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THE INFLUENCE OF POPULAR GEOPOLITICS ON THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CULTURE OF (NON)VIOLENCE IN POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMATOGRAPHY

The paper will focus on the discourses contained in the popular geopolitics of post-Yugoslav cinema with a focus on the representation of the culture of (non)violence. Geopolitical discourses are an integral part of contemporary geopolitics, they were created under the influence of geopolitical traditions and imaginations, they intertwine and form the background of all aspects of geopolitics (Zorko 2014). In order to show the influence and connection between popular geopolitics and nonviolence, we will elaborate key concepts such as: popular geopolitics, geopolitics of emotions, violence, culture of nonviolence, culture of memory, collective memory and trauma, post-war narratives presented through popular geopolitics in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which will be viewed through post-Yugoslav cinematography. The work will focus on post-war narratives related to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that took place in the period from 1992 to 1995, through films that were made in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia from the period of the end of the war until today. Our goal is to present post-war narratives through films and documentaries, showing how much they contributed to the culture of violence or non-violence. The aim of the work is also to show how film can influence the creation of post-war narratives, as a form of geopolitical content or (popular) discourse, and given that popular geopolitics, through all its segments and ways of acting, regardless of whether it is through the media, magazines, films, the Internet, affects the consciousness of certain social and cultural categories of countries, societies, and finally individuals.

Key words: popular geopolitics; violence; culture of non(violence); culture of memory; post-war narrative; post-Yugoslav cinematography; war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical shifting of the understanding of popular geopolitics and culture of (non)violence

A term that has recently found its verbalization in everyday use in various spheres of social activity, as well as in many media reports, political, cultural, sports, shows, and also in frequent use in “lay” communication, is the term of geopolitics. The processes of globalization as an essential determinant of the modern global world have also contributed to the expansion of the concept of geopolitics. Nowadays, we often come across the concepts and terms “geopolitics of sports”, “geopolitics of emotions”, “geopolitics of social networks”, “geopolitics of video games”, “geopolitics of borders”, “geopolitics of drinking water”, “geopolitics of the cosmos”, “geopolitics of environment”. The concept of geopolitics has been and continues to be so widespread in our everyday life, yet so little is known about it. Therefore, in the rest of the text, we will offer a short theoretical approach to understanding the concept of geopolitics in general, and then the role of popular geopolitics in the representation of the culture of (non)violence in post-Yugoslav cinematography.

It is important to emphasize that very little was said about geopolitics in the academic community, it was kept silent for many years, solely because of its very “deviations”, due to the „misapplication of the fundamental but very sensitive principles of political geography by the German geopolitical circle” and for these reasons for many years, „geopolitics in classical scientific circles was treated as a pseudoscience, as a utilitarian, instrumentalized, totalitarian, state pseudogeography” (Ćurak, Turčalo 2013: 22). From its inception (in 1899, we connect the origin of geopolitics to the work of the Swedish scientist Rudolf Kjellen *The State as a Form of Life*) until today, geopolitics has gone through different periods. Often, geopolitics was and is identified with international relations, but what characterizes it is its connection with geography, which means that geopolitics as science is exclusively concerned with studying and researching the influence of geographical factors on politics. The word “geopolitics” originates from the 20th century, it is closely related to all the dramatic events which that century produced. For Kjellen, geopolitics was a useful word that he used to describe the geographical base of the state, its natural heritage and resources, which many argued determined the power of the state¹ (O Tuathail 2007: 15).

¹ Kjellen’s term was taken up in Germany after the First World War by former general Karl Haushofer, who in 1924 started a journal called “Zeitschrift für Geopolitik”, which promoted a conservative nationalist way of thinking (O Tuathail 2007: 15).

Critical geopolitics is the “youngest direction” in the development of contemporary geopolitics, it problematizes the theoretical assumptions of existing power structures, it can be said that it arose as a response to the doctrines of the Cold War to criticize state structures from the point of view of intellectuals. Gearoid O Tuathail defines critical geopolitics as „an intellectual movement beyond the political realism and “God tricks” that characterize uncritical geopolitical narratives in general. It rejects the state-centric and cognitively impoverished stories of how the interstate system works as the most important „recognizes the way people know, categorize and make sense of world politics as an interpretive cultural practice”, and to understand this process, Tuathail says: “... it is necessary to study geopolitics as a discourse together with the cultural context that gives it meaning” (2007: 21).

Gearoid o Tuathail established a generally accepted conceptualisation of critical geopolitics (O Tauthail 2007: 22):

- Formal geopolitics²
- Practical geopolitics³
- Popular geopolitics

Popular geopolitics can be defined as: “an independent discipline or an inter/trans-disciplinary approach, and a completely new concept of geopolitical reflection in the contemporary scientific environment” (Zorko 2021: 99). That popular geopolitics has become more and more popular in academic circles at the beginning of the new century, the fact of the accelerated globalization of the world, the development of communication technology, and “innovations in the products of popular culture and new technology have opened up the possibility of a more complex and deeper consideration of what effects they can have on the audience/the public in terms of the geopolitical messages and codes they transmit” (Ibid. 101). Popular geopolitics refers to geographic politics created through various media, thereby shaping popular culture. Popular culture or mass culture is the totality of cultural and pseudo-cultural products, intended for consumption by the broadest stratum of the population (Beljan 2012).

Popular geopolitics explores popular culture and mass communications, “it refers to stories about world politics that find their expression in the popular culture of a country, in its films, magazines, novels, and even cartoons” (Tuathail 2007: 24). This

2 Formal geopolitics refers to what is usually considered geopolitical thought or geopolitical tradition. “It refers to advanced geopolitical theories and visions created by intellectuals and statesmen” (Ćurak, Turčalo 2013: 23).

3 Practical geopolitics refers to the stories used by public policy makers and politicians in the actual practice of foreign policy (Ibid. 23).

informal geopolitics sends geopolitical messages to ordinary people without the influence of politicians, and this is what makes it special. All these forms of formal, practical and popular geopolitical narrative are precisely the products of universal imaginations, cultures and traditions. Jason Dittmer is considered to be the founder of popular geopolitics, and he observes it primarily through “case studies of film, comics, video games, sermons, and new media” (Turčalo, Zorko 2021: 372).

One of the basic characteristics of people as a social being is the need to communicate. In such a social relationship and within it, each individual exerts a mutual influence based on which certain attitudes and values are formed. The time we live in is characterized by its peculiarities, and one of them is that it is also our time – the time of propaganda⁴ and advertising⁵, the time of mass communications⁶ and mass media⁷. No matter how much we try to diminish their value and meaning in the daily life of the human environment, the influence of propaganda on our thinking, directions, directing towards or avoiding something it is enormous. Geopolitics is not content with suddenly or directly penetrating our real and everyday life; it conquers our imaginary world through an inevitable and undoubtedly dangerous dialectical movement. The very fact that most of us, regardless of how much we resist changes, and whether we resist at all, we think about them today, which is a sufficient indicator of how popular geopolitics through the media, film, social networks, television series, deeply affects the lives of individuals and other social groups.

We can agree that during the last few years, even decades, “mass media programs and messages expose individuals and groups to their influence with such force and intensity that they fill a person’s entire free time, exerting a direct influence on their way of thinking, attitudes and behavior” (Nuhanović 2005: 112).

4 By propaganda we mean influencing people’s consciousness in order to determine their behavior. Propaganda can be: economic, political, war, hostile, etc.

5 “Advertising has gone from symbols, vulgarity and mercantilism to fame and worship. Today, advertising has become a form of communication. Not just any image is imposed on the consumer, but a latent image of what he could be - often without his knowledge - which brings the greatest possible benefits to the advertiser“ (Nuhanović 2005: 167).

6 “The function of the means of mass communication is the realization of the right to culture, that is, cultural exchange as an overall and versatile way of human socialization. This underlines the importance and power of mass communication tools. The social milieu enables communication, which is required for social life“ (Nuhanović 2005: 111).

7 “In the social practice of the modern world, the tendency of one-way communication is expressed. The essence of the functioning of the mass media would be to bring the community back to itself, i.e., this communication enables the voice of oneself (to be seen and heard) to communicate through them, critically analyze oneself and, through a constant dialogue of exchange of experiences of political practice, realize its progress and course in future“ (Nuhanović 2005: 111).

Looking from this aspect, we can notice that popular geopolitics through its contents, discourses and narratives has a dual character effect, which means that it can positively and negatively affect the entire society, as well as the state, which is manifested in the integration and disintegration of the society that is in the interest of certain social groups, those in whose hands these contents are. In the time of globalization, films and television series as a genre have become a universal, if not a cultural, reference for anyone who would try to study the emotions of the world. "Screenwriters of films and television series have become the best analysts of society and the modern world, if not the most reliable futurologists" (Mojsi 2016: 11). Specialists in popular geopolitics observe the film as "an imitation of the world... popular geopolitics characterizes the film as a metaphor or allegory in recording the everyday perception of the world". Films are no longer considered „mere images or undirected expressions of the mind, but a temporary embodiment of social processes that continuously construct and deconstruct the world" (Turčalo, Zorko 2021: 370). In the same way, films in post-Yugoslav cinematography construct and affirm violent patterns of social action. Unfortunately, to a much lesser extent, they deconstruct such violent narratives and discourses. On the contrary, they reflect the inexorable spread of the culture of violence, the culture of fear, social exclusion, gender violence, etc.

And finally, let's ask some important questions: How to change the discourses and narratives in the film industry that abound in violent themes, affirm the culture of violence, the culture of fear, social exclusion, gender-based violence, the propagation of patriarchy as a value system and way of life, stereotypes, prejudices, gender inequality, etc? How to reshape the aforementioned discourses and narratives as established ways of functioning of post-Yugoslav societies and states with narratives and discourses of building a culture of nonviolence, that is a culture of peace, a culture of memory, cultural and structural positive peace?

CULTURAL MEMORY OR COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND TRAUMA

The violence of the few does not withstand the quest for freedom of the many.

(former German President Christian Wulff, speaking on the anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall, August 13, 2011)

Most people look to historical accounts to understand how their own nations emerged and fought for their freedom, such explanations, whether found in books or

imparted through public ceremonies and national memories, often tell of violent battles, insurrections, victories and defeats in wars, and fallen heroes in armed struggles (Bartkowski 2013:1). Connected with what author Bartkowski said, in our paper we will show it through the film, to see is it the violence or non-violence that is presented in post-Yugoslav cinematography, looking at it through the narratives of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Why film? First, because the visual has a crucial role in discourse formation at any level and because the informative power of transmitted images is at least as influential as the exchange that takes place in spoken or written language, unlike the written word, however, the role of mediated images is so subtle that it often remains unaccounted for.

„Looking at cinematic texts helps bring to light the underlying dynamics of cross-cultural image-making as it unravels within the wider context of communicated concepts and interpretations second because in today’s world of electronic media, images reach out wider than writings, a fact which is still rarely recognized or explored persistently, nowadays it is the moving image rather than the printed word that carries more persuasive weight”. (Jelaca 2014: 44)

We also want to research, whether the film, serves only to glorify violence, or can it serve to glorify non-violence and reconciliation? Before that, it is important to present a theoretical framework for important concepts such as the culture of memory, collective memory and collective trauma because precisely their elaboration can point us to what could be found in the films about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁸ in post-Yugoslav cinematography.

The concept of collective memory is a complex one, “what collective memory specifically refers to is often a matter of confusion or dispute, summarised illustratively in James V. Wertsch’s observation that collective memory can mean any number of things depending on the conversation in which it is embedded” (Kolaric 2018: 17).

The collectivity of memory is never equal to a combination of individual memories; instead, what and how we remember is triggered by the social groups we are part of, with whom we share those memories. Jan Assmann lists six characteristics of collective memory: the concretization of identity, preserving the unity of the group; its capacity to reconstruct, always changing and relating past to the present; formation,

8 Between 1992 and 1995, an inhumane plan was executed to ethnically cleanse Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the planned, systematic, and industrialised killings of non-Serbs, the majority being Bosniak-Muslims, the siege of Sarajevo resulted in over 11,000 people killed, of which 1,600 were just children, between 1992-1995, the citizens of Sarajevo were subjected to daily shelling and sniper attacks, cut off from the rest of the world. <https://srebrenica.org.uk/what-happened/bosnian-war-a-brief-overview> (23. 05. 2024.)

objectification of communicated meaning and shared knowledge; organization; obligation, building a hierarchy of relevance of symbols in shaping a self-image; and reflexivity (J. Assmann in Kolaric 2018: 21). According to Aleida Assmann, the idea of collective memory – a group’s version of the past – is primarily that of knowledge, and thus of something beyond one’s own experience, it is also socially curated, to participate in the group’s vision of its past means that one has to learn about it, one cannot remember it, one has to memorize it, it is knowledge that backs up, not an „I” but a „we” (A. Assmann in Kolaric 2018: 22). The Assmanns’ theory of collective memory introduces the concept of cultural memory, they differentiate between two forms of collective memory: communicative and cultural. Cultural memory, is no longer tied to individual remembrance or individual carriers but is media-enabled and of longer duration. Cultural memory refers to the

“body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose cultivation serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image and upon which each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity, it is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms, meaning the focus is once again turned towards cultural artefacts” (J. Assmann in Kolaric 2018: 22).

Aleida Assmann’s theory of cultural memory offers a valuable way of thinking about how societies (among them, but not solely, nation-states) make sense of collective past and own group identity.

Her differentiation between cultural and political memory⁹ opens up space for thinking about how different events and periods become selected into the collective stock of identity-stories, and about the role mediation (language, material objects, various means of storage and transmission) plays in the process.

“At the same time, it does not ignore the role power and politics play, in particular through shaping the top-down historical narratives, rearranging public spaces and institutionalising the processes of selection, storage and transmission: schools, cultural events, commemorations”. (Kolaric 2018:26)

Film and memory

There has been great optimism concerning the relevance of film for collective (cultural) memory in recent scholarly literature. Grainge begins the introduction to

9 Political memory is the top-down produced memory, self-contained and homogenous as a narrative with a clear message, it integrates little of other memory formats – unless there are reasons to do so. (Kolaric 2018)

his influential volume on memory and popular film by stating that “as a technology able to picture and embody the temporality of the past, cinema has become central to the mediation of memory in modern cultural life” (Grainge in Kolaric 2018: 49). The reading of a special place for film in making memory of communities typically points to film’s visuality, which endows them with special powers in representing memory (Kaes in Kolaric 2018). How exactly it is relevant, and how films relate to memory, is a matter of more dispute. Michel Foucault’s argued that cinema was, together with television, an effective means of *re-programming* popular memory (Foucault in Kolaric 2018). Along similar lines, Kilbourn distinguishes four interconnected ways in which film and memory engage (Kolaric 2018): film as representative of memory; as filmic intertextuality; films as memory contributors in the broader cultural context, e.g. as prosthetic memories, external additions to individuals memories that connect them to others, and cinema itself as, or meta-archive; prosthetic memory writ large; collective cultural memory: the totality of signs and meanings that make up a given culture. Rather than opening itself to the theory and methodology of film, this paper takes film as another storytelling medium to be read; it treats film as one means of storytelling among others, in a manner that privileges what is told (the story) to how it is told.

CULTURE OF NON(VIOLENCE) IN POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMATOGRAPHY

*There is no war, then, without representation. ...and... Cinema
is war.*

Paul Virilio (1989)

Before we present the films and documentaries that we will elaborate on in our paper, as in the previous chapter, we will present the theoretical framework for the culture of (non)violence, the theoretical framework of the narratives in post-Yugoslav cinematography, and the criteria and films that we will research in the paper. Often referred to as the „Father of Peace Studies,” Norwegian theorist Johan Galtung has developed a three-pronged typology of violence that represents how a confluence of malleable factors merge in particular cultural/historical moments to shape the conditions for the promotion of violence (and, by inference, peace) to function as normative: direct violence, structural violence, and, most importantly, cultural violence.

Cultural violence represents the existence of prevailing or prominent social norms that make direct and structural violence seem „natural” or „right” or at least acceptable, for example, the belief that Africans are primitive and intellectually inferior to Caucasians gave sanction to the African slave trade, Galtung’s understanding of cultural violence helps explain how prominent beliefs can become so embedded in a given culture that they function as absolute and inevitable and are reproduced uncritically across generations¹⁰. When we think about societies in post-Yugoslav countries, the fact is that we live in societies that tend to value and glamorize violence, in which many children and youth are exposed to violence daily via television, social media, and, of course, films, some would argue that we can’t expect much to change. By the time a child becomes an adult, most of them will have already witnessed hundreds or even thousands of acts of violence on television. It’s possible that early exposure to violence numbs children to it or legitimizes it as a means to solve problems, though researchers are divided on this front.

It’s possible, though, that some children may imitate what they see on television or identify with characters who commit (or are victims) of violence. Another fact that further aggravates the situation when it comes to post-Yugoslav cinematography is that brutal violence happened, that young people and children, in addition to the film, have survivors from the nineties war, some of whom committed violence. What we are interested in is whether the feature films promoted only the culture of violence through post-Yugoslav cinematography or did certain feature films show the senselessness of war and lead to a process of reconciliation.

Post-war narratives and war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in post-Yugoslav cinematography

In other words, there is a dialectical relationship between experience and narrative, between the narrating self and the narrated self. As humans, we draw on our experience to shape narratives about our lives, but equally, our identity and character are shaped by our narratives.

(Antze and Lambek 1996: xviii)

Many post-Yugoslav movies since 1990 have featured war either directly, focusing on events, or indirectly, addressing the consequences of the war in the transition society, such as violence, corruption and poverty.

10 <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/what-we-do/our-approach/peace-violence>, date of access (24. 05. 2024).

“By focusing on questions of the fight for national identity, some directors glorified the war and stressed the topic of nationhood, whereas others used the images of war and violence to perpetuate the clichéd portrayal of Balkan culture and peoples, in the first post-socialist decade, former Yugoslav cinemas were marked by similar aesthetics and topics influenced mainly by nationalist policies” (Borjan 2021: 157).

According to Borjan, most films released at the beginning of the transition period were strongly ideologically charged, by creating a sense of fear and imminent threat from the Other, movies echoing nationalist narratives justified war and violence as an act of self-defence; they were used to justify political chauvinism and divert the attention of the audience from corruption, clientelism, economic and political problems, and non-transparent privatization of state-owned enterprises (Borjan 2021). They were products of „the need to prove the inevitability of ethnic conflicts in the region” (Levi in Borjan 2021: 157) and history was used as an essential ideological framework for enhancing hatred and ethnic intolerance towards the Other. The second type of movies that addressed the war complied with the simplified Western gaze of the area that reduced the heterogeneous population to a single, stable identity, such feature films released in the 1990s were labeled by some international film scholars as „Balkan cinema” (Iordanova 2001, 2003, 2006) or „Balkan film genre” (Daković 2008) as the perpetuated Western stereotypes on the Balkans representing this area as primitive, exotic and wild; a kind of Third World bordering the First World (Borjan 2021: 157). The trend of self-exoticism and the portrayal of Balkan culture as archaic, violent and barbaric was embraced by several internationally acclaimed local filmmakers (*Dom za vešanje / Time of the Gypsies*, dir. Emir Kusturica, 1989; *Underground*, dir. Emir Kusturica, 1995; *Crna mačka, beli mačor / Black Cat, White Cat*, dir. Emir Kusturica, 1998; *Bure baruta / Cabaret Balkan*, dir. Goran Paskaljević, 1998; *Lepa sela lepo gore / Pretty Villages Burn Nicely*, dir. Srđan Dragojević, 1996; *Rane / Wounds*, dir. Srđan Dragojević, 1998; *Pred doždot / Before the rain*, dir. Milčo Mančevski, 1994) that have developed their „aesthetics of violence”, all these films emphasize violence and the „untamed”, „savage” nature of the Balkans by staging stories full of unmotivated violence, hatred, betrayal and cruel vengeance, but they do not really address trauma on an individual or a collective level (Pavičić in Borjan 2021). The excessive presence of war in post-Yugoslav cinema might be seen as an attempt to comply with the trend of self-Balkanization but it was also a necessary exercise of coming to terms with the wartime traumas. As for the narrative about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will observe it through feature films produced in

Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Serbian cinematography. If we look at the narrative about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is also part of the narrative of post-Yugoslav cinematography, which we have covered, we must point out that the majority of feature films when it comes to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina dealt with the topics of raped women, women victims of sexual violence, through a feminist perspective, the genocide in Srebrenica, life in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the possibility or impossibility of reconciliation.

What is crucial is how much violence or non-violence is represented in the feature films that deal with the mentioned topics. We will try to show that, through selected feature films and documentaries, which we will list below, we will categorize them as those who glorify violence, or as those who nevertheless have a message of peace. The question is, to what extent war-themed feature films can have a message of peace? For research of this paper we will elaborate following feature and documentary films:

- *Esma's Secret (Grbavica, 2006)*
- *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales (Za one koji ne mogu govoriti, 2013)*
- *Snow (Snijeg, 2008)*
- *Pretty Villages Burn Nicely (Lepa sela lepo gore, 1996)*
- *Contested memories and the Frozen Conflict (Osporena sećanja i zamrznuti konflikt, 2016)*

We will categorize the mentioned features films and documentaries according to the following criteria:

- Films processing the war (as past/memory);
- Films referring to the war (from the present);
- Features films or documentaries;
- Features films through a feminist perspective;
- Features films and documentaries which presents violence or non-violence.

What is important to mention is that we will conclude whether the culture of violence or non-violence is presented in post-Yugoslav cinematography based on the mentioned feature films and documentaries.

POST-WAR TRAUMA ON SCREEN

Jasmila Žbanić's two feature films, *Esma's Secret (Grbavica, 2006)* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales (2013)*, can be regarded as features films that explore the con-

sequences of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the everyday lives of citizens. In particular, the two mentioned films “address women’s reactions to violence and horror, how the war affects their private and public relations, and how local and global communities can deal with past atrocities and the post-war scenario” (Pascalis 2016: 1). A specificity of Žbanić’s two mentioned feature films, is that it introduces the horrors of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the dominant European imaginary without actually showing images of violence. In this way, she refuses to engage with the traditional pattern of aggressive cinematographic representations of violence, she creates a visual structure where the audience neither participates in the victimisation of the object of military fury nor hypocritically shares the position of the prey (Pascalis 2016). We will first elaborate *Esma’s Secret (Grbavica, 2006)*¹¹, this film revolves around the everyday lives of women and men deeply scarred by war. Their experiences are set in Grbavica, a Sarajevo neighbourhood where the main character lives and where many outbursts of violence occurred during the siege, specifically, it was the site of one of the Serb rape camps, whose existence has often been denied, or concealed, in public discourse about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ibid.). According to Pascalis, what is at stake in the film is the evanescent difference between “before” – dominated by horror, and violence against the helpless – and “after” – pervaded by weak relationships, scarred by the legacies of war, where anything can trigger traumatic memories, such a trajectory from one situation to the other is neither linear nor fixed, but always renegotiated by each character, from one sequence to the next, also the main dialectic is the one between past and future; with the past haunting the present and producing an horrific continuity in gendered violence, even if with different declinations (Pascalis 2016). Before we start with the elaboration of the second film, it is important to mention that at the end of the chapter, we will give conclusions for each of the elaborated films. *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*¹², is based on the actual experiences of the Australian performer Kym Vercoe and her journey

11 The film’s protagonist, Esma, was held prisoner and repeatedly raped by the Bosnian Serbs paramilitary forces, and forced to give birth to her child in one of the camps. This is the „secret” of the international title-one shared by many other women, like the ones she meets monthly at the Women’s Centre. Esma had always told her daughter that her late father was a šehid - a Bosnian and Muslim war martyr - but when Sara asks for a certificate to receive a discount on the fee for a school trip, Esma is finally forced to reveal the truth. (Pascalis 2016).

12 Kym travels to Bosnia as a tourist during the summer. The guide-book she reads during her journey brings her to Višegrad, a small city with a rich history that provided the setting of Ivo Andrić’s novel *The Bridge on the Drina*. During her night at the Vilina Vlas Hotel, she cannot sleep, and when she returns to Sydney she discovers the same hotel was a rape camp during the Bosnian War, where more than 200 women were killed. She decides to go back to Bosnia during the winter and retrace her journey. Back in Višegrad, she faces hostility from the police and various citizens. Finally, she performs a private ceremony in one of the hotel’s rooms to mourn and remember the raped women (Pascalis 2016).

as a tourist in BiH. This film addresses, the difficulty to privately cope with Bosnia's violent past for both its citizens and the international community and especially Višegrad community, which tries to erase the memory of violence and avoid blame, also by giving Vercoe the ability to observe and narrate BiH from the outside, Žbanić creates distance from the violence, questioning the possibility for the perpetrators and their communities to testify about it without proper healing (Pascalis 2016). Through Kym's body and experience, the director is able to show the new violence intrinsic in the mechanism of engineering a „forgetting” of traumas that the dominant power group inflicted on its victims (Kaplan in Pascalis 2016). According to the conclusions of the author Pascalis, this film also upholds the fragility of the ethical experience, neither allowing the erasure of violence nor assuming it is possible to simply identify with violated bodies from an outside position. It proposes a new perspective on the narrative of the war, granting a gaze to those who did not participate in the violence but are still deeply affected by it. In conclusion, Žbanić's, through elaborated films, proposes different ways for women (and sometimes men) to address the atrocities of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Žbanić abandons any discourse about the supposed inherent violence in the Balkan (male) identity, and refuses to victimise women as a universal category, quite the opposite: she produces specific paths through her character's pain, investigating their difficulties in establishing personal and political relations, above all, her character's bodies are never considered as natural beings: Žbanić sees them as geoculturally located-as biopolitical products created through processes originating from power and responsibility, guilt and care (Pascalis 2016).

In the following, we will elaborate Aida Begić¹³'s film *Snow*¹⁴, which deals with trauma and life with trauma in a post-conflict society. According to Borjan (2021: 167):

„Collective identification with the trauma and the relation to the past in post-Yugoslav societies have been defined to a large extent by visual media, cinema has had a specific role in the (re)articulation and revision of cultural memory but it has also addressed intimate spheres of victimhood and human suffering and their affective relations to cinema as a domain in the field of cultural memory”.

- 13 She graduated in film and theater directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo in 2000. Her graduate film „First Death Experience” was screened at more than twenty international film festivals. This film participated in the 54th Cannes Film Festival – an official Cine fondation selection, and later won five awards.
- 14 The story of *Snow* takes place in a small village in Eastern Bosnia, largely populated by women. As the spectators slowly discover, their sons and husbands were taken away during the war and were never heard from again. The movie unfolds around the daily lives of women in the village. Daily tasks might appear meaningless but they are essential for the survival of the protagonists and their community. By focusing on daily matters, this movie has marked a significant switch from the atrocities of war that had previously permeated the film production in the post-Yugoslav cinemas (Borjan 2021).

Female protagonists in *Snow* attempt to suppress their memories of violence and their silence is reflected in the narrative since their war traumas are left apart from the story. By focusing on daily matters, this movie has marked a significant switch from the atrocities of war that had previously permeated the film production in the post-Yugoslav cinemas, Begić inserts elements of magic realism in approaching the trauma (Borjan 2021). The hair of Ali, the only boy in the village, grows long overnight every time it is cut short, Jelača argues that this occurrence is connected to his survival since he was not taken away by Serbian soldiers like other men in the village because he was mistaken for a girl but it is also proof that „his trauma is lodged in his body and takes control of his physical appearance” (Jelača in Borjan 2021: 171). The sound in the movie is for the most part diegetic, which further underscores the silence of the women. Their lives are permeated by mutual support and solidarity, sadness but also joy and humor, however, a certain optimism emerges at the end of the movie when the women decide to develop a small business and produce local products, thus refusing the position of victimhood and stressing their ability to make a self-sustainable living (Borjan 2021). Begić and Žbanić were generally recognized as the first female post-Yugoslav directors to address the issue of female war traumas and the burden women carry after gender-based violence. Post-Yugoslav female directors avoid historical narratives, they do not focus on big events in recent history but they shift their gaze to daily hardships in an oppressive patriarchal society, however, female directors eschew the narratives of victimization and employ a different strategy; female protagonists in their films take an active attitude to problems, trying to sort out a better future for themselves and their families, the two Bosnian directors broke with the tradition of representing women on screen (Borjan 2021).

In post-Yugoslav cinematography women were often represented as silent, passive, deprived of their own will and objects of male lust.

The last feature film, which we will elaborate is *Pretty Villages Burn Nicely*, directed by Serbian director Srđan Dragojević. The film focuses on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a retrospective on life in Yugoslavia. The film’s protagonists Milan and Halil, friends since childhood and in the war on opposite sides, a symbolic representation of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. If we compare this film with the films we elaborated earlier, then it represents a culture of violence rather than a culture of non-violence, because the film is permeated with scenes of violence that include murders, gender-based violence, destruction of villages, derogatory words: everything that war represents. The film also presents a male perspective and

view of war and war events, unlike the previous ones that we have elaborated on, which present a feminist perspective. However, it is necessary to mention that this film was released a year after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996. The film is permeated with a lot of symbolism, from the “tavern” named “Sloga“, which at the beginning of the film represents the place where all the villagers gather, and during the film the place where military formations gather, the tunnel itself, which in the time of Yugoslavia represented peace, the building of the state, in war it represents the complete opposite.

On several occasions, through the dialogues between the actors, the film wants to show that none of them knows how and why the violence happened; one of the actors of the film utters the following sentence: *You see, we burn down a village, and we don't even know its name.* The film also shows the influence of the media on the wars of the 90s with different interpretations of events, often calling for violence. The elaboration of the mentioned film we will end with several questions which are essential to be considered:

- *Does the film relativise the crimes and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina?*
- *Does the film represent the facts or not?*
- *Could and did the film contribute to reconciliation, and did it show the senselessness of war?*
- *Were they all unaware of the situation and condition they found themselves in?*
- *Does the film represent the trend of self-exoticism and the portrayal of Balkan culture as archaic, violent, and barbaric, as it was said by author Pavičić, (Pavičić in Borjan 2021: 158)*
- *Can we categorise this film as one that exclusively represents the culture of violence or non-violence? Could it be both?*

The documentary *Contested Memories and the Frozen Conflict*¹⁵ produced by the Center for Research on Religion, Politics and Society, directed by Nikola Knežević, problematizes the culture of memory, the collective memory, which by all is selective. The documentary focuses on the following topics: the importance of religious communities in the process of reconciliation, but also the role of religious communities in crimes during the wars of the 90s in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the importance of truth commissions such as RECOM, as Dinko Gruhonjić highlights the importance of state-supported initiatives like RECOM for credible documentation of

15 Link for the documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hPtqkQTXD0>. The documentary was published in 2016, date of access (26. 05. 2024).

war victims, non-selective/selective approach to victims, dealing with war crimes of all nations (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks). But what is most important, the documentary showed how much work still needs to be done on reconciliation in the region of the former Yugoslavia.

The documentary *Contested Memories and the Frozen Conflict* also underscores the essential self-reflection required of religious groups to shift from fueling nationalistic populism to becoming catalysts for positive societal transformation, as Alen Krstić asserts that religions must confront their own guilt to become agents of positive change, and it is questioned what kind of theology and spirituality religious communities promote if they enable neighbors to turn against each other overnight?

Table 1¹⁶

Films processing the war (as past/memory)	Films referring to the war (from the present)	Features films	Documentaries	Features films through a feminist perspective	Culture of violence	Culture of non-violence
Esma's Secret	Contested memories and the Frozen Conflict	For Those Who Can Tell No Tales	Contested memories and the Frozen Conflict	For Those Who Can Tell No Tales	Pretty Villages Burn Nicely	Contested memories and the Frozen Conflict
Contested memories and the Frozen Conflict	For Those Who Can Tell No Tales	Esma's Secret		Esma's Secret		For Those Who Can Tell No Tales
Pretty Villages Burn Nicely	Esma's Secret	Snow		Snow		Esma's Secret
	Snow	Pretty Villages Burn Nicely				Snow

16 Presents our categorization of elaborated films and documentaries, based on theoretical interpretations of films by different authors. It shows our interpretation, whether the listed films in the table below glorifies violence or promotes non-violence and reconciliation, treating film as a storytelling medium focused on content over form. The table also aims to show the difference between films made from a feminist perspective and those that present a male view of war. With the aforementioned categorization, we wanted to show that popular geopolitics, which we observed through one way of its expression, the film showed that post-Yugoslav cinematography construct and affirm violent patterns of social action, and unfortunately to a much lesser extent they deconstruct violent narratives and discourses, excluding films from a feminist perspective, elaborated in the table.

CONCLUSION

Trauma and memory may be used in cinema and popular media to proclaim victimhood, unresolved nostalgia, nationalism, or fake national pride, but they can also move to personal witnessing and reconciliation

(Borjan 2021: 174)

Through our paper, we asked ourselves a couple of questions, which are listed below, and we will be answering them as part of our concluding considerations:

- *Do film, as a form of geopolitical content or discourse (popular), only serve to glorify violence, or can it serve to glorify non-violence and reconciliation?*
- *How much is violence or non-violence represented in the feature films?*
- *Did certain feature films show the senselessness of war and lead to a process of reconciliation, and to what extent can war-themed feature films have a message of peace?*

The mass media instruments – films, commercials, cartoons, and television programs - have become the main ones in terms of political influence. In that context if we look at the popular geopolitics, which Jason Dittmer observes primarily through case studies of film, comics, video games, sermons, and new media we can conclude that film can certainly be an instrument to promote the culture of violence, which was the case with most of the films that teased the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most of those films showed the war from the perspective of men, who did play a dominant role in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also for its end (Dayton Peace Agreement). As this short overview of the post-Yugoslav films on trauma and violence demonstrates, „cinema reflects different stages in the life of a society from the initial encounter with traumatic events to the assessment and development of the discourse of trauma” (Borjan 2021: 174). The films analyzed in this paper show the tensions between attempts to represent individual traumas and the political instrumentalization of these experiences. But if we refer to the feature films and documentaries that we have elaborated on, then we can conclude that feature films and documentaries can still talk about war without showing explicit scenes of violence; these were exactly the films directed by Jasmila Žbanić and Aida Begić. The culture of violence is certainly an integral part of post-Yugoslav cinematography, especially when we talk about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, the films that we have elaborated on did have a message of peace. They did show the insignificance of war. They had a message of peace in the sense that they showed the evil that war brings with it, traumas that remain for a lifetime and are passed on from generation to generation.

In summary, films play a crucial role in popular geopolitics by shaping, reflecting, and challenging public perceptions. Films can significantly shape how audiences perceive geopolitical events, regions, and cultures. They often simplify complex issues, creating memorable images and narratives that become ingrained in public consciousness. Post-Yugoslav cinematography and popular geopolitics are closely intertwined, with films serving as powerful tools for shaping, challenging, and reflecting the complex realities of the region. Post-Yugoslav films often depict the wars and conflicts of the 1990s, shaping national narratives and identities; some of filmmakers use their work to challenge official national narratives and to provide alternative perspectives on the past, for example, *Grbavica* (2006). Besides feature films, the documentary genre plays a crucial role in post-Yugoslav cinema, providing a platform for investigative journalism, historical documentation, and personal testimonies, which is the reason why we have included documentaries in our research. The relationship between popular geopolitics and post-Yugoslav cinematography reveals how films not only shape and reflect geopolitical narratives but also promote cultures of both violence and nonviolence, highlighting the complexities of national identity, historical trauma, and reconciliation in the region.

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UTICAJ POPULARNE GEOPOLITIKE NA REPREZENTACIJU KULTURE (NE)NASILJA U POSTJUGOSLOVENSKOJ KINEMATOGRAFIJI

Sažetak:

Rad će se fokusirati na diskurse sadržane u popularnoj geopolitici postjugoslovenske kinematografije sa fokusom na reprezentaciju kulture (ne)nasilja. Geopolitički diskursi sastavni su dio savremene geopolitike, nastali su pod uticajem geopolitičkih tradicija i imaginacija, prepliću se i čine pozadinu svih aspekata geopolitike (Zorko 2014). Kako bismo prikazali uticaj i povezanost popularne geopolitike i nasilja, elaborirati ćemo ključne koncepte kao što su: popularna geopolitika, geopolitika emocija, nasilje, kultura nenasilja, kultura sjećanja, kolektivno pamćenje i trauma, post-ratni narativi predstavljeni kroz popularnu geopolitiku u zemljama bivše Jugoslavije, koji će se posmatrati kroz postjugoslovensku kinematografiju. Rad će se fokusirati na post-ratne narative vezane za rat u Bosni i Hercegovini koji se dogodio u periodu od 1992. do 1995. godine, kroz filmove koji su nastali u Bosni i Hercegovini i Srbiji od perioda završetka rata do danas. Naš cilj je da kroz filmove i dokumentarne filmove prikazemo post-ratne narative kojima ćemo pokazati koliko su oni doprinijeli kulturi nasilja ili nenasilja. Cilj rada je također da prikaže kako film može uticati na stvaranje postratnih narativa, kao oblik geopolitičkog sadržaja ili diskursa (popularnog), a s obzirom na to da popularna geopolitika, kroz sve svoje segmente i načine djelovanja, bez obzira da li je to kroz medije, časopise, filmove, internet, utiče na svijest određenih društvenih i kulturnih kategorija država, društava, i na kraju pojedinaca.

Ključne riječi: popularna geopolitika; nasilje; kultura nenasilja; kultura sjećanja; post-ratni narativi; post-jugoslovenska kinematografija; rat u Bosni i Hercegovini

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