. However, unlike the broader category of e.g. multiprotagonist film,[2] network narratives only became popular in the mid-1990s, with a group of pioneering titles like *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Chungking Express* (*Chung Hing sam lam*, 1994), *Exotica* (1994) and especially Robert Altman’s *Short Cuts* (1993). The *Altmanesque* form soon developed a set of conventions: the autonomous storylines typically share the spatio-temporal frame (of e.g. a city) and are united by a common theme, as well as set of integrative devices, such as chance encounters (particularly car crashes), circulating objects (the gun in *Babel* [2006]), montage sequences underlining the simultaneity of stories, etc.

As Bordwells “working filmography” of some two hundred examples at the end of his chapter on network narrative films demon-

[1] D. Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*, Berkeley 2006, p. 191.

[2] *Multiprotagonist films* also include the so called *ensemble-films*, with groups of protagonists (bands,

families etc.) sharing a common causal project or one single plotline, a type of film frequently found throughout film history.

strates,[3] “this increasingly common (maybe too common) storytelling strategy”[4] became equally popular in American and other national cinemas across the world. Further research has proved its relevance for e.g. contemporary French cinema[5] and Swedish and Scandinavian cinemas (e.g. Tomić 2011, 2012 and 2016), where it was unanimously related to the wider international trend.

What this paper claims is that this form has also become significant in post-Yugoslav, particularly Croatian cinema, since the 1990s which is the focus here, with a certain delay compared to international wave of network narratives. The prominence of the form can be measured by number of the films as well as their popularity and critical acclaim: e.g. four out of seven best Croatian films in the last 25 years, as selected collectively by all major national film associations for the occasion of the Pula film festival in 2016, are multiprotagonist films or network narratives. Besides *Metastases* (*Metastaze*, 2009, Branko Schmidt), the domestic film that sold most tickets in Croatian cinemas from 2007 to 2010,[6] the list includes such landmarks of contemporary cinema and laureates of international film festivals as *The High Sun* (*Zvizdan*, 2015, Dalibor Matanić) and *The Blacks* (*Crnci*, 2009, Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić) and the lesser known *The Reaper* (*Kosac*, 2014, Zvonimir Jurić). Other examples could be added to this working network narrative list: *The Constitution* (*Ustav Republike Hrvatske*, 2016, Rajko Grlić), with four stories united by the chronotope of a Zagreb residential building, or a hotel in the case of a Croatian minority co-production *Room 304* (*Værelse 304*, 2011, Birgitte Staermose), a formulaic version of network narrative filmed in Zagreb with the help of Croatian cast and crew.[7] The capital of Zagreb is, in other words, a common setting for this millennial form of city-film,[8] in a host other popular titles such as *You Carry Me* (*Ti mene nosiš*, 2015, Ivona Juka). While the *Metastases* gave voice(s) to the city’s impoverished outskirts (and were popularly called *Croatian Trainspotting*), *You Carry Me* offered another kind of marginalized perspective, featuring three stories with female protagonists, a well-received twist to the form soon attempted by another female centred triptych, *The Trampoline* (*Trampolin*, 2017, Katarina Zrinka Matijević). Occasionally the network stretches to more or less explicitly cover the topic of “slices of life“ from contemporary Croatia in, for example, *Here* (*Tu*, 2003, Zrinko Ogresta), or to broaden

[3] The list is from his book *Poetics of Cinema* (D. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, New York-London 2008, pp. 245–250) and he continued to expand it on his blog <<http://www.davidbordwell.net/>>.

[4] D. Bordwell, *Lessons from Babel*, „David Bordwell’s website on Cinema“ 2006, <<http://www.davidbordwell.net/>> [accessed on: 10.12.2017].

[5] M. Azcona, *The Multi-Protagonist Film*, Chichester-West Sussex, p. 18.

[6] J. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film. Stil i ideologija*, Zagreb 2011, p. 250.

[7] The chronotope of hotel is a common one, from the days of *Grand Hotel* (1932) to *Four Rooms* (1995), *Bobby* (2006), etc.

[8] City is the dominant locus of network narratives: a prototypical example is Los Angeles, in films like *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia* (1999), *Crash* (2004) and such a number of other “LA-ensemble films”. Many European cities have since the mid-1990s also received their version of network narrative film (Azcona, 2010: 36f; Tomić, 2016).

a network with parallel stories from other European countries, in *Three Stories About Sleeplessness* (*Tri priče o nespavanju*, 2008, Tomislav Radić).

But what can be discerned as a distinctive trait, and will be elaborated in the following pages, is the presence of history as a topic in post-Yugoslav cinema. More precisely, memories of war appear, not just as a backdrop to the social setting of e.g. Serbs and Croats sharing the building in *The Constitution*, but as the central theme or catalyst of drama in films like *The High Sun*, *The Blacks*, *Witnesses* (*Svjedoci*, 2003, Vinko Brešan) or the fantasy war horror *The Living and the Dead* (*Živi i mrtvi*, 2007, Kristijan Milić). Furthermore, unlike the international network narrative history that begins with the 1990s,^[9] the Croatian one has in lineage some of the most renowned titles of Yugoslav film canon – films like *Three* (*Tri*, 1965, Aleksandar Petrović) or *The Concert* (*Koncert*, 1954, Branko Belan) – where the war plays an equally prominent role.

Otherwise the form seems to have developed in line with network narratives elsewhere: although art and experimental cinema is continuing to show interest (innovative examples include e.g. Kelly Reichardt's *Certain women* (2016), works by Roy Andersson or video artist Omer Fast), critics have for a while now been commenting on its codification. Some have even argued for its proliferation over the last two decades into a genre (e.g. Azcona) with an increasing influence in the mainstream, demonstrated by generic hybrids with e.g. the thriller, teenpics or romantic comedies. Croatian equivalents include *All the Best* (*Sve najbolje*, 2016), Snježana Tribuson's romantic comedy that attempts at a transgression of this genre as its underlined artificiality of predictable situations and dialogues is a *camp* reference to soap operas that Tribuson is well known for from her earlier, more successful comedy *The Three Men of Melita* (*Žganjer* / *Tri muškarca Melite Žganjer*, 1998). Another example of a generic hybrid worth mentioning is *Forest Creatures* (*Summa summarum*, 2010, Ivan-Goran Vitez): variously classified as a dark comedy thriller and a satirical action-horror drama, the story follows a group of Croatian employees in a Dutch-owned marketing company on a team-building outing, playing paintball in a forest inhabited by cannibals. The film is, as Pavičić summed it up, a fabulous parody of the paranoias of the Croatian educated urban middle class in transition: fearing the atavistic primitivism of the Croatian province, as well as the invasion of foreign liberal capitalism that devours free time and existing social networks.^[10]

The chronotope of the “global city”^[11] in network narratives has increasingly widened its scope to include asymmetrical social spaces, as

**Balkan as
a chronotope**

[9] Although historical overviews tend to name some predecessors from earlier film history – like the so called *Querschnitt* films, such as *People on Sunday* (*Menschen am Sonntag*, 1930, Robert Siodmak et al.) – the consensus was that “Between *Grand Hotel* (1932) and the early 1990s, there don't seem to be a lot of

network narrative films.” (D. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema...*, p. 197).

[10] J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 230.

[11] A concept was frequently borrowed from Saskia Sassen's book *The Global City* (2001) in interpretations of network narrative films.

in *Paris* (2008), with one thread of the story set in Africa, or, more successfully, in *Babel* and its replicas in the Swedish film *Mammoth* (2009) and similar representations of the globalized world. Another common project were visions of a “New Europe” in, for example, Haneke’s film *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (*71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls*, 1994), a Turkish-German network of stories in *The Edge of Heaven* (*Auf der anderen Seite*, 2007) or a British-Macedonian one in *Before the Rain* (*Pred doždov*, 1994). As the form became automatized, the films came under scrutiny and criticism for failing to reflect on the differences between the social settings or to produce the polyphony of perspectives that the form was originally attributed with (as it supposedly undermined monolithic view of a single-protagonist classical narrative, see e.g. Kerr).[12]

The Balkans, as they feature in these constellations, are often reduced to exoticisms, as is the case of director Milčo Mančevski’s *Before the Rain*, where Macedonia is an atavistic land of tribal warfare or, in Slavoj Žižek’s words: “the ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism [...] the Balkan war – the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to the decadent and anemic Western life.”[13] *Before the Rain*, in other words, not only contrasts the traditional ways of life in remote mountain villages of Macedonia to the modern Europe, but recycles “a metaphor of the Balkans as a half-mythical space (Halligan) where “history always repeats itself”, people live in “cycles of eternal hatred and feuds [...] employing of the favourite and deeply-rooted stereotypes of Balkanist thinking, the idea of war in the Balkans as a regionally specific and inevitable destiny.”[14] Such a filmic representation has a well-known pedigree, epitomized by Emir Kusturica’s circular narrative of *Underground* (1994), stretching from WWII to the reignited ethnic conflicts of the 1990s, portrayed as cyclical, repetitive outbursts of violence and irrational behaviour endemic to the region. Often in tandem with Mančevski’s *Before the Rain*, *Underground* has, in a nutshell, been said to replace the historic perspective with that of synchronicity and thus stands as an exemplary “exercise in self-exoticism or self-Balkanization, as a process of internalizing the stereotype of the Balkans as inherently violent”.[15]

[12] Bakhtin, when developing his concept of polyphony in Dostoyevsky’s works, refers to an example of network narrative structure in Tolstoy’s story *Three deaths* as a sheer opposite to a polyphonic text. If Dostoyevsky had written that story, Bakhtin continues, he would have brought the different viewpoints into a dialogue (not necessarily in literal sense) so that the individual perspectives could relate to the words of others i.e. produce dialogic relations (M. Bahtin, *O romanu*, Beograd 1989, pp. 128–132). Haneke’s other attempt at a network narrative, *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages*, 2000), was usually taken as a counter-exam-

ple or a network metanarrative that intersected stories from contemporary Paris with those from rural France, Albania and Africa but with no dialogue established between the colliding protagonists – as they did not share the same code or experiences mutually translatable (see Everett or Tomić 2016).

[13] D. Jelača, *Dislocated Screen Memory: Narrating Trauma in Post-Yugoslav Cinema*, London 2015, p. 34.

[14] J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 143 (see also: P. Levi, *Raspad Jugoslavije na filmu. Estetika i ideologija u jugoslovenskom i postjugoslovenskom filmu*, Beograd 2009, p. 169).

[15] D. Jelača, op.cit., 143. (see also P. Levi, op.cit., pp. 169–170).

Such an ahistorical perspective becomes even more acute in films *about* history, often combining different historical settings but representing them as trapped in timelessness or mythic synchronicity rather than historical linear time – like in *Underground*. Unlike network narratives elsewhere, whose parallel storylines were typically simultaneous and rarely stretched their networks into earlier history,[16] many post-Yugoslav films, including the mentioned Croatian examples, readdress the topic of war. The omnipresence of war in post-Yugoslav cinema is illustrated in for example Dijana Jelača's book *Dislocated Screen Memory: Narrating Trauma in Post-Yugoslav Cinema* and many of her examples intertwine storylines of e.g. three women as victims of war and traditional patriarchal attitudes in Kosovo film *Three windows and a hanging* (2014, Isa Qosja). Such parallax war scenes in Balkan cinema frequently mobilize narratives from World War II, activating “historical allegorizations that reflect the present day concerns”[17] that can serve a double purpose: legitimizing official histories or ethno-nationalist discourses and offering self-Balkanizing attractions for the Western eye.[18]

The second function seems to persist even with the recent tendency to deconstruct nationalist stereotypes (in post-2000 films Pavičić terms “the cinema of normalisation”,[19]) as in the previously mentioned film *The Living and the Dead*, based on the eponymous book by Josip Mlakić. The film's epigraph is a quote from Ivo Andrić: “We are all already dead, just waiting to be buried one after another” and it goes on to intertwine histories from wars in Bosnia in 1943 and 1993, employing even phantasy and supernatural links to illustrate a “self-Balkanizing fatalism”. [20] Frequent flashbacks and flash-forwards merge ghosts of history in a *mise en abyme*, a repetition compulsion, up to the final scene of a Balkan death drive through the ages. A recent analysis of the film traces these network narratives back to the self-Balkanizing trope of history (of wars, depicted in ontological synchronicity) as a “*transhistorical danse macabre*”. [21]

[16] Examples of network narratives set in diverse historical periods are rare (exceptions are few, e.g. *The Hours* [2002] or *Ararat* [2002] by Atom Egoyan) and, additionally, such historical frescoes from earlier film history are rarely discussed as network narratives, but rather form their own cannon – represented by e.g. *Intolerance* (1916), Fritz Lang's *Destiny (Der müde Tod)*, 1921) or Buster Keaton's *Three Ages* (1923) – and called “omnibus film” or otherwise (A. Peterlić: *Omnibus-film*, in: *Filmska enciklopedija II*, ed. A. Peterlić, Zagreb 1990, p. 226).

[17] D. Jelača, op.cit., p. 17.

[18] *Underground* is a common example of both, e.g. P. Levi discusses the film's legitimization of nationalist propaganda in Yugoslav war with the help of

mobilized ethnocentric interpretations of WW2 (e.g. inserted documentary footage of German forces entering Maribor and Zagreb, welcomed by the joyful crowd, are contrasted to an earlier documentary sequence showing the destruction of Belgrade in WWII and the entry of German forces in the city with nobody to greet them (P. Levi, op.cit., pp. 146–147; for similar binarisms in Croatian cinema, see e.g. Pavičić on “the cinema of self-victimization“, J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 108).

[19] J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 181.

[20] D. Jelača, op.cit., pp. 51–52.

[21] S. Mileta, *Zvizdan, transhistorijski danse macabre*, „Filmonaut“ 2016, no. 16, pp. 81–85 (see also: P. Levi, op.cit., p. 160).

These Croatian examples could be matched by network narratives from other post-Yugoslav cinemas that share the common denominator of history seen in synchronicity, like the Bosnian feature *Remake* (2003, Dino Mustafić). The film draws parallels between a storyline about a father set in WWII and another one that follows his son during the Siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s, portrayed as a spectral remake of the earlier tragic story of the father. Danis Tanović's Altmanesque *Death in Sarajevo* (*Smrt u Sarajevu*, 2016) similarly transforms a common chronotope of network narratives, a hotel (one, moreover, called "Hotel Europa"), into an allegory of collective history. The staff and other social strata inhabiting bottom to upper floors (including an underground strip club), pictured on the centenary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that triggered World War II, are trapped in vicious circle of repeated outbursts of conflict and chaos, topped by a character called Gavrilo Princip appearing uninvited on the roof.

Even though these films, like *Underground*, are occasionally read as vehicles of counter-memory, working through the reductive Balkan stereotypes, there are more explicit (but less known i.e. more avant-garde and less spectacularly self-Balkanizing) parodies of the region's obsession with (WWII) history. These should include Željimir Žilnik's mockumentary *Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time* (*Tito po drugi put među Srbima*, 1993) or a similar concept in *Tito on Ice* (2012, Max Andersson and Helena Ahonen), a road-trip phantasmagoria featuring a mummified Marshal Tito in a refrigerator that tours the former republics of Yugoslavia.

Network narratives of counter-memory

One of the crucial changes brought by "the cinema of normalisation" is, according to Pavičić, its reworking of the imagery of war of the earlier dominant of "the cinema of self-victimization", typical of the wartime nationalist propaganda, and the "cinema of self-Balkanization" and its exotic image of region.^[22] Unlike the mentioned self-Balkanizing representations of war as "culturally specific", for the spectacle of the external gaze, "the cinema of normalisation" returns to war topics from an everyday, realistic perspective. Its protagonists are characters resolving trauma caused by the war or the post-war social disorder. Typically the trauma lies in the character's personal and family history, and resolving it involves a confrontation with their surroundings. Finally, she or he is an active figure, capable of changing and evolving (or the failure of achieving moral catharsis equally becomes the subject of the story).^[23]

The film *Witnesses*, made after an award winning script by Pavičić himself, is a shining example of the cinema of normalisation. It deflates nationalist ideology and the myths of heroic masculinity mirrored and mutually supported by patriarchal family structures (*mater dolorosa* that buries her war hero husband and then tries to persuade

[22] J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 197.

[23] Ibidem, p. 211.

her children to follow his lead proves to be the most fervent keeper of these structures in decay). Frequent flashbacks that are the structuring principle of the film outline these parallels between destructive effects of mobilized war ideology on families and individuals. The scenes of battle prove to be random and absurd outbursts of violence, verging on tragicomic (like the true story of the war hero's loss of a leg). The dramatic conflict switches instead to the gap between the older generation (and passive children stuck in their value system and paralysed by it) and the emancipated youth, facing a brighter future in the last scene (resembling the secular Holy Family at the end of Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957) that escapes Death i.e. the film history's most iconic scene of *danse macabre*).

According to Pavičić, the motif of “children or young people that criticize or are forced to correct their parents’ mistakes is an obsessive theme of post-Yugoslav cinemas after 2000 to an extent that one could say the motif is central to the production of the whole decade”.^[24] Other authors will similarly reflect on the “omnipresence of the child in post-Yugoslav cinema [as] self-indictment of a collectivism much larger than any one nationalist group: that of the adults who sustain the conditions under which the child suffers” or on the so called “post-memory” of war by the next generation.^[25]

Other examples of this tendency can be found in a group of popular theatre plays on parenthood, a conventional theme of network narratives, like *Men of Wax* (2016) by the playwright Mate Matišić. The three autonomous stories are set in a fictional present (the lingering tension between e.g. Serb and Croats in the first story or the ethnic groups on the Bosnian border in the second inform the events) and the recurring theme is the sacrifice of children brought by the family as a metonymy of systemic violence. It is no surprise that Nemanja's (the son in the first story) favourite film is Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups*, 1959), the canonical coming-of-age story of failed escapes from an array of dysfunctional social institutions. The father in all the stories of *Men of Wax* is called Viktor, and the praised scenography for the production of the play by the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb aptly showed the children only on film, as (screen) projections in their parents’ narratives.

A more optimistic outlook of the cinema of normalisation can be demonstrated by *Witnesses* as well as by *The High Sun*, and furthermore served as an argument for the interpretation of this film as reworking the *transhistorical danse macabre* trope. *The High Sun's* “metaphysical doubles”^[26] or the same two actors playing a different couple in love in three separate time frames, strengthen the parallels between stories that at first seem to illustrate the self-Balkanizing fatalistic return of violence. The film seems almost like homage to a classic of Yugoslav

[24] Ibidem, p. 193.

[26] S. Mileta, op.cit., p. 84.

[25] D. Jelača, op.cit., p. 184.

cinema, Petrović's *Three* (1965): three war scenes, from the beginning, one from the middle, and one from the end of WWII, with the only link being the recurring protagonist. As in *The High Sun*, the three-partite structure deconstructs any Manichean opposition and portrays the war as a meaningless array of mob violence and other tragedies on all sides. But, unlike the abstract critique of war and the existential vacuum left after the final repetition in *Three*, the last story in *The High Sun*, ends the compulsive repetition i.e. performs what LaCapra calls "working through that involves repetition with significant difference".[27] In other words, *The High Sun* undermines the self-Balkanizing trope of cyclical violence, or:

scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in the melancholic loop. [...] Any duality (or double inscription) of time (past or present or future) is experientially collapsed and productive only of aporias and double binds. In this sense, the aporia and the double bind might be seen as marking a trauma that has not been worked through. Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent that one works through trauma [...] one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future.[28]

The film's reworking of the repetition compulsion in Balkanist cinema is seen in e.g. the eight-minute-long sequence of a collective trance-like state of youth partying towards the end of the film. Unlike such orgiastic scenes of Balkan people celebrating when they are not killing each other, typically accompanied by gipsy music,[29] the scene from *The High Sun* owes more to popular culture (music videos and even TV-commercials) than the local folklore, and has an opposite function, that of catharsis and the bodily performance of working through (including washing off in the early dawn swimming).

Finally, another strategy of counter memory is exemplified by several networks of narratives offering a female perspective as an alternative to the "testosterone-laden machismo of the cinema of self-Balkanization"[30] or the "fetishist focus on excessive masculine violence" typical of earlier representations of war.[31]

Often proclaimed to be among the best Croatian dramas of the 1990s, Lada Kaštelan's *The Last Link* (*Posljednja karika*, 1994) is the story of three generations of women (Her, Mother and Grandmother) in a phantasmic encounter at the age of 36. The grandmother's post World War II communist ideas are shown conversing, in direct po-

[27] D. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore 2001, p. 147. The second, also a post-war story in *The High Sun*, is of the couple sexually attracted but still trapped by what resembles "traumas that have not been meaningfully worked through but rather emploted into ethnocentric discourses, passed on, and mistaken for ancient hatreds" (D. Jelača, op.cit., p. 40).

[28] D. LaCapra, op.cit., pp. 21–22.

[29] Kusturica's *Underground* and its „aesthetics of genitofugal libido" are the paradigmatic example (e.g. P. Levi, op.cit., p. 136).

[30] J. Pavičić, op.cit., p. 183.

[31] D. Jelača, op.cit., p. 38.

lyphony, with the daughter's and granddaughter's Zeitgeists that have experienced the downfall of Yugoslavia and the early 1990s. Like in Tena Štivičić's internationally popular *3 Winters* (2014) – an echo of *The Last Link*, with three generations of women and their families in the similar time frame stretching from World War II to the present – the stories are barometers of tectonic social changes. But unlike Štivičić's play, where actors are mainly social vectors explained and typified for the Western audiences,[32] the power of *The Last Link* lies in its radically intimist perspective.[33] The ghosts of the deceased mother and the grandmother come to comfort Her, who is pregnant and about to decide whether to keep the child at (another) moment of social upheaval and uncertainty. The vitality of this micro-narrative of private lives and the shared everyday struggle in the changing social landscapes is a multi-layered challenge to the dominant grain of grand narratives and official (war) histories.

Critics who have read the pervasiveness of war in recent cinema as a symptom of “belatedness of trauma”, “the confiscating effect” of ethno-nationalist discourse and its recent revivals, also wondered “how does post war culture work to reinstate or repair at least some fragments that have been lost, filling the gaps with screen memories of a different kind”.[34] The stories analysed here help reconstruct cultural memory and open it up for “more historicized and contextualized accounts of the past”.[35]

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[32] Or unlike *The Concert* (1954), where the three stories following a woman and her piano through the turmoil of Yugoslav history serve as a vehicle of propaganda: her tragedy warns of the entrapments of bourgeois dreams luxury and class mobility (e.g. in the dream sequence of heroine in a wedding dress playing the piano in a lavish setting, the cursed instrument nobody is shown playing at the film's end).

[33] The difficulty of distributing an intimist film from the region, perceived as a land of war and related local folklore, is a leitmotif of e.g. Croatian film history, with few internationally successful examples like *Rondo* (1966, d. Zvonimir Berković) or *Quit Staring at My Plate* (*Ne gledaj mi u pijat*, 2016, d. Hana Jušić) having faced the same challenge.

[34] D. Jelača, p. 58.

[35] Ibidem, p. 41.

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