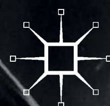
DISLOCATED SCREEN MEMORY

NARRATING TRAUMA IN POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMA

DIJANA JELAČA



Dislocated Screen Memory

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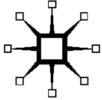

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To lost childhoods, across borders, and to families, across oceans

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Introduction: War Trauma as Screen Memory

If there are four words that hold together the edges of this book, those are: *war, screen, trauma*, and *memory*. Each of them functions in this book more as an archive of meanings rather than a rigidly defined concept. Often, this book is about challenging standard understandings of each of the four rather than stabilizing their meanings. But more than anything, it is about their relationship in the elusive cultural context broadly defined by the term "post-Yugoslav cinema," where "post" implies a cultural space that is never entirely "beyond" (Bhabha 1994). The work presented here is the result of a years-long struggle to understand the elusive role of culture in catastrophes and their aftermath. My work is defined by overarching questions that haunt me because of their ethical importance, but also because there are no definitive answers to them. A search for finite answers when it comes to war trauma as screen memory is an always already lost battle. Instead of finite conclusions, there are only fleeting impressions, tendencies, and trajectories than one can detect and try to give temporary coherence to. This, perhaps, might at times be unsatisfying as an analytical exercise for some, but when it comes to traumatic memory and its cultural life, it might be the only way to arrive at a deeper understanding. The analytics of trauma are by default a weak theory, willing to surrender to not knowing as much as knowing (and thus, in many ways, mimicking the workings of trauma itself, as an experience that is simultaneously unavoidable and unknowable in equal measure).

In the most general sense, I am concerned with the question of how a coping with painful memories takes place through and with culture. Film, to me, was the logical choice for such explorations, both because of my academic training and because of my deep, lifelong affective investment in the medium. Perhaps the scopophilic fascination started when I first watched a film—an earliest memory of viewing, of a film whose name I do not remember as it appears that my memory has privileged the act of spectatorship more so than the content on the screen itself. Almost certainly, a definitive imprint of the relationship between screen and trauma

was laid when I watched Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1979) at seven years old; I did not understand most of it, but some scenes nevertheless stuck with me for years to come, imprinted as image-memories that came to make a lot more sense some years later, when war became my own reality. When the film came on my television set again during the Bosnian war years, my teenage self watched it in awe, shocked *both* by the accuracies of her childhood memories of the film and by the ways in which the film seemed to help me make sense of my own world and the violence that surrounded it. *The Deer Hunter* thus helped me identify early on this dialectic dynamic: that film *both* constitutes traumatic memory and is constituted by it. Hence, *The Deer Hunter* acted, for my teenage self, as a repository of difficult memories, both of its own protagonists as well as of the memories I brought to it as I was making sense of my own experience of war. I attempted to apply such tentatively dialectical analytics—of film as both constitutive of and constituted by traumatic memories—to the films discussed in this book. These films were all made during or after the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, by the filmmakers of its successor states, and represent a wide spectrum of approaches to the questions that haunt: how and why does such violence take place, and who are "we" in its wake? In particular, I am interested in trauma as cultural memory, and in the way in which the body of post-Yugoslav films that reflect valances of traumatic memory stage a three-fold repetition. As Raya Morag has claimed in the context of post-traumatic New German Cinema and American Vietnam war cinema, "on the first level, post-traumatic films that relate to the same historical-traumatic event create a body of work in which each additional film is a repetition (additional re-enactment)" (2009: 24). On another level, Morag finds that trauma cinema stages repetitions within each separate cinematic text, and therefore, "the repetitive structures that appear within each of the film texts in and of themselves actualize the repetitiveness phenomena" (24). A third form of repetition could be noted, where separate films stage mutual intertextual repetitiveness among themselves—an endemic aspect of the cinematic recurrence of trauma that informs some of my analyses in this book. These separate-yet-connected layers of repetition work together to create what Eisner has, in a different context, called a "haunted screen" (2008)—an archive of both visible and invisible ghosts of traumatic memory that inform the meanings of cinematic texts and their contexts. Such films constitute "a technological memory bank" (Kaes: ix) and reflect the fact that memory is not only an organic cognitive process, but also a *technology* that can be distinctly inorganic (as emphasized, for instance, in Landsberg's work on cinema as "prosthetic memory" [2004]). Moreover, as illustrated in my personal anecdote about *The Deer Hunter*, in the encounter between the spectator and screen, cinematic memory often takes

a hybrid shape of inorganic and organic forms mutually intertwined and informative of one another until they can no longer be fully separated.

Somehow Cinematic: The Valances of Trauma and their Expressive Forms

Tracing the genealogy of the term "trauma" and its study, Ruth Leys notes that "from the beginning trauma was understood as an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what had happened" (2000: 9). Thus, while the title of this book signals the process of narrating trauma,[1] I remain mindful of the fact that trauma can often be "narrated" only in dislocated, even unfamiliar or ineligible forms that may be haunted by, but never entirely *privy to* trauma's deepest aspects. Mieke Bal notes that "narrative does play a role in our understanding of traumatic recall, but the status of traumatic memories is virtually that of the exception that proves the rule" (1999: viii). With ineligibility in focus when it comes to narrative representations of trauma, I hope to incite a rethinking of what constitutes a narration to begin with, rather than dismiss the term as entirely inadequate with reference to trauma. While trauma may not be fully narratable, it unquestionably influences narratives that emerge *around* it. In that sense, we can speak of narrating around, rather than about trauma. Moreover, the question of *whose* trauma is being narrated around is one that centrally informs my approaches to trauma in post-Yugoslav cinema. In the most general sense, I consider the valances of trauma that fall into two categories: the trauma of the victim and, more controversially, the trauma of the perpetrator. The latter has been disputed as an experience that could be deemed traumatic (in the work of Ruth Leys, for instance), and I remain aware of the ethical implications of such a denomination. Moreover, Thomas Elsaesser implies that the proliferation of trauma as "the new currency of identity and victimhood, indeed of identity *as* victimhood" (2014: 7), and its application to both survivors and perpetrators might inadvertently erase the meaning of trauma altogether. Yet, my focus on both victim and perpetrator experiences as traumatic (albeit in entirely different ways) is not geared toward proposing that the two are *absolute* or *only* categories, nor that trauma is applicable to just about anyone, but rather as a way to propose an intervention into discursive processes that flatten trauma into a singular or one-sided experience. With the inclusion of perpetrator trauma (overtly present in many films discussed in this book), I echo Michael Rothberg's suggestion, drawn from LaCapra, that "being traumatized does not necessarily imply victim status" (2009: 90). Moreover, with attention given to perpetrator trauma,

I seek to give due attention to the processes that Raya Morag has described, in the context of Israeli cinema, as "society's unwillingness to accept that the perpetrator's trauma is part and parcel of denial of responsibility for atrocities made in its name" (2013: 6).[2] In other words, focus on perpetrator trauma as an important aspect of war and postwar experience might bring into intimate focus, rather than conceal, the material dimensions of the institutionalized structures that place an individual in the role of a participant in mass atrocities in the first place. Such focus, moreover, does not in any way displace considerations of victim and survivor traumas, but rather situates them within the grid of differently articulated frameworks of meaning that the word "trauma" can carry.

The question that frames this book concerns cinematic storytelling devices that make at least partially intelligible and culturally meaningful narratives around trauma, outside of the frameworks of ethno-nationalist modes of belonging (which are still prevalent in the post-Yugoslav context). A term often deployed yet defined with increasingly less frequency or nuance, trauma is psychoanalytically understood to be an experience of devastating psychological injury that leaves lasting marks on the psyche. Drawing from Freud's use of the term "traumatic neurosis" in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Cathy Caruth suggests that "in the most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (1996: 11). Moreover, in interpreting the meaning of war trauma in Freud's writing, Maureen Turim notes that "Freud understood war trauma as a series of events that occur in a particular context of disillusionment and dislocation" (2001: 206). Since trauma itself is not fully consciously processed at the time of its occurrence, it often presents as a return of some aspect of the traumatic event by way of flashbacks or recurring nightmares that interrupt the continuity of post-traumatic life. Trauma and memory are thus deeply intertwined, so much so that the term "traumatic memory" is often deployed as synonymous with the trauma itself—and to some extent it is, inasmuch as it is only in the fragmented memories of the traumatic event that the mind is able to work through trauma's injurious impact or access some aspects of it (van der Kolk & van der Hart refer to this temporal convergence as "traumatic experience/memory" and argue that this experience/memory is "timeless" [1995: 177], while Bal notes that "the concept of traumatic memory is in fact a misnomer, if not a contradiction" [viii]).

Literary trauma studies, rooted in psychoanalytic readings of trauma texts (influenced particularly by Freud's aforementioned "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" as well as *Moses and Monotheism*), emerged largely

in relation to the Holocaust studies, but have since been taken up more generally, as theories helpful in thinking through the often vicarious and clandestine ways in which trauma is inscribed in expressive forms in many historical and geopolitical contexts. Cathy Caruth's work has been particularly influential, so much so that it ran the risk of becoming an unsuspecting grand narrative in a domain of inquiry where grand narratives seem particularly inappropriate. Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) is, among other things, about trauma's inscription into history as well as, perhaps centrally, about the imperative of bearing witness to the wound of the Other. In her book, Caruth pointedly asserts that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (1996: 4, emphasis in the text). This is an important point to remember about trauma—it is not an easily locatable experience in terms of its temporal and spatial occurrence, in part because its impact shatters the continuous experience of the two. Trauma is never merely a single event that took place in the past (thus the term "post-traumatic" appears somewhat inadequate, as it implies that trauma is locatable only in the moment of the original event, while everything else is marked as its "after"). Rather, trauma is re-ignited and re-experienced, in various forms, through unwitting recurrences in the present, thus blurring the boundary between "then" and "now."

Caruth's emphasis on trauma's unassimilable nature at the moment of the original event has often been reduced to the conclusion that trauma is altogether entirely unknowable and, therefore, inexpressible. Certainly, her point was more nuanced—that traditional expressive forms may be inadequate for rendering trauma narratives and that to address trauma is to always balance between the knowable and the unknowable, the remembered as well as the forgotten (or the repressed). Some aspects of trauma might never be fully assimilated in the psyche, understood or even remembered, and this is why it is important to call attention to trauma's "inherent latency" (17) that increasingly permeates many cultural forms. There is a paradox in calling attention to cultural expressions of trauma by way of situating forgetting as one of its central aspects. In Caruth's words: "the historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but *that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all*" (17, emphasis mine). Moreover, in the newer focus on perpetrator trauma, the focus on belatedness has been replaced by the focus on "being there," since perpetrators' experiences are not typically marked by the element of unknowing, or surprise, but rather by knowing *ahead* of the event that they will be perpetrating it. Therefore, perpetrator

trauma is marked by a disassociation from the Other onto whom they inflict violence.

As influential as Caruth's work has been, many have subsequently taken issue with her treatment of trauma. For instance, Leys argues that Caruth collapses the categories of perpetrator and victim onto one another, while others have found that Caruth's treatment of trauma as an extraordinary catastrophic event that is outside of the domain of the everyday elides the ways in which, for some people, trauma is an everyday, systematic, and perhaps even ordinary experience (for instance, in an ongoing experience of domestic violence, sexual abuse or racial discrimination). Ann Cvetkovich notes that trauma is a concept whose meaning cannot be assumed to be trans-historical. Rather, she argues that it emerged with and through modernism in particular. "Trauma and modernity thus can be understood as mutually constitutive categories: trauma is one of the affective experiences, or to use Raymond Williams' phrase, 'structures of feeling,' that characterizes the lived experience of capitalism" (2003:17). Critiquing the fact that "sociocultural approaches to trauma have been overshadowed by psychoanalytic and psychiatric discourse" (17), Cvetkovich challenges Caruth's universalizing of trauma, as it runs the risk of erasing historical specificities of particular events and their traumatizing effects. Cvetkovich calls for more work that explores trauma's cultural expressions rooted in specific sociopolitical and economic contexts and argues that "defined culturally rather than clinically, trauma studies becomes an interdisciplinary field for exploring the public cultures created around traumatic events" (18).

Theorists invested in the postcolonial approaches to trauma have leveled a similar critique at Caruth. Postcolonial critiques of trauma studies have suggested that the field has been largely dominated by the trauma of the Western or European subject, as well as largely informed by Western-based understandings of what constitutes a subject to begin with. For instance, noting that trauma studies "are almost exclusively concerned with traumatic experiences of white Westerners and solely employ critical methodologies emanating from a Euro-American context" (2008: 2), Craps & Buelens warn that

> [B]y ignoring or marginalizing non-Western traumatic events and histories and non-Western theoretical work, trauma studies may actually assist in the perpetuation of Eurocentric views and structures that maintain or widen the gap between the West and the rest of the world (2).

Instead of reiterating Eurocentrism, Michael Rothberg looks for trauma texts that reflect multiplicities and parallels between traumatic events,

since "such anachronistic and anatopic (dis)placements bring together the Holocaust, slavery, and colonialism as singular yet relational histories in what I call *multidirectional memory*" (2008: 225, emphasis in the text).[3] Yet, all these critiques of trauma studies still largely rest on the analyses of literary cultures. While deeply indebted to literary trauma studies, my project is an exploration of trauma reflected on and constituted through the cinematic screen.

In recent years, there has been a rise of scholarly interest in the relationship between the (cinematic) screen and trauma, with several book-length studies and edited volumes on the topic appearing in close succession. The relationship between trauma and the image is a fraught one, as visual representations of suffering have frequently been deemed problematic and objectifying (Sontag 2004), if not outright taboo (for instance, the images and films of the inmates taken inside the Nazi concentration camps). In their edited volume *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas nevertheless note that "trauma studies consistently return to an iconoclastic notion of the traumatic event as that which simultaneously demands urgent representation but shatters all potential frames of comprehension and reference" (2007:3). Observing the rise in popularity of the research on trauma's relation to the cinematic screen, Susannah Radstone notes that trauma had become a " 'popular cultural script' in need of contextualization and analysis in its own right—a symptom, the cause of which needs to be sought elsewhere" (2001: 3). Radstone worries about the "subjugation" of screen studies under the dominant trauma theories derived from literary studies and psychoanalysis. Indeed, while I find the works of literary and psychoanalytic trauma studies very insightful and informative in my own understanding of trauma and its expressive forms, I am at the same time mindful of the unique relationship between screen and trauma as perhaps extending to different valances of representability than non-visual language and literature might do. Extending Caruth's assertion that the language of trauma needs to be "somehow literary," perhaps we can think about how expressions of trauma are increasingly becoming "somehow cinematic" and why that might be the case. The term "screen" itself cannot be taken to mean one thing here. While I often use it to indicate the presence of the cinematic apparatus of vision, the term also implies a barrier, a separation through a lens that might convey things in ways that are not necessarily reliable. In that sense, screen might be more about vagueness than clarity, inaccessibility than availability—just like trauma itself. Indeed, Janet Walker has noted that there are some intrinsic properties of the audiovisual media that lend themselves to the paradoxes of trauma and representability, as "film and video texts are always already constructed through the processes

of selection and ordering, yet they can also reproduce, mechanically or electronically, an actual profilmic or provideographic event" (2005: xix). Similarly, E. Ann Kaplan has observed that "trauma is often seen as inherently linked to modernity" and, furthermore, that "cinema is singled out [. . .] as involving a special relationship to trauma in the 'shock' experience of modernity, especially as cinema disoriented traditional, primarily literary cultures" (2005: 24). If trauma is often described as an out-of-body experience, then spectatorship is inscribed in the event itself, where the traumatized subject is forced into the role of a spectator of her own traumatization.

Unsurprisingly then, fragments of trauma permeate cinema often, as illustrated in Russell Kilbourn's work on (traumatic) memory in international art and mainstream film. He argues that

> The feature film remains the dominant narrative form in the twenty-first century; hence the importance and urgency of achieving a greater understanding of memory's determination, in a very meaningful sense, by cinema (2010: 9)

Kilbourn notes a distinction "between 'art' and mainstream examples of memory films vis-à-vis what might be called a 'crisis' of memory as cinema's, and thus the culture's, 'meta-traumatic' engagement with its own history" (2010: 136). Such important insights about the links between trauma and cinema notwithstanding, Radstone is right to note that trauma's rise in popularity in academic work generally, and screen studies particularly, is worthy of closer attention in its own right. Perhaps it is a mere trend that falls under the rubric of chance developments. But perhaps there is something more to it—perhaps scholars in the humanities are reacting to a growing number of public cultures that reflect existential precarity (often coupled with trauma of both the extraordinary and ordinary, everyday kind) as the dominant human condition of our time. If we are less cynical about the supposed "trendiness" of the topic and oriented more toward the sheer volume, range, and frequency of cultural forms that reflect (post)modern life (under neoliberal capitalist conditions) as traumatically precarious, maybe the framework of trauma studies can be understood as a mode of grappling with such scripts, making sense of them, or giving them due attention by bringing them to scholarly scrutiny. Moreover, perhaps the framework of trauma studies—adjusted to a specific medium of representation and well as specific socio-cultural contexts—allows for scholarly interventions that can remain mindful of the fact that, like with the traumatic experience itself, there can be no definitive answers, complete representations, closures, or finite resolutions. Such scholarly work, then, performatively reflects something about the trauma itself: just

as trauma is not fully knowable as an experience, so the scholarly work on such an experience does not purport to fully know, or need to know, all the interpretative "answers" that lead to definitive conclusions.

I remain in the domain of the cultural work of trauma and its vicissitudes, some of its myriad complexities illustrated in Agostinho, Antz & Ferriera's edited volume *Panic and Mourning: The Cultural Work of Trauma* (2012). The attention to trauma in cultural and screen studies reveals something about the links between precarious or injurious experiences and culture itself: that culture can operate as a channel of coping, a repository of impossible memories, or a site of working through. Moreover, war and screen have been exposed as intricately connected in their technological development. In his groundbreaking study of the technologies of cinema being used as weapons of war, Paul Virilio (1989) has found that the technology used to create cinema has been intrinsically tied with the development of war machineries and vice versa. As Virilio finds, wars fought in the twentieth century became increasingly about *seeing* and *vision* (and from an ever greater distance at that), as film cameras and visual lenses became an intrinsic aspect of that evolution. According to Virilio, "war consists not so much in scoring territorial, economic, or other material victories as in appropriating the 'immateriality' of perceptual fields" (10). Far more complicated than being mere means of representing wars then, screen technologies themselves become implicated in the very enactment of warfare, where "apparatuses of death as technologies of spectatorship" (Levi 2007: 158) reveal an uneasy material link between cinema, vision, injury, and death. Furthermore, perhaps we have arrived at another layer of understanding: that screen, as a mechanism of vision, is not only a technology of war, but also perhaps more poignantly, a technology of trauma. If screen has an inherent proximity to trauma, it might therefore represent a key site through which trauma *can* be knowable, remembered, expressed, understood, revealed, or made otherwise material in our screen-saturated realities. Screen can not only be an accomplice in injury (Sontag 2004), but also, increasingly, the sole site of bearing witness to the traumas of others. Perhaps it is this inherently ambivalent positionality of the screen—as the medium of injury in its own right as well as the medium that archives injuries and calls back to the imperative to bear witness—that makes us stuck on the dialectic relationship between screen and trauma and drives us to attempt to work through some of its entanglements.

Similarly to Cvetkovich, Thomas Elsaesser (2001) has wondered whether trauma can be generalizable, or whether such attempts are always inevitably problematic. An answer to the risk of making trauma into too homogeneous an experience—thereby depoliticizing it—might be to locate it within specific historicities and, even then, not to assume its uniform meaning. Elsaesser does this in the context of German cinema and

its address of the Holocaust, or lack thereof, where he treats absence *as* presence (2014). Following Elsaesser's trail, in a somewhat different direction that takes me to divergent conclusions, I turn to a specific geopolitical location and history, to explore the question of how war, screen, trauma, and memory mutually inform one another in an assemblage that constitutes post-Yugoslav public cultures. The context of time and place is critical in order for trauma's circulation to be understood through the prism of ethical urgency attached to lived experience, not separate from it. In his analysis of the complicated role of context for postcolonial trauma studies, for instance, Norman Saadi Nikro states that "The question of context is all the more challenging when we acknowledge that people embody trauma as extremities of narrative, discursive, logical forms of articulation" (2014: 2). Moreover, Nikro adds, the study of trauma from the perspective of postcolonial critique "involves an acquaintance with historical circumstance and con/textures in which texts are embedded, and can be approached as products and patterns of hermeneutic inhabiting and dwelling" (5).

That context with respect to the study at hand is an interethnic war, or series of conflicts subsumed under the umbrella category of "the breakup of Yugoslavia." However, the emphasis on trauma's relation to war in this book should not be understood as an implication that war is a monolithic and easily defined event that affects everyone the same way nor should it be taken as implying that war is the only or most traumatizing collective experience, since that would reiterate the problematic point that trauma is always extraordinary. Quite the contrary, in some of the chapters that follow, I show how certain less conventional examples of war cinema depict war trauma as distinctly ordinary, even tedious. This is precisely how one might describe the arc of *Days and Hours* (*Kod amidže Idriza*, Pjer Žalica, 2004), a Bosnian film that plays as a heartbreaking testament to the processes of grief and healing, traumatic memory and loss in the face of a devastating war, yet a film that barely mentions war and, instead of making a spectacle out of bodily or psychic pain, decides to linger on human faces in an everydayness that hinges on boredom and on the prosaic routines and rituals as key ways to approach the question of coping with trauma after the war is over. In doing so, it becomes one of the most insightful exposés about war and postwar experience precisely because it defies expectations that they be represented in the register of dramatic affect and overabundance of pain. Perhaps it is an insightful approach to representing war and its aftermath precisely because it does not make a sensationalist spectacle of its subjects nor does it heighten its emotional tone to an elevated level, but rather allows its protagonists to be silent and reflective, calm and involved in their ordinary rituals while intimately and quietly coping with

devastating loss and traumatic memories. As dramatic as it is, war does not necessarily displace small performances of everyday ordinariness to such an extent that they become erased altogether. Rather, war shifts their meanings ever so slightly so that coffee is drunk a little bit differently, food is eaten slightly more tentatively, sadness and loss imbuing them with an ever so slightly (but not entirely) altered meaning. As in *Days and Hours*, in many post-Yugoslav films, conflict itself takes place offscreen, and its heightened state of spectacular and affective abundance is replaced by the more private and intimate structures of coping that are organized around the seemingly unremarkable everydayness and routine, occasionally interrupted by onsets of traumatic memory. Trauma is, therefore, often a quiet presence unremarked on in words, but reflected visually as an experience that lingers and shifts everydayness ever so slightly yet poignantly.

Dislocation and Screen Memories

In *Defeated Masculinity* (2009), Raya Morag notes that war films are rarely considered through the prism of trauma as a distinctive category of either representation or scholarly analysis.[4] The reason for this might be that war films are often taken to be about history rather than trauma and, as Morag notes, "there is an imminent clash between representing history and representing trauma" (24), a clash that is perhaps as necessary as it is inevitable. If understood to be more about trauma than about history, perhaps war films could be relieved of the burden of historical accuracy, since traumatic recurrence rarely answers to the compulsion to be factually accurate. Quite the contrary, traumatic memory often alters the way facts are perceived. More than historical accuracy, trauma cinema is about memory's inadequate relationship to past events and their recurring role in the present. For instance, Janet Walker's *Trauma Cinema* (2005) endeavors "to show how certain videos and films advance our understanding of the etiology and sequelae of trauma by elaborating the links between, and the consequences of, catastrophic past events and demon memories" (vxi). Importantly, Walker notes, "a joint consideration of 'trauma cinema' and psychological theorizing has the potential to radically reconstruct the roadblocks of positivism and binarism at the intersection of catastrophe, memory, and historical representation" (xix).

Walker's demon memories frequently reappear in the representational mechanisms that I highlight in this book. The dynamics between appearance and concealment are reflected in my term "dislocated screen memory"—which I use for cinematic memory that is indicative of trauma in the act of its simultaneous erasure and emergence. Such memory can often be approached only indirectly, as a dislocation of the normative ways

that otherwise frame remembering in their focus on linear coherence or accuracy subsumed under dominant (and politicized) regimes of knowing. The dynamics of dislocated screen memory are the dominant mode of reflecting and constituting trauma in post-Yugoslav cinema. I draw on Freud's term "screen memory," which he has defined as memory "which owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relation existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed" (1976: 501). Screen memory is a stand in for something else that is inaccessible, forgotten, or omitted in direct recollection because it is unpleasant, traumatic, and therefore repressed by the mind.[5] Screen memory is typically associated with seemingly benign childhood memories acting as screens for unwanted, more troubling, or complicated recollections. Freud indicates that an increased frequency of screen memory is present in "neurotics"—that is, traumatized individuals suffering from mental disorders. One of the central mechanisms of screen memory is displacement, or transference of one memory onto another, a doubling via staged parallelism, which is often impossible to discern at a glance. Moreover, childhood memories that act as screen memories for more repressed recollections are often phantasms—events that did not necessarily happen in the shape in which they are being remembered but have been altered by the mind in order to mediate or accommodate some aspects of more troubling, repressed memories. In this structure, memories are assemblages *of* the past rather than *from* the past—they do not revisit the past as much as reassemble its traces for the purpose of present needs. As Reed & Levine note, the concept of screen memories led Freud "to an extraordinary conjecture that perhaps all memories did not consist of the retrieval of pristinely stored veridical objective, immutable perceptions, and 'facts,' but were instead assembled and shaped at each moment with a specific set of dynamic needs in mind" (2015: 28). Moreover, focus on screen memories as phantasms, "even deliberately counterfeited memories could enable historical truths to emerge, strengthen remembering communities, or even produce new ones" (Freeman et al. 2013: 2).

Toward the end of his essay, Freud puts forth a provocative stipulation: that screen memories should not be all too quickly distinguished from the seemingly more authentic memories, since "the raw material of memory traces" (503) might be more generally inaccessible other than through screened mediation. "The recognition of this fact," argues Freud, "must diminish the distinction we have drawn between screen memories and other memories derived from our childhood" (503). This stipulation could perhaps be extended beyond childhood memories and to the latency of traumatic memory in particular, as its imprecise and often factually inaccurate quality, marked by displacement, has been frequently observed.

In the "screening off" of unconscious or inaccessible memories by other memories that seek to construct the past in a more acceptable way, the concept of screen memory is closely associated not only with trauma, but also, curiously, with the dynamics of the cinematic screen and memory as such. We might deploy Freud's screen memory as an analytic that may illuminate the relationship between the cinematic screen and traumatic memory, or, rather, illuminate something about the dynamics of cinematic memories as both revealing and concealing, authentic and inauthentic at the same time. Cinema and the concept of screen memories curiously emerged around the same time (Freud's essay dates back to 1899), and indeed, the analytical stretch from screen memories to cinematic screens is not difficult to make, particularly when one takes into consideration a prominent aspect of the cultural workings of cinema: cinema is always an interplay between memory—both reflected and constructed through film—and its role in the present.

Expanding on, or *dislocating*, Freud's concept accordingly, by shifting some of its meanings away from individual presentations and more toward the cultural, public domains of cinematic mediation, I set out to tackle questions about trauma's role in the dislocated screen memories of a specific conflict, as depicted by the cinemas of various ethno-national sides that participated in the said conflict. If "cinematic representations have influenced—indeed shaped—our perspectives on the past; they function for us today as a technological memory bank," as Anton Kaes argues (1992: ix), how does an archive of post-Yugoslav trauma cinema—as one such "technological memory bank"—dislocate the dominant ethnocentric modes of remembering? Can such a dislocation be a lasting effect, and moreover, a transformative political stance conveyed culturally? While there might be more questions posed than answers offered, they are nevertheless tackled with a guiding belief that asking the right questions—even when they are not answerable—is an important starting point toward avoiding positivist conclusions about trauma, its cultural life, and its role in informing history on screen and beyond.

Spectatorship as Cultural Work of Memory

In illustrating the links between screen and trauma, one must acknowledge a third factor—the spectator—without whom the above link would be rendered entirely insignificant. I am particularly interested in the role of affect, as a sensory, largely pre-cognitive reaction to external input, which acts as the connecting glue between the spectator and screen. Influenced by Sara Ahmed's work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) and *The Promise of Happiness* (2010a), I do not treat emotions—one of the central

affective responses that humans experience, and arguably, the central connecting thread between the spectator and cinema—as simply *just there*, but rather as a product of affective attachments to other bodies and objects placed within history, present within cultural and other contingencies of mutually intertwined existence that is linked to hierarchies of power, or to the ideology that makes them meaningful. Furthermore, they are not always entirely self-evident either. "Emotions are important not in and of themselves, but for what they hide," argues Greg M. Smith (2003: 189). Ahmed's term "affective economies" is a poignant concept that illustrates the dynamic nature of the interconnectedness of emotional responses to the world around us with the ideologies that seamlessly integrate them into reiterating status quo. For Ahmed, affect is neither static nor firmly lodged within a body or a group of bodies, but rather, it is a dynamic process that resides in "an effect of the circulation between objects and signs" (2004: 45). While emotions are a kind of "concern-based" affect (Plantinga 2009: 29), affect itself encapsulates a much broader cluster of physical sensations whose "causal chain may be inaccessible to consciousness" (29). Yet affective responses, particularly those of an emotional kind, do not emerge entirely devoid of limitations posed by ideological formations that condition us to turn our affective investments toward some objects more than others.

I am interested in how the presence of trauma narratives, incomplete and disconcerting, as well as challenging of normative expressive forms, might instigate a turning toward objects for whom favorable affective investments are not supported by the ideology of ethno-national exclusivity. This does not mean that trauma itself exists outside of ideology or the politics of location, but it has the potential to disrupt it. Dubravka Žarkov has argued that "neither the body nor its losses and vulnerabilities exist beyond the historical, social and geo-political *time-space locations* of the embodied subjects" (2014: 164, emphasis in the text). If injury and pain temporarily dislocate one from the frameworks of locality (and by extension, ideology), their meaning or understanding almost inevitably returns one to the fold of historically situated time–space locations and their ideological interpellation. In the context of post-Yugoslav cultural spaces, the sanctioned objects of affirmative affective investments are typically members of one's own ethnic group. Can the presence of trauma, circulated as an affective cultural form, dislocate, even temporarily, the spectator's affective investments from the ideological interpellation that dictates how affect should be distributed, who should be loved, who should be hated, who should be ignored, and who empathized with?

Certainly, the full range of possible affect elicited, enhanced, or negated by trauma cinema is impossible to predict. The question gets even more

complicated when the sliding nature of lived trauma (whose range is marked by two polarities: the perpetrator and the victim) is introduced into the mix of the complicated identification processes enabled by and through film. However, in order to escape playing into the politicization of what Halberstam has called "competitive narratives about trauma,"[6] I resist marking some bodies and identities as inherently more precarious and vulnerable than others. Precarity and injury take place in specific contexts and within a convergence of concrete circumstances, which are sometimes indeed driven by identity politics and pre-existing, structural discrimination. At the same time, it does not follow that certain bodies and identities are inevitably susceptible to trauma, or that trauma is a guaranteed experience for them, while others are completely immune to it. To imply this is to reiterate troubling politics of ideological divisions that render some bodies as always passively helpless and others as always aggressively violent. Moreover, claiming a traumatized existence does not immediately delegate one in the category of a victim—as noted earlier, perpetrators can be rendered traumatized by their deeds without that classification implying a lack of personal and structural accountability, but rather calling overt attention to it.

In this book, I speculate about possible viewing positions that are allowed or denied by the cinematic screen, particularly through the prism of variously imagined valances of screen trauma. Indeed, trauma sometimes acts as a mechanism by which a film's otherwise potentially problematic stances are undermined from within. This book is deeply invested in exploring the question of how cinema affects the speculative spectator, especially if we take into consideration the notion that "the essential capacity of cinema in its huge temples was to shape society by putting order into visual chaos" (Virilio: 50). How does Yugoslav post-conflict cinema put order in the "visual chaos" that is the history of collective war experience, and moreover, how does it articulate and visually stabilize different approaches to remembering and forgetting, making them into an archive of public memories about violent events and their aftermath?

With respect to spectatorship, Linda Williams states that "no amount of empirical research into the sociology of actual audience will displace the desire to speculate about the effects of visual culture, and especially moving images, on hypothetical viewing subjects" (1995: 4). Along these lines, when I discuss the spectator—one who may engage in negotiating, or dis/identifying with the screen memories discussed here—s/he remains a hypothetical rather than an empirical figure. Moreover, the spectator is a figure constituted by the text as much as s/he constitutes the text in the act of viewing. I am influenced by Gledhill's suggestion that meaning

"arises out of a struggle or negotiation between competing frames of reference, motivation and experience" (2006: 114), as well as the recent affective turns in understanding spectatorship, which examine viewing experience outside of the psychoanalytically defined concepts of pleasure and desire. These approaches might have a lot to contribute to our understanding of screen trauma and spectatorship, as an affective encounter examined outside of the traditional frameworks postulated by psychoanalysis. Moreover, my own viewing biases, conscious and unconscious, will undoubtedly be revealed through my readings of the films and contexts at hand. My experiences of reading through, and variously dis/identifying with screen memories about the conflict that I myself lived through, offer *a* possible roadmap, but never a definitive one. I speculate about an unsteady and often messy proliferation of reading and identifying positions—some close, others far removed from my own affective reactions to viewing—and through that, I argue for the films' instability as singular texts predictable in offering paths to identification.

We can stipulate that the act of spectatorship serves as an enactment of cultural memory, where cultural memory is understood to be a collectively shared memory "that preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity" (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995: 130). Yet, cultural memory cannot be understood as a static object. "Cultural memorialization," writes Mieke Bal, is "an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future" (1999: vii). Moreover, Ann Cvetkovich suggests that focus on cultural memory is

> also a turn to the affective or felt experience of history as central to the construction of public cultures, to give a range of people the authority to represent historical experience, and often implicitly to suggest a plurality of points of view. Yet questions remain about what counts as a trauma history and whose feelings matter in the national public sphere. (37)

If the key purpose of cultural memory is to constitute a sense of group belonging (often structured along the hierarchy of power to create or influence narratives), how might trauma cinema in the post-Yugoslav, postwar context constitute an archive of cultural memories that invite an envisioning of a different kind of collectivity—one constituted through trauma trans-ethnically rather than ethnocentrically? And moreover, how does the witnessing, through the act of spectatorship, of the trauma of an (ethnic, gendered, sexual) Other disrupt ethnocentric cultural memories and leave in their wake a possibility for empathy across political and ideological divides? These questions haunt the pages of this book and serve as

guiding forces toward attempts at understanding the historically localized links between war, screen, trauma, and memory.

The Case of Post-Yugoslav, Trans-Ethnic Trauma Cinema

In my analyses of cinema as both reflective and constitutive of cultural memories, I lean on the important work of Eleftheria Rania Kosmidou, who has examined cinema about European Civil Wars (including the Yugoslav war) and argued that "the cinematic representations of these wars have made a decisive contribution to cultural memory, as they put forward particular historical allegorizations that in nearly all cases reflect present-day concerns" (2013: 2). Civil wars might be particularly difficult objects of cultural memories, since, as Kosmidou notes, they do not bring about a fight against an external threat but rather against a former neighbor. In the context of Yugoslavia, however, the concept of civil war is further complicated by the ethnic dimensions of the conflict and by the pre-existing internal division of Yugoslavia into separate republics, a division that did not necessarily align with pure ethnic borders but nevertheless served to reiterate them and eventually contribute to the construction of "external threats," even when such threats were embodied by former neighbors.

It is certain that the processes of cultural circulation of trauma, examined here in their cinematic form, are taking place in the post-Yugoslav context in many other ways to which this book, because of its scope, does not attend to. Is there something about cinema in particular that makes it a more significant object of cultural memory in the historical and geographical context about which this book is about? Here, I turn to Dina Iordanova, who sums up the answer to a similar question in the following:

> Why film? First, because the visual has a crucial role in the 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 in a persistent manner. Nowadays it is the moving image rather than the printed word that carries more persuasive weight.
>
> (2001: 5)

While this book looks at the post-conflict films of a particular region, it does so by acknowledging that posing limitations on archiving cultural

expressions by their geographical location might increasingly prove to be a futile task. Many post-Yugoslav films are more transnational than ethno-national: they are often co-financed by different post-Yugoslav successor states, and their cast and crew frequently reflect that mix as well. Yet more often than not, these trans-ethnic links are elided by the films' final denomination as almost exclusively ethnically and nationally singular: Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, and so on. I identify most films as originating from a singular ethno-national space because they are claimed as such, not because I think such identification is definitive. I find Ann Cvetkovich's notion of an "archive of feelings," where the method involves "an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions" (7), particularly useful in the process of shaping an incomplete archive of what could be deemed post-Yugoslav, trans-ethnic trauma cinema, as I do in this book. I am interested in examining the process that Maureen Turim has, in a different context, called "the structuration of historical trauma, not as an aesthetic embrace of all aspects of the film, but rather as renewed conviction in its significance as a historical artifact" (2001: 207–8).

Undoubtedly, some films included in this book's archive of dislocated screen memory might be deemed more troubling than others. Yet, even these potentially problematic works of cinema cannot be easily dismissed on the basis of their ideological or ethno-nationalist premises. One of the main goals of this book is to take a renewed look at such films and put them in conversation with others, perhaps less problematic representations of dislocated screen memories, in order to see where these seemingly very different works appear not to be that different from each other where trauma as cultural memory is concerned. Regardless of their positioning on the ideological scales that range from ethnocentrism to anti-nationalism, my project is to treat the cinematic texts discussed here as overt or clandestine, conscious or unconscious (or somewhere in between) articulations of trauma. And with that approach comes an understanding that visibility or overt address is not the only indication of presence, and moreover, that the intentions (textual, intertextual, or extra-textual) cannot be assumed to be completely conscious (since trauma is precisely that which is most stubbornly unassimilated in the mind). In other words, my goal is to approach these texts from a slightly different—one might call it dislocated—angle than the prevalent, expository ones that insist on the films' attitude toward ethno-politics as the primary prism of interpretation. I want to suggest that by looking at the markers of trauma that each of these films articulates differently, we can nevertheless arrive at an understanding of the politics by which trauma is variously deployed toward different goals—not only challenging, constituting, negating, or naturalizing ethnic identity, but also other modes of subjectivity that are closely related to ethnicity

(gender, sexuality, social class, age). In this book, they are understood as mutually constitutive, all representing pieces of an assemblage whose parts are impossible to fully separate from one another.

When the framework of trauma is one's organizing analytic, it becomes impossible to separate into ethno-national entities the body of cinema that speaks to the same conflict(s) (if the unifying event is considered to be the violent end of SFR Yugoslavia). These films constitute an inseparable archive of injury that cannot be contained within ethno-national borders even when their makers might intend them to. As a body of work, films that speak to and about the same historical event—or series of events—inevitably address the question of what their own collective role in archiving, creating, or re-creating the public memories of such an event is. There is no single answer to this question. This is why I introduce the concept of dislocated screen memory as a term that marks the limits of narrative stability. Dislocation not only implies a disturbance of standard modes of ordering the hierarchies of knowing, but also takes displacement and substitution as integral to memory as a cognitive process that is both necessary and, at the same time, never entirely reliable. On the dual nature of memories, Hodgkin and Radstone note:

> Conservative and destructive, conciliatory and unforgiving, memory may serve as an implacable reminder of what some might prefer to see forgotten; or it may strive to forget it. It is at once the salve and the salt in the wound. (2003: 237)

Throughout the pages of this book, I will return to dislocated screen memory not only as both enacted in individual films, but also constituted jointly, through the body of work of post-Yugoslav trauma cinema. In many analyses, I find that the depictions of trauma—with its undeniable presence and simultaneous challenge to traditional modes of expressibility or visiblity—often dislocate normative, ethnocentric approaches to the memory of violence, replacing them with an invitation for empathy staged in the domain of mass-mediated public cultures formed by cinema. In the chapters that follow, I therefore examine how cinema's traumatic memories form an archive of feelings that might pose a challenge to the ethno-nationalist frames of interpretation, otherwise dominant in the aftermath of Yugoslav wars.

In order for cinema to have an affective impact, it needs to invite a sense of belonging. But what kind of belonging is being evoked is where politics lie. I examine how belonging is constituted through a consideration of trauma as central to identification, but at the same time, a site of identity's frequent undoing. It is in this unstable nexus that I find some of the most

effective screen memories of recent Yugoslav history of violence. I approach the films primarily as expressions and channels through which trauma narratives get played out at the level of culturally circulated affect that permeates post-conflict spaces across national and ethnic lines. The themes of the films are as varied as are their attitudes toward the ways in which engaging trauma can or cannot be a tool for a productive politics of coping, and potentially even healing. The films help negotiate the experiential gap left by trauma's unassimilated aspects, by ameliorating chasms in knowledge and experience. My readings attempt to incorporate many positions along the experiential range, and assume that the unifying umbrella of experiencing a war trickles down to the specifics of how that "having lived" played out in different measure on different bodies, influenced through various vectors that come to frame identity: gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, age, and so on.

With this approach, even the more politically troubling works can at least partially be dislocated from their fixity within a singular ethnonational ideology of intolerance, because their problematic politics are not taken to function as an end to themselves, but rather become a symptom of a displaced struggle to cope. This analytical approach, in turn, offers an enormous potential for the notion of *reading otherwise*, or reading against the grain, within which even the more troubling (yet popular) works can offer an illumination of the relationship between screen and trauma. According to Norman Saadi Nikro:

> As a research paradigm, trauma cannot be stabilized according to a predetermined field of theory, but is both embedded in and traverses relational accommodations between disciplines, geographies, histories, implicating flows of material and imaginary resources and the institutions directing their distribution and access.
>
> (2014: 17)

My reparative readings (to evoke Eve Sedgwick's term [2003]) seek to acknowledge that the aforementioned predetermined field of theory is, here, not entirely adequate and that viewing practices veer in many directions, often actively undoing what might be deemed an intentionality of the text itself (if such intentionality can ever be universally and unwaveringly established in the first place).

Notes on an Archive

If, as Charity Scribner argues, "Europe's postindustrial turn is also a cultural turn" (2003: 159), the chapters that follow focus on different thematic

and formal tendencies prominent in the cultural representations and constitutions of trauma in post-Yugoslav cinema. In order to give closer attention to these works, I inevitably needed to limit the number of films included in the book. Therefore, this book is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of post-Yugoslav filmmaking, nor of the trauma narratives that circulate within it. Rather, in each chapter, I concentrate on several prominent case studies as a way to illuminate the ever-complex dynamics of screen trauma in detailed ways. Many films that are only briefly mentioned, or not mentioned at all, could have been used to illustrate further important points about trauma and cinema in the post-Yugoslav context. My selection was geared toward illuminating in each chapter several films whose approach to screen trauma is challenging, layered, and sometimes indirect, yet surprising or difficult to fully unpack, but nevertheless indicative of challenging insight. Within each chapter, I deploy differently constellated sets of feminist, psychoanalytic, queer, affective, and other critical cultural theories, a combination of which has immensely helped me think with and through the issues at hand.

This book therefore presents a fairly unstable archive of screen trauma (perhaps there can be no other kind). That archive is, it should be noted, skewed toward certain geographical spaces more than others. For instance, the majority of the films I discuss are Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, with a fewer number of Macedonian, Slovenian, and Kosovar, and no Montenegrin films included. This uneven selection is not meant to imply that the films from the less represented national cinemas do not engage the questions posed here as intensely or pointedly. Quite the contrary, the uneven selection was, for the most part, unconscious on my part. If invited to reflect on it consciously, I can offer at least three possible explanations. One is the fact that my own experience of Yugoslavia's violent end took place while I was residing first in Croatia and then in Bosnia, and I occasionally visited Serbia during those years as well. That personal geography of war was most likely a factor in my unconscious preferences in the process of selection. At the same time, these three former Yugoslav republics (with the addition of Kosovo) were central landscapes of injury in the Yugoslav conflicts, so it would follow that their cinema might be the most obvious place to look at for the articulations of traumatic memory related to war.

The third reason could be the language itself (Serbo-Croatian, or BCS) as stubbornly unifying cultural glue that brings the films from these three successor states together, at least in the domain of screen culture. But while it is important to give attention to the ethno-national breakdown of the collection of films discussed here, my own analyses resist that kind of focus, since I seek to deliberately move away from considering any of the films as singularly ethno-national or as products of ethnic purity reflected

in cinema. For many reasons, I think that division is unattainable and, moreover, detrimental to the understanding of such films within the wider context of their regional appeal. Instead, I sought to reiterate, in writing about post-Yugoslav cinema, my deep conviction that national boundaries cannot contain or fully account for the flows of affective investments and ranges of human experience, particularly when it comes to traumatized existence. My approach is therefore trans(ethno)national, even, or particularly when I seek to parse the construction of ethnic identity as such in films made in the wake of Yugoslavia. How is ethnic identity connected in these films to trauma, how is trauma gendered and sexualized, as well classed? These valances of identity play intricate roles in the creation of assemblages that constitute films as trauma narratives.

In Chapter 1, I discuss Yugoslavia's cinematic and political legacies of war and stipulate that they are mutually constitutive. Just as Yugoslav history was bookended by wars, so was its cinematic tradition imbued with war films that variously constituted collective memory and challenged history as such. Rather than fetishizing it, this approach reveals war as a critically important nexus—materially and metaphorically—in the processes of various group identifications during Yugoslavia and in its aftermath. The role of war as cultural memory (and a key focus of collective identity) is important to consider when looking at post-Yugoslav trauma cinema and its dislocated screen memories, which often intertextually refer to the Yugoslav tradition (cinematic and otherwise). Introducing some of the key analytical concepts with which the region and its cinema have been approached (such as Balkanism and self-Balkanization), I show why they might be important yet insufficient in accounting for the full range of cultural challenges placed on meanings, particularly when they veer toward becoming grand theories myopically applied to any cultural text. To counter such grand narratives, I offer readings of several notable post-Yugoslav films through the framework of perpetrator trauma (films such as *Remake*, *The Living and the Dead*, *The Blacks*, and *The Enemy*). Moreover, I highlight films that have positioned themselves as memorials to suppressed traumatic injury: for instance, *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* and *When Day Breaks*. With the region's prevalent ethnic divisions in mind, I examine how some forms of cinema might pose an inherent challenge to this troubling ideology of exclusion—such as the local iterations of diasporic, or "accented cinema" (in *Someone Else's America*, for instance), as well through the trans-ethnic trauma cinema highlighted throughout this book.

In Chapter 2, I focus on the gendered aspects of war trauma (a prominent trope when it comes to the Bosnian war in particular) in order to explore the question of how trauma narratives either stabilize or disrupt

normative patriarchal understandings of gender, as well as of ethnicity. While attention to gender informs all chapters in this book, in this particular case, I offer a close reading of three films, each reflecting something different about decidedly (if normatively) gendered war and postwar trauma, memory, and the (im)possibility of closure. The first is one of the most controversial and written about post-Yugoslav films, *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*. Challenging standard interpretations of the film along the nationalist/anti-nationalist lines, I suggest that what is largely missing in existing scholarship on this film is a focus on trauma as its central framework of screen narrativization. Moreover, trauma in this film is gendered in ways that function within, yet often shatter the borders of traditional gender norms. The other two films discussed in this chapter, *Grbavica* and *Snow*, offer a seemingly stark contrast to *Pretty Village*, yet point to similar tendencies in engendering identity through trauma. I show on the example of these seemingly very different films how gender itself is constitutive of traumatic experience and vice versa, how trauma as such constitutes gendered and ethnic identity.

In Chapter 3, I turn to a related topic of sexuality, and examine a group of queer-themed post-Yugoslav films, asking how their focus on queer trauma dislocates the privileging of heteronormativity as the sole path to both ethno-national identity and claims to traumatized existence. Just like the previous chapter establishes a link between normative gender and "pure" ethnic identity, this chapter unpacks heterosexuality as one of the central foci where ethno-national belonging is constituted as acceptable or "healthy." Through films as diverse as *Marble Ass*, *Fine Dead Girls*, and *Go West*, I show how queer trauma that permeates them has the potential to dislocate ethnocentric heteronormativity as a primary mode of group belonging. The dislocation is achieved through an insertion of queer trauma into the stories of war or its aftermath as a way to challenge the ideological premise that the only sovereign (and traumatized) subject of nationhood is a heteronormative subject. I show how, rather than normalizing queer desire by way of inserting it into national feelings, many of the films discussed in this chapter challenge the binary of health and sickness upon which nationalism envisions the nation as a healthy, heterosexual body.

Chapter 4 looks at post-Yugoslav heritage cinema, and particularly at the affective state of nostalgia, as a complicated structure of feelings that circulates various ideological approaches to yearning for the past (real or imagined). In a number of case studies—among them *Three Tickets to Hollywood*, *Marshall*, *Charleston for Ognjenka*, and *St. George Shoots the Dragon*—I stipulate how some films reflect what Boym has called restorative nostalgia, positioning ethnocentrism as the primary prism of

nostalgic memory, while others engage in reflective nostalgia, or yearning for the sake of yearning itself. I identify the popular “Yugo-nostalgia” not only as a more reflective-leaning form of nostalgia, since it is decidedly non-ethnocentric, but also self-consciously steeped in an understanding that its object of yearning is an impossible one. The central section of this chapter offers a re-reading of Kusturica’s *Underground*, arguably the most critically scrutinized post-Yugoslav film. Moving away from the more standard analytics of self-Balkanization and the scrutiny of its director’s persona as guiding frameworks, I focus on the film’s carnivalesque excesses and self-reflexive undoings to argue that it functions as a ghost—a work of cinema that reflects memory and history as mutually intertwined collective phantasms that are never entirely real.

In Chapter 5, as a counterpoint to the preceding chapter on heritage cinema, I turn to a consideration of post-Yugoslav youth cultures and the inheritance of trans-generational memory of war and trauma. Using Marianne Hirsch’s concept of postmemory, I explore how films about youth subcultures (*Skinning*, *Tilva Ros* or *Clip*), as well as films about delinquents, or social or gender outlaws (*Mirage*, *Spots*, *Southern Scum Go Home!*), center on social class and material precarity as frameworks that influence how a postmemory of trauma would become a more immediate and arresting structure—a habitus that, in turn, structures not only youth taste dispositions, but also their relationship to violence, often in clandestine ways. In the latter sections of the chapter, I offer a reading of *Children of Sarajevo* and argue that it puts forth a representation of post-conflict youth as what I call “war class”—a second generation of “post-Yugoslavs” that share material precarity born out of war, destruction, and the onset of neoliberal capitalism, thus constituting a social group often made to turn to alternative forms of community—subcultures or cliques—as a way to find pathways toward social agency. In the Conclusion, I return to film as cultural memory and stipulate that it is the figure of the Child that represents post-Yugoslav cinema’s most unnervingly elusive figure of traumatic memory (in films such as *Perfect Circle*, *So Hot Was the Cannon*, and *No One’s Child*). Moreover, I stipulate about an aesthetic and formal approach to war and postwar realities of a small number of works which I call “the quiet war film”—*Days and Hours*, *Snow*, and *The Silent Sonata*. These films consciously replace sensory overabundance typically associated with war film in favor of silences and quiet reflections, thereby envisioning alternative scenarios of narrating screen trauma as cultural memory.

An earlier version of my discussions of *Grbavica* and *Snow* in Chapter 2 came out as a chapter in Croatian, in an edited volume *Komparativni postsocijalizam* (*Comparative Postsocialism*, edited by Maša Kolanović, 2012),

under the title "Sasvim moguć optimizam: Žena i poslijeratni bosanski film" ("Possible Optimism: Women and Postwar Bosnian Cinema"). Part of Chapter 5 came out in *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, in an article titled "Youth after Yugoslavia: Subcultures and Phantom Pain" (2014). I thank the publishers for their permission to reprint those parts.

1

Yugoslavia's Wars, Cinema, and Screen Trauma

In 1965, a notable Yugoslav film director Puriša Đorđević made *Devojka* (*The Girl*), a layered and intricately challenging cinematic poem about the relationship between war, screen, trauma, and memory, of a kind previously unseen in regional filmmaking. By tracing a fragmented and never fully knowable history of war's trauma, Đorđević weaved together a poetic film—Petar Volk refers to it as "elegy" (1986: 169)—that simultaneously speaks to the importance of attempting to know and the impossibility of fully knowing the extents of someone else's intimate war experience. Attempting to piece together a story about the mysterious girl, we learn about her from temporally dislocated fragments of a storyline that is only one possible narrative of who she is and what had happened to her. We first encounter the girl through a photographic image locked away in a bureaucratic drawer—a frozen image which is the only thing that remains long after she herself had disappeared without a trace. The film itself calls attention not only to the inadequacy of the photograph to capture the girl's story, but also to its necessity. A frame—not only of photography, but also of cinema—functions as a trigger for memory and for the necessity of historical witnessing, even though it cannot ever convey the full story. In a scene that depicts the moment when the photographic image is taken, the girl tells the photographer that she did not smile for the photograph because "the time between the two seconds it took to take the photograph was enough for me to see everything again—that is why I didn't smile." What does she mean by "seeing everything again?" And how could one *see everything* in two seconds, or in the time between them? Perhaps the girl is addressing the very dialectic that constitutes trauma: the simultaneous (im)possibility of remembering and forgetting. I open this chapter with a nod to Đorđević's powerful film because it neatly sets up a continually fragmented link between the spatial and temporal frameworks of war

and traumatic memory as they pertain to regional cinema. This Yugoslav film, and its many counterparts that take war as their direct or indirect theme, offers an invisible foundation on which post-Yugoslav trauma cinema is based and made meaningful through reverberations of injury across time and space. Moreover, World War II is a collectively traumatizing event whose complexities were elided by the Socialist Yugoslav ideology of Brotherhood and Unity. This may have caused it to subsequently return as the pathology that haunted the vicious atrocities committed in the last Yugoslav war. For instance, Max Bergholz chronicles interethnic pogroms in Bosnia-Herzegovina during WWII (events largely erased from Yugoslav history books) and argues that they reveal a "counterintuitive dynamic—in which violence creates antagonistic identities rather than antagonistic identities leading to violence" (2013: 684). Hence, rather than reiterating an understanding of ethnic violence as inevitable, or rooted in "ancient hatreds," a closer attention to the dynamics of suppressed traumatic memories of WWII, and their subsequent nationalist misuse, might illuminate the role of (private, cultural, and trans-generational) trauma in constituting ethnicity and informing the violence of the more recent war. If many aspects of the trauma of WWII were largely suppressed in Socialist Yugoslavia's cultural memory, how did they nevertheless find clandestine ways of being transmitted trans-generationally? Renata Jambrešić Kirin concludes in her analysis of Yugoslavia's cultural memories of WWII that

> It was precisely the ideological suppression of the interethnic tensions and numerous disagreements, the pressure of "unprocessed" and "bunkered" traumatic episodes from the past, as well as the absence of public arenas in which a resistance to state policies and local initiatives which claimed the ownership of the truth of what happened (. . .) would take place, that made numerous local communities and individual participants in the early 1990s susceptible to war propaganda whose goal was ethnic homogenization.
> (2009: 75–6)[1]

Similarly, Ilana Bet-El has argued that the most prominent memories which played a role in inciting violent action in the last Yugoslav war were "undoubtedly rooted in the Second World war: the memories of policy, especially appeasement; the memories that defined the ethnic groups, especially the Serbs and Croats, as either good or bad; and most crucially, the memories of genocide on European soil" (2004: 207). As I show later in this chapter, the legacies of WWII—both as a historical event and as traumatic memory—frequently resurface in post-Yugoslav cinema as a mechanism for addressing, among other things, not only the violence of the more recent conflict, but also the links between the two wars.

The relationship of memory to the object that is being remembered or forgotten is multifold. In her *Requiem for Communism*, Charity Scribner

identifies three key "modes of memory" in the post-Socialist context: mourning, melancholia, and nostalgia (2003: 114). All three modes inform my analyses of dislocated screen memory in different chapters of this book. The difference between these modes lies in their differing relationships to the object of memory. Scribner describes the difference thusly:

> The melancholic, the mourner, and the nostalgic each relate to the object in a distinct way. The mourner can name the loss that stuns the melancholic. The nostalgic, as we shall see, disavows the loss altogether. Each subject makes a different claim on his loss. Of the three, it is really only the mourner who can speak of a lost object *as an object.* The melancholic and the nostalgic remain fixated on *things* that are not entirely separate from them.
>
> (114, emphasis in the text)

To these modes of memory, Scribner adds disavowal, which "permits the subject to split his or her stance toward the lost object, so that the object's loss is at the same time accepted *and* denied" (12, emphasis in the text). Throughout this book, I examine how these various modes of memory play out on the *post*-Yugoslav cinematic screen and what they indicate about trauma. As suggested previously, my use of the term "post" does not merely indicate "after" or "beyond." My thinking about "post" as an ambivalent and complicated, even dislocated category, is influenced by Homi Bhabha, who has argued that

> "Beyond" signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary—the very act of going beyond—are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the "present" which, in the process of repetition becomes disjunct and displaced.
>
> (1994: 5–6)

Moreover, the "post" in "post-Yugoslav" implies the paradox of *exiled continuation* as a dislocated state where culture is sometimes produced in most illuminating ways. Robert Rakočević argues that the inherent tension inscribed in the concept of "post-Yugoslav" reflects the simultaneous process of identification and distancing, especially in the "narratives about exile and immigration" (2011: 204). Examining post-Yugoslav literature, Rakočević argues that it reflects "full awareness of the past but not a fatalistic attachment to it, as well as an ability to see crisis as a new beginning, and not only as an end" (209). My use of the term "post-Yugoslav" not only leans on Rakočević's insight, but also assumes the concept's broader application—namely, not just to authors who articulate an ongoing attachment to Yugoslavia's shared cultural sphere within exilic spaces of the present, but also as an inevitable location of any cultural work

produced in post-Yugoslav spaces as such, particularly when they are intertextually referential to one another by virtue of addressing the traumas of the same event (or series of events).

While my analyses take the historical moment of the breakup of Yugoslavia as their organizing temporal device, or as their *object of memory* (thereby making Yugoslavia into the object of mourning, melancholia, nostalgia, or disavowal), there is no specific *moment* when Yugoslavia definitively broke into sovereign ethno-national pieces. Rather, it was a gradual *process* by which a Socialist, multiethnic "country of paradoxes and ambiguities" (Petrović, 2000: 165) unraveled in stages, under one guiding principle: ethnicity increasingly became the defining measure of collective belonging. Socialist Yugoslavia existed from 1945 to 1991, although many take the death of its lifetime leader Josip Broz Tito (1980) as the moment the disintegration was effectively set in motion. During his life, Tito silenced political dissent, particularly those voices that encouraged ethnonationalist sentiments over Yugoslavia's official ideology of multiethnic co-existence. As already noted, that ideology actively suppressed unwanted memories of inter-ethnic animosity during WWII, memories that were instead delegated to the domain of the private and the familial, rather than made into public cultural memories. It appears that Yugoslavia's breakup contained a paradox then: if Tito's death ushered in the possibility of articulating suppressed memories, nationalist sentiments were allowed to finally take center stage and shape exclusionary politics that ultimately led to bloodshed. These exclusionary politics not only manipulated the hidden memories of WWII, but also distorted them into narratives of ethno-national exceptionalism and moral superiority of one group over another. As Bet-El argues, "the personal context of the memories, their narrative coherence, was eliminated; all that was left was the pain of the past, and anger at its suppression" (209). This ethno-nationalization of painful memories of WWII may have helped trigger a pathological and paranoid return to violence. The ensuing conflicts left in their wake grim devastation, death, displacement, destroyed lives, and wounded landscapes. The region is still reeling from the aftereffects of such devastation, and this fact is deeply reflected in the culture that is produced in the aftermath of such catastrophe.

Film is a stage where these aftereffects are, at times, culturally most visible and most persistently addressed. Yet, the fact that film presents a site of coming to terms with war and its aftermath is not a new notion in the (post-)Yugoslav context. It could be argued that Yugoslavia's entire film history has been dominated by war film as one of the preeminent genres under which collective identification was being invited, encouraged, or perhaps propagated. But while Yugoslav war films (particularly

the "Red Westerns") might have actively invited a kind of cross-ethnic identification with the idea of pan-ethnic Yugoslav collectivity (Horton 1987; DeCuir 2013), post-Yugoslav war-themed films might be reflecting a different approach to collectivity as such, this time defined by ethnic borders rather than their erasure. It does not follow, however, that the latter group of films does not pose a challenge to the ethnocentric premises of the context of their emergence. As I show in this and subsequent chapters, there are ways in which even the most stubbornly ethnocentric films can be interpreted as reflecting a kind of ambivalence toward collectivity—any collectivity, and ethnic collectivity in particular.

As a country that was ravaged by the violence of WWII and suffered a great number of human casualties, Socialist Yugoslavia faced a challenging phase of recovery in the war's immediate aftermath. That did not, however, prevent its Socialist authorities from quickly getting off the ground significant efforts in developing an infrastructure for Yugoslavia's film industry. Daniel Goulding writes:

> Faced with such a massive and complex set of priorities for rebuilding a war-torn country, it is a significant testimonial to the high importance which the new socialist regime placed upon film that the first concerted efforts to establish and build a new national cinema occurred in these early years of struggle against severe odds and deprivations.
>
> (2002: 2)

The so-called "administrative period" (1945–1951) laid the logistical groundwork for the industry's subsequent achievements and successes, which, Petar Volk notes, "would most certainly not have happened had it not been for this elaborate, efficient and fruitful social engagement in creating the material and technical conditions for filmmaking" (1986: 134). Yugoslavia's subsequent "innovations and maverick tendencies in the area of film culture," as Goulding refers to them (ix), range from the era-defining WWII-themed, officially sanctioned blockbusters,[2] to the countercultural gems of the short-lived, invigorating New Film and its radical strain, the Black Wave (which effectively ended when one of its filmmakers, Lazar Stojanović, was sentenced to several years in prison because of his unfavorable representation of Tito and life under Socialism in *Plastic Jesus* [1972]). The history of Yugoslav cinema, and particularly its New Film phase (1961–1972), as the most critically and artistically accomplished era, has been well documented and given fair share of scholarly attention (Goulding 2002; Levi 2007; Jovanović 2011; DeCuir 2012). What I am interested in here, however, is less a consideration of the regime/anti-regime binary reflected within Yugoslav film history, but

rather a stubborn persistence of war film as one of the central genres of Yugoslavia's cinematic tradition. It is a genre equally taken up by regime-friendly filmmakers and dissident auteurs alike. For every *The Battle of Sutjeska*—a historical epic that puts a heroic spin on much of WWII in the Yugoslav context—there was *Three*, Aleksandar Petrović's exquisite meditation on the experience of war in a minor key. For every regime-friendly epic such as *The Battle of Neretva*, there was *Morning*, Puriša Đorđević's deconstruction of what it means to be victorious in a violent war. Indeed, war film, in its various narrative and stylistic iterations, might be the one cinematic genre that has contributed the most to a constitution of collective screen memory during and after Yugoslavia. Milutin Čolić (1984) argues that war films are one of Yugoslav cinema's crowning achievements and, moreover, that war films can be films without any war depicted in them. He also notes the symbiotic relationship between war and cinema:

> War is a fruitful subject for cinema. By its very nature [war] is "movable," dynamic, and represents, in some sense, the prototype of the image to which cinema strives as its language and expression.
>
> (1984: 11)

Čolić classifies Yugoslav war film tradition into seven distinct subgenres: epic spectacles, poetry, action, psychology and ethics, war and children, comedy, and documents. Čolić declares three films—each belonging to a different subgenre of Yugoslav war film—as the most accomplished instances of Yugoslav war cinema: Veljko Bulajić's *Kozara*, Aleksandar Petrović's *Three*, and Puriša Đorđević's *The Morning*. These three films neatly reflect the range of cinematic treatments of war in the Yugoslav context, and furthermore, each in their own unique way calls attention to the simultaneous impossibility of fully accounting the horrors of the wartime experience. Moreover, each represents war less in a heroic storytelling mode and more through the prism of individual tragedies and interrupted narratives.

Čolić's stipulation that war cinema represents the central backbone of Yugoslav cinema might be closely equated to another stipulation—that Yugoslav history is, to a large extent, a history framed by wars on each end. Perhaps this is the reason why the impact of wars reverberates in its culture to such a persistent extent. If, transnationally, the twentieth century was a century of both war and cinema, in this local context, it was also the century of Yugoslavia, and the intricate relationship between these three elements—war, cinema, Yugoslavia—is not to be easily neglected where cultural memory is concerned. Making overt the symbiotic links between

Yugoslavia and its cinema, Jurica Pavičić, for instance, notes that the abrupt canceling of Yugoslavia's most prestigious film festival in 1991 was "not just the end of the Yugoslav film festival in Pula—the key event of film life in communist Yugoslavia—but in a certain way it was also a symbolic end of Yugoslavia itself" (2012: 49).

Yet, as I have argued in the introduction of this book, perhaps of central concern in the cultural production that examines Yugoslavia's existence and demise through cinema is not the war itself, but rather traumatic memory that extends the effects of war well into the times of peace. What if it is not war, but trauma that haunts—as an unresolved injury that lodges itself into collective memory and reflects itself in and through culture, often in clandestine ways? Indeed, the three films that Čolić names as the most accomplished Yugoslav war films could be better understood as trauma narratives rather than traditional war cinema, which is, I want to suggest, precisely what gives them their lasting affective impact and power as works of cinema. Rather than suggesting an indisputable course of history, these films turn to intimate examinations of the effects that mass violence has on people who must face it and continue to survive in its wake. Their cinematic frames are filled with ambivalence and melancholy more so than with victorious glee. They leave in their wake more questions than answers, as they deny their audience the chance to take away a sense of coherence or closure. With their cinematic techniques of extreme close-ups, abrupt cutting, and unexpected camera angles, they pull the viewer deep inside the cinematic frame, rather than keeping its audience at a distance. I want to suggest, therefore, that such films have staying power because they reflect something about the trauma of war experience that is affectively, pre-cognitively recognized, even when not consciously acknowledged as true: that it is an experience simultaneously impossible to know and not-know, impossible to put into coherent representation in a satisfying way, yet burdened with an imperative to continue to do so in order to bear historical witness. In other words, trauma cinema such as this one might act as counter-memory, "a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate and the personal" (Lipsitz 1990: 213), before extending to the more collective or ideologically slanted reaches of trauma.

(Self-)Balkanization and Cinema

Violence and bloodshed have been omnipresent motifs of Yugoslav, as well as post-Yugoslav cinematic frames in different registers, so much so that an excessive overabundance of sorts eventually began to draw critics'

attention for its sheer inescapability. The omnipresence of war and violence in post-Yugoslav cinema has been deemed a problematic feature by many scholars, who argue that to insist on representing local histories as always inevitably bound by violence is to engage in a problematic reiteration of what Maria Todorova has called Balkanism (1997)—an oversimplification of Balkan history that reduces it to "ancient hatreds" and implies that its residents are inherently bloodthirsty. The perception of inherent backwardness has historically not been associated with the Balkans only, but also, as Larry Wolff shows, with Eastern Europe more generally. "It was Western Europe," argues Wolff, "that invented Eastern Europe as its complimentary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment" (1994: 4). And while the invention of Eastern Europe as such was premised on the binary split between the civilized West and the uncivilized East, the discourse of Balkanism, as Todorova shows, is further imbued with the notion of inescapable violence, a stereotype that takes firm hold early in the twentieth century. The corresponding discourses about Eastern Europe and the Balkans are characterized by their similarity (although not full overlap) with the ideologies of Orientalism.[3] In case of the Balkans, Todorova marks that " 'Balkan,' while overlapping with 'Oriental,' had additional characteristics of cruelty, boorishness, instability, and unpredictability" (119).

As a result of the growing critical awareness of Balkanism as a troubling discourse of binary simplification, the preoccupation with war and violence by notable and internationally lauded post-Yugoslav filmmakers—such as Emir Kusturica and Milcho Manchevski—has been qualified as an exercise in self-exoticism, or self-Balkanization,[4] as a process of internalizing the stereotype of the Balkans as inherently violent, and then playing it out for the spectacle of the external (typically Western) gaze. For instance, two of the most prominent and internationally recognized post-Yugoslav films, Manchevski's *Before the Rain* (*Pred doždot* 1994, Macedonia) and Kusturica's *Underground* (1995, Serbia), have been classified by Slavoj Žižek as "the ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism" (1997: 38). However, while there might be some initial parallels between the two films with respect to their focus on the Balkan "cycles" of violence, they nevertheless function quite differently vis-à-vis the rationalization (or lack thereof) of why such violence occurs. While in *Underground* (which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4), the dominant register of representation is that of a carnivalesque farce that mocks collectivities and historical narratives alike, *Before the Rain* frames its story through the register of inescapable tragedy in which individuals, even when resistant to it, cannot escape becoming eventual victims of violence (for instance, the protagonist returns from London to his ancestral home, only to become

a casualty of an inter-ethnic dispute—moreover, killed by his own people when he tries to resolve the conflict). This aura of inevitability, or foreclosure of the cycle of violence, indeed gives the film overtones of fatalism in which the land that it purports to depict cannot but fall victim to a perpetuation of bloodshed. Dina Iordanova finds that the film "continues the line of representing the Balkans as a mystic stronghold of stubborn and belligerent people, and asserts the existing Balkan trend of voluntary self-exoticism" (2001: 63). However, the film's circular narrative structure does not add up to an entirely coherent story, thereby leaving room for ambiguities and logical discrepancies to challenge its foreclosing of the cycle of violence as unbreakable. As Iordanova notes, "the disjunctures actually create the effect of fascinating uncertainty, leaving a nice feeling of ambiguity and enhanced by the sentence which is repeated several times in the film—'the circle is never round' " (79). Moreover, Gordana Crnković notes that, more than being about the gaze (external or internal), the film "not only functions as a visual event but also creates space, social environment, ethics and politics of deep listening" (2014: 82). Hence, even in such seemingly foreclosed cinematic engagements in self-Balkanization, there often remain structural and narrative ruptures that allow for ambiguity to exist as a potentially destabilizing force.

Where discursive creation of spaces is concerned, Žižek has claimed that, instead of being a concrete geographical region, the Balkans indeed functions as a ghost—an ideologically imagined geography that is always somewhere else, "a little bit more towards the southeast . . . " (2000: 3). Yet, as Žižek points out, the displacements of the Balkan borders are multiple and not static: for Europe, the frontier that marks the place where the Balkans starts might be located somewhere in Slovenia; for Slovenia, the border is Croatia; for Croatia, the barbaric Balkans starts in Serbia; in Serbia, it starts with the Kosovo Albanians always a bit more toward the southeast . . . . From these observations, Žižek concludes that

> the enigmatic multiple displacement of the frontier clearly demonstrates that in the case of the Balkans, we are dealing not with real geography but with an imaginary cartography which projects on to the real landscape its own shadowy, often disavowed, ideological antagonisms, just as Freud claimed that the localization of the hysteric's conversion symptoms project on to the physical body the map of another, imaginary anatomy. (4)

A number of other authors have looked at the mechanisms that discursively depict the Balkans as Europe's imaginary, dark Other (Goldsworthy 2003; Bjelić 2003). In her influential article "Nesting Orientalisms," Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) argues that the Balkans plays a prominent role in

Europe's ongoing engagement with "Orientalism," whereby the imaginary, backward Orient acts as the Eastern "Other" to the progressive West (namely, Europe). "The Orient" is not a singular space, however, precisely because it is an imaginary geography that cannot be physically located within one place. Because of the proliferating nature of the Orient, according to Bakić-Hayden, the Balkans acts as a prominent spot in the process of the "gradation of Orients" (918) in which "Asia is more 'East,' or 'other' than Eastern Europe; within Eastern Europe itself, this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most 'eastern'; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies" (918). Todorova argues that the Balkans acts as Europe's dark underbelly, within which the more negative aspects of modern society can be tucked away and cordoned off in a way that would not threaten to overcome Europe (although the threat, at the same time needs to always be there in order for Europe do define its own identity against it). Todorova points out that, in opposition to the geographically fleeting nature of the Orient, the Balkans is a concrete place, and one that was not subject to Western colonization the way that other regions often associated with the Orient were. Furthermore, the Orient, as Said has described in detail, is constructed as feminine, sensual, and submissive. The Balkans, on the contrary, is never depicted as sensual. If anything, the Western imagining of the Balkans insists on the region's savagery and wilderness rooted in violent masculinity.

Perhaps exemplifying a curious tendency to cater to that masculinist stereotype, a number of post-Yugoslav films "revolve around disgruntled, disillusioned, cynical, and violent men" (Imre 2009: 187). And indeed, Dina Iordanova's analysis (2001) of a number of regional postwar films signals that there seems to be a trend in regional cinema of making films with the Western audiences in mind (and thus, by implication, playing into the Western stereotypes about the region), rather than making them for audiences inhabiting the region (they seem to be only of secondary concern, according to Iordanova). Pavle Levi detects in this tendency to self-describe as violent, in order to cater to the dominating and defining Western gaze, an attempt at pseudo-historiography that relies on the problematic explanation that the region is simply "genetically genocidal" (112).

It is difficult to say whether the trend of playing into the stereotype of the Balkans as inherently violent is truly something that can be generalized about without attention to nuance, just as it is also difficult to generalize about whether the films were "intended for" domestic or foreign audiences, a binary division that needs to be challenged to begin with. Speculation about who the intended audience might be is inadequate to

some extent because it requires a firm us/them dichotomy and, moreover, a firm assumption that a work of film has one author whose intentions are *the* key to interpretation. One can tentatively conclude that post-Yugoslav filmmakers are often actively conscious of the reputation that the Balkans carries in the West; they try to either play into that reductive stereotype (and by proxy, play into the expectations of foreign audiences familiar with such stereotypes) or go the other route: engage the stereotype and work to self-consciously subvert the image of the Balkans as a "powder keg" and Europe as its polar opposite, by challenging the grounds on which such a taxonomy is made in the first place. For this latter group, the depiction of the Balkans as violent is "mythopoetic"—in other words, acts as a "disruptive expose of the generalization of myth and cultural truths" (Ravetto-Biagioli 1998: 43, as quoted in Imre 2009).

With respect to the burdens of history, Iordanova claims: "the more I look at the Southeastern Europe's cinema, the more it seems that all important films from the region ultimately deal with historical memory" (2007: 22). Yet, we could pose the question differently: when is cinema *not* about memory? As Russell Kilbourn has argued, "cinema is not merely one of the most effective metaphors for memory," but is also, alongside photography, "*constitutive* of memory in its deepest and most meaningful sense" (2010: 1, emphasis in the text). Iordanova suggests that Serbian cinema seems to avoid sensitive topics of postwar trauma, while Bosnian film is entirely subsumed in it. These sorts of generalizations are often too rigid to be accurate, and I want to suggest (just like Čolić did in the context of Yugoslav war films) that it is often the case that films which do not seem to be directly addressing war and violence turn out to be precisely about war and violence, indirectly so—and that this often tells us more about how trauma in accessed by consciousness (or rather, how we create meanings *around* rather than *about* trauma) than those works in which the violence and gore are clearly framed at the center of the screen, deemed fully representable. In the post-Yugoslav context, narrative film largely contributes to a constitution of variously articulated collective (sometimes ethnocentric) memories about the conflict. Elissa Helms has stated that "it is worth noting that fiction films and their directors play a prominent role in constructing and influencing the ways in which citizens of what was Yugoslavia are coming to see their past" (2014: 613). Yet, while this constructing and influencing of the past through cinema might take place in a domain which is simultaneously limited by ethnocentrism, it is nevertheless structured by a model "without guarantees" (to evoke Stuart Hall's famed phrase)—which is to say, a model in which spectatorial positions provide outcomes that are numerous, unpredictable, and diverse, even if they take shape within limited frameworks of meaning.

While I wish to resist generalizations about the ethno-national cinemas of the former Yugoslavia, some tendencies can be detected, not as absolute types but as fleeting trajectories. It can be noted that the above-mentioned self-Balkanization—or fetishistic focus on excessive masculine violence (Longinović 2005)—was a theme typically featured in the films of the 1990s: from *Before the Rain* to *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, to *Underground*, to *Powder Keg/Cabaret Balkan* (Goran Paskaljević 1998, Serbia), and even, to some extent, in the Oscar-winning *No Man's Land* (Danis Tanović 2001, Bosnia). This tendency somewhat subsided during the 2000s, as an increasing number of films turned to the everyday, postwar, transitional reality in which violence is left behind, but its aftereffects are still felt. Films such as *Days and Hours*, *Snow*, *Grbavica*, *Here* (Zrinko Ogresta 2003, Croatia), or *Fine Dead Girls* (Dalibor Matanić 2002, Croatia) turn to exploring postwar realities, as their protagonists negotiate how to integrate their lives back into a pretense of normality that is still unquestionably framed by the aftereffects of war. Jurica Pavičić has called this turn to the everyday postwar life "the cinema of normalization" and argued that after the post-2000 democratic changes in the region, "the rhetorical strategies typical of the cinema of self-Balkanization had suddenly become counterproductive and unpopular" (2010: 47). These new films of normalization, Pavičić observes, "deal with characters who try to cope with postwar reality. These characters live in a realistic, everyday, usually urban surrounding. They have to surpass traumas and obstacles inherited by the past (usually, war)" (47). Moreover, Saša Vojković (2011) argues that these new tendencies of exploring social issues in postwar realities make it increasingly difficult to classify films under strict national banners. More often than not, post-Yugoslav cinema is transcultural and transnational in its themes and production alike. But the turn to the "cinema of normalization" is not an absolute tendency. In fact, there has been a significant number of filmmakers of the younger generation who revisit war in order to re-cast its meaning, less through the grand historical scale and more through the register of intimate psychological dramas with genre overtones. For instance, in Serbia's *Neprijatelj* (*The Enemy*, Dejan Zečević 2011) and *Top je bio vreo* (*So Hot Was the Cannon*, Slobodan Skerlić 2014), or in Croatia's *Crnci* (*The Blacks*, Goran Dević & Zvonimir Jurić 2009), war is an immediate setting that triggers the themes of accountability, guilt, and traumatic consequences of violence. In other films, the aftermath of war is used as a setting for exploring the themes of otherness, both external and internal to the sense of individual selfhood (Vidan 2013a).

Like other post-Yugoslav films with combatants or war veterans as central protagonists, Croatia's *The Blacks* offers insight into perpetrator trauma through a nightmarish snippet from the life of a paramilitary unit

of the Croatian army ("the Blacks"), a group of men who are preparing to go on a rogue rescue mission somewhere in Eastern Croatia, while the truce between the warring parties brings any military action to a halt. Diverging from the more standard, heroic, and ethnocentric narratives about the war in Croatia, this film turns, as Pavičić argues, "the cinematic machine against the viewer" in order to represent the Homeland war as "claustrophobic, dark, Gothic and suffocating" (2012: 58). The film's opening scene is an eerie shot of a dark room in which we can discern blood on the walls and floor, and torn clothes lying around. At the center of the shot is a black cat with kittens, an eerie presence reminiscent of horror imagery. This same black cat is frequently seen later in the film, roaming the hallways of the paramilitary headquarters, reminding the spectator of the space with which the film opens. Throughout the film, references to "the garage" are made as it becomes increasingly obvious that the soldiers are committing violent acts there (the rumors of which their commander, Ivo, vehemently denies to his wife over the phone, as he threatens the soldiers to keep quiet about it). Eventually, it is revealed that "the garage" serves for killing, when a soldier tells Ivo: "I cannot kill anymore. The thing in the garage . . . I can't anymore," to which Ivo responds with, "And you think it comes easy for me?" Who they are killing in the garage remains unclear—whether it is the enemy soldiers or civilians remains unknown. But that opening shot introduces the space to which the film only briefly returns later. At a later point, we see the same room fully lit, and as the camera quickly glances over, the shot confirms that it is blood stains we see on the walls. The film uncomfortably aligns the spectator with the soldiers' claustrophobic point of view: the garage is a chamber of secrets where the truth about atrocities is locked away. This indirect acknowledgment is a poignant diagnosis of the way in which war crimes are compartmentalized and locked away in dark mental chambers that can be accessed only as fragmented glimpses and, moreover, never entirely exposed in full view. The soldiers are locked in a cycle of violence, symbolically emphasized in a scene in which they walk through the woods on their rescue mission, only to eventually discover that they have been walking in circles. The circular aspect of entrapment is further reiterated by the film's structure in which the chronology of the plot is temporally dislocated. The story's climax—a failed rescue mission—takes place at the film's beginning, thereby losing its climactic character. When the unit becomes stuck in a minefield, the same soldier who states that he cannot kill anymore shoots Ivo, and then kills himself. Then the film cuts to the chronological beginning of the story, which takes place back in the headquarters. This shift is introduced by a long shot of a hallway, with the black cat running across it. At the end, the film briefly returns to the climax in the forest, as one surviving solder drags, one by one, the bodies of his dead

comrades. This film not only provides a viscerally effective, nightmarish snippet from the life of a paramilitary unit in a way that dis/locates perpetrator trauma, but also examines its repressed aspects by way of horror imagery and claustrophobic, circular structure of storytelling.

While some have considered the omnipresence of war and violence in post-Yugoslav film to be a counterproductively excessive exercise of self-Balkanization, I tend to think of it as a necessary occurrence, especially if we consider culture to be an important site of coming to terms with trauma. In that sense, film has been a critical element of several different processes—from emplotting the visual chaos that is war into a perceived order that becomes stabilized into history (similar to how Virilio describes cinema's effect with respect to war optics), to reflecting the belatedness of experiencing trauma, to the (re-)enactment of the process of working through (which is critical for survival itself), to the constitution of alternative, inorganic (or prosthetic) memories that call the authenticity of history as such into question, to the staging of a cinematic recurrence of the traumatic event as a way to perhaps come to terms with it. All these and many other tendencies can be often detected in a single film, while as a collective body of work they stand as a layered assemblage whose textures reflect the myriad complexities of life during and after wartime.

Film as Cultural Memory and a Symbolic Counter-Monument

While retaining the undeniable importance of critical intervention into the discourse of Balkanism, and the productive impact that it has had on challenging the stereotype of the discursively constructed "Balkans," the charge of self-Balkanization is at times deployed in too linear a manner that neglects to consider how war and its aftereffects indeed *are* a traumatic legacy that seems to stubbornly recur or haunt our collective unconscious. Perhaps it is worth considering, for a moment, why it might be that war recurs and violence becomes instigated in such veracious manner rather than pushing against the fact of its existence altogether. Post-Yugoslav cinema is, without a doubt, frequently haunted by this question. Its consideration does not automatically infer that violence is somehow inherent to local "mentality" (a problematic term in its own right), but might open doors for new insight, such as that violence perhaps recurs as a result of the suppressed, unresolved traumas of the past—traumas that have not been meaningfully worked through, but rather emplotted into ethnocentric discourses, passed on, and mistaken for ancient hatreds. I want to suggest that the persistence of the trope of "ancient hatreds" acts as a kind of screen memory itself, where screen memory is understood, in Freudian terms, to be a memory that seeks to mask, or address a different

kind of deeply buried, more painful, hidden memory. Screen memory is a stand-in for something else that has been repressed, and is therefore never merely self-referential or literal. In case of the Balkans' supposed ancient hatreds, such a notion may act as screen memory inasmuch as it is a fictive memory that works to obscure and further repress the more historicized and contextualized memories of violence, which it is actually about. Hence, self-Balkanization might be a more complicated process than initially thought—instead of being a mere internalization of an externally imposed stereotype, it might act as a complicated mechanism by which collective traumatic memory is being addressed through the screen memory of a constructed trans-historical animosity.

But what specifically is this more recent memory of trauma that is not being directly addressed? Its location varies in different frames of representation and might be situated at the nexus of different historical factors depending on the context. Quite often, ancient ethnic hatreds located in the distant past act as screen memory not just for the last Yugoslav war, but also for WWII, whose ethnic elements were dutifully suppressed by the Socialist regime and its policy of Brotherhood and Unity. In other contexts, the two world wars might themselves act as screen memory for the more recent war, particularly in films that position them as a justification or rationalization of the ethnic cleansing that occurred in the last war.[5] These links cannot all too simply be collapsed into parallelisms, but rather need to be turned into a consideration of how the traumatic past plays an active role in the present, not only politically, but also culturally.

In his comparison between Socialist war cinema and post-Yugoslav cinema, Nedin Mutić argues that the latter films "represent a different kind of war(s) where the Yugoslav self is deconstructed and fragmented, and is represented as absent or something abstract, marginal, historical and fictitious" (2009: 217). This abstract marginality of the "Yugoslav self" in post-Yugoslav cinema enacts the dynamics of screen memory, a process that is perhaps most prominently deployed in a single character and the actor who plays him. The character is Gvozden from *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, a bitter and disillusioned former Communist who is now a commander of a Bosnian Serb army unit. Tellingly, he is played by one of Yugoslav cinema's most iconic actors, Velimir Bata Živojinović. A defining figure of Yugoslav film, Živojinović's screen persona appeared in both the ideologically sanctioned epics and the staples of Yugoslav New Film, including two of the three aforementioned iconic depictions of WWII in Yugoslav cinema—Veljko Bulajić's *Kozara* and Aleksandar Petrović's *Three*. In *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, Živojinović now embodies a character who calls back to this screen memory of his larger-than-life cinematic presence. Echoing the shifting status of Živojinović's screen persona, Gvozden—the

character he plays, whose name could be translated as "Iron Man"—himself wrestles with a shifting sense of one's place inside collectivity. He is frequently mocked by other protagonists for his former, perceivedly calculated idealism of Socialist collectivity. Rosalind Galt notes the intertextual doubling between Živojinović and the character he plays in *Pretty Village* and argues that "this ironic relationship to Yugoslav film history doubles the (knowing) spectator's sympathies, as well as questioning the similarities between the two wars. The iconography of the partisan film and the trope of underground space again work to structure the ambiguous political stakes of both historical conflicts" (2006: 172). The ambiguity is staged on several different levels—between Živojinović's former and current screen persona (formerly Yugoslav, now distinctly Serbian actor); between his character Gvozden's former Socialist idealist and present-day nationalist self; between WWII and the last Yugoslav war; between Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinema; and, perhaps centrally, between the unnerving shifts in collective identity that Živojinović's larger-than-life screen presence reflects. In addition, the character's self-reflexive doubling is reflected in his refusal to be filmed or interviewed by the American journalist. Calling attention to the manipulative nature of the image, he remarks: "No pictures. Later they can put different words in my mouth, through that, what do you call it, 'montage.' With that, they can make us look as bad as they want. No pictures." This attitude presents one of the film's numerous instances of calling attention to its own cinematic form as a framework of representation that is always imbued with vested interests.

If Yugoslav successor war(s) radicalized remembering of previous conflicts, as Bet-El argues, "into separate monolithic ethnic memories, each ethnic group onto itself" (209), then how does post-Yugoslav trauma cinema capture screen memory unlocatable within singular ethnic identity, and therefore challenge or disrupt the ideologically driven monolithic memories of ethnic collectivities? Screen memory is a moving image that is difficult to pinpoint as simply articulated by one thing. In this and subsequent chapters, I deploy the analytics of screen memory to track the ever-shifting positioning of trauma as well as its role in the cultural context of post-Yugoslavia. I am particularly interested in its dislocated iterations, which invite a questioning of the stability of the frame and its narratives alike. I actively move away from the dominant frameworks of self-Balkanization and ethnocentrism not because they do not offer insightful analytical positions, but because they have become a theoretical given to such an extent that they might limit rather than extend our understanding of the complicated dynamics between war, memory, trauma, and screen.[6]

In the context of post-Yugoslav cinema, some scholars have examined how injury and memories of violence are treated, as well as created cinematically, and how film is positioned in the assemblages where trauma reverberates through the public sphere and circulates as cultural memory. For instance, in her work on films about European civil wars, Eleftheria Rania Kosmidou examines two notable post-Yugoslav films that gained international prominence—Kusturica's *Underground* (1995) and Tanović's *No Man's Land* (2001). She argues that both films reflect what she calls a "postmemorial position" (in that they indirectly address the workings of trans-generational cultural memory) and, moreover, that through the use of carnivalesque humor (*Underground*) and satire (*No Man's Land*), "the filmmakers reflect on the past and allegorize the present" (2013: 116). Moreover, Igor Krstić has written about Serbian film *Rane* (*The Wounds*, Srđan Dragojević 1997) in the context of a "wound culture," where "the wound stands paradigmatically as a metaphor for a culture that is traumatized by endless war and everyday violence, and morbidly obsessed with it" (2000a: 101). In a couple of notable examples of post-Yugoslav cinema, film stands not only as memory, but also as a symbolic *memorial* where physical memorialization might have been actively denied for ideological purposes. For instance, in Croatia's *Lea and Daria* (*Lea i Darija*, Branko Ivanda 2011), the central theme is that of the persecution of Jews in the Croatian Nazi state during WWII. In her present-day reality, Croatian/German Daria, one of the film's central characters, is haunted by the voice of Lea, her childhood friend who died in the Holocaust. Daria does not seem able to consciously remember Lea, yet she is haunted by the young girl's voice, and therefore by the imperative to bear witness. Unable to recover her memory, Daria turns on a film projector, and the events in Zagreb immediately before and during WWII start unfolding, narrated by the ghost of Lea herself. This literal screen memory, as presented in the film, is also the memory of a ghost—of a figure who has long been dead, and therefore cannot be the one who remembers. And yet she does remember through a phantasm of her friend Daria's own repressed memories from childhood. While the film has been criticized for sanitizing the extent of Croatia's complicity with the Nazi regime[7]—and indeed, it shies away from depicting any local collaborators, insisting that all Croats in the film be sympathetic with the victims of fascism—it nevertheless points to the pro-filmic aspects of capturing or recalling traumatic events (or the impossibility thereof). The film's remembering protagonist and narrator, Lea, has long perished, and moreover, she cannot be actively evoked in her friend Daria's conscious memory. Lea is, therefore, simultaneously the one who remembers and an impossible object of memory, an only witness who simultaneously cannot be a witness because she is dead. Whose memory

is the film evoking then, if one of its remembering subjects is long gone and the other admits that she does not consciously remember? It is the dislocated screen memory of a ghost that haunts through the repressed unconscious of those who survive.

Based on a true story of Croatia's child actor Lea Deutsch—who died on the train to Auschwitz, while her mother and younger brother's last known whereabouts were the concentration camp itself—the film does not depict its narrator's death, since Lea would not be able to witness, remember, or narrate the moment of her own dying. Instead of depicting her death, the film turns to fantasy: as the train bound for Auschwitz stops, the walls collapse and suddenly, the train car is transformed into a stage in the middle of a bucolic meadow. In this fantasy, Lea is joined by Daria, and they perform one last dance routine in front of an audience that comprises the film's other characters. This phantasm serves, then, as screen memory, screening off the depiction of Lea's death in the same train car and replacing it with a happy fantasy of dancing instead. It indicates both the narrator's inability to be a witness to her own death and the collapse of witnessing altogether—if, as Dori Laub (1995) has notably postulated, the Holocaust is an event that produced no witnesses, then Lea's moment of death cannot be either remembered or represented, since there was no one left in that train car who could be a witness to her demise. In the film's final moments, its other protagonist, Daria, finally seems to give up on efforts to bring Lea to conscious memory, proclaiming: "I have no memory." But as the camera pans over her room, we see a doll that belonged to Lea sitting on one of Daria's dressers. Hence, even if Daria cannot consciously evoke Lea, there nevertheless still exist physical mementos of her once being in the world. Moreover, with respect to its unearthing of the impossible memories of the victims of Croatia's WWII Nazi regime, *Lea and Daria* could be additionally understood as indirectly working through a more recent history of Croatia's persecution of ethnic minorities—that of the more recent ethnic war and the rise of extreme nationalism that yet again ushered in violence and discrimination against ethnic Others.

Another recent post-Yugoslav film about hidden memories, Jasmila Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* (2013, Bosnia-Herzegovina), self-consciously positions its existence as an important exercise in addressing, as well as commemorating, suppressed war crimes. Simić & Volčić (2014) have looked at the film as "a strategy for resistance, intervention and justice, while promoting symbolic reparation" (377). Žbanić's film is, indeed, a cinematic enactment of memorialization in a place (an eastern Bosnian town of Višegrad) where war crimes are forcibly denied by the ruling Bosnian Serb regime and not allowed to be publically commemorated. The film is based on a true story of Kym Vercoe (who plays herself),

an Australian tourist who traveled through Bosnia in 2011 and accidentally discovered the grim truth about mass rapes and other war crimes in a seemingly peaceful town that nowadays shows no visible traces of such events. By using the foreign gaze as a device for unearthing suppressed truths about war crimes, the film elides the more complicated aspects of local knowing and not knowing, which often exist simultaneously, in a seemingly paradoxical way. Instead, the film largely focuses on an outsider's sense of moral outrage that war crimes are not being acknowledged in a more proactive way. During her prolonged second stay in the town, Vercoe films the city and notes that "seeing Višegrad through the lens makes it digestible," acknowledging the distancing that is allowed to her through a technological embodiment of her outsider's perspective. The film features several wide shots of the famous Višegrad Bridge—not only one of the most iconic heritage sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina, due in great part to Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić's novel *The Bridge on the Drina*, but also a place where horrific atrocities took place in the last war. Notably, Žbanić films the bridge in a way that simultaneously evokes its breathtaking beauty and cruel indifference, as if to pose the challenging question of how something so beautiful can be the site of something so horrific. Moreover, the shots of the bridge in a film that deals with re-inscribing painful memories into a landscape where such memories have been denied is a way to re/introduce the bridge as a site of remembering and memorializing the pain and loss of many.[8] Incidentally, Žbanić's cinematic re-inscription of the iconic bridge on the Drina as a site of remembering the atrocities committed by the Bosnian Serbs poses a defiant counterpoint to another filmmaker's inscription of "heritage" into the landscape of Višegrad—Emir Kusturica's controversial project Andrićgrad, envisioned as a recovery of Serbian cultural traditions through the figure of Ivo Andrić and his legacy (a kind of ethno-nationalist cooptation that the writer himself defiantly stood against during his life) (Figure 1.1).

In a similar vein to *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, Goran Paskaljević's *When Day Breaks* (*Kad svane dan* 2013, Serbia) self-consciously enacts the process of memorialization of the traumas of the past—here, as in *Lea and Daria* and *The Third Half* (*Treto poluvreme*, Darko Mitrevski 2012, Macedonia), the forgotten past is the persecution of Yugoslavia's Jews in WWII. By mining forgotten memories of a previous time, *When Day Breaks* simultaneously calls attention to the more contemporary forms of (deliberate) forgetting—that of the atrocities committed in recent wars. As opposed to Žbanić's privileging of the outsider's gaze as a diagnostic, but also distancing device, *When Day Breaks* frames the unearthing of the hidden traumatic memory as an intimate self-discovery of an elderly musician, Miša, who finds out, in his old age, that he had been adopted by

Figure 1.1 Re-inscribing the bridge on the Drina as a site of trauma by creating a cinematic memorial (*For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, screen grabs)

a Serbian family when his Jewish parents were killed by Nazi collaborators. Dragana Obradović has argued that "the film presents the problem of commemoration and memory as a problem of severed lineages" (2014: 6). Moreover, the fact that the site of the former Nazi concentration camp is, in present-day Serbia, the place where refugees from the more recent war reside, draws an overt link between these separate-yet-connected histories of violence and displacement. Tellingly, today's refugees and the Roma musicians, together with a handful of other social outcasts, are the only ones who attend the commemoration for the Jewish victims at the end of the film and are, it is suggested, the only ones willing to respond to the ethical call for bearing witness to the traumas of others and memorializing

traumatic memory in space. To use Judith Butler's analytical framework of grievable life (2009), it appears that only those whose lives are deemed "ungrievable" in the present (the refugees, the Roma, the poor, the social outcasts) are able to grieve the lives of those deemed similarly ungrievable in the more distant past (Yugoslav Jews). Paskaljević's and Žbanić's films both bring to focus efforts to memorialize the victims of war crimes. They both also stage impromptu memorial sites: in *For Those Who Can Tell Not Tales*, Vercoe places, on the bed of a notorious motel where mass rapes took place, a yellow flower for each raped woman (flowers that she picked around town, in the gardens of its Serbian inhabitants); in *When Day Breaks*, the memorialization takes place through Miša organizing a concert on the site of the former concentration camp, where the music that his father had composed before being killed is played. While they depict these impromptu counter-memorials, both films stand as counter-monuments[9] in their own right, enactments of ethically driven cinema that actively seeks to fill the gap of forgotten trauma and insert it back into active, knowable cultural memory.

Against Memory: Post-Yugoslav Trans-Ethnic Trauma Cinema

Outside of the framework of memory, general stylistic tendencies of post-Yugoslav cinema have been classified, in Jurica Pavičić's extensive survey, into three main categories which simultaneously function as modes of representation: films of self-victimizing, films of self-Balkanization, and films of normalization (2011: 21–2). These three groups inevitably exhibit variations inside each category, but they might also inadvertently limit critical insight into the ongoing preoccupation with traumatic memory that links many films across the externally imposed separation. Notably, Pavičić closely links style with ideology, arguing that "key stylistic tendencies in post-Yugoslav cinema arise foremost, and inextricably, from the political and ideological circumstances in post-Yugoslav societies before, during and after the war" (26). It must also be noted that a large majority of the existing scholarship on post-Yugoslav cinemas is preoccupied with what might be called analytics of exposure: critical interventions that seek to *expose* a film's (or filmmaker's) position when it comes to nationalist frames of address, or ethnocentric tendencies. This preoccupation often leads to an implicit imposition of a binary within which a cultural text must be neatly delegated to an ideological side, even though the multiplicity of interpretative (or, in the case of film, spectatorial) positions might challenge such definitive delegations.

Other topics that have occupied scholars of post-Yugoslav cinemas are ideology and political transition, particularly as they relate to identity

(Vojković 2008; Mazaj 2011; Alagjozovski 2012). Moreover, post-Yugoslav cinemas are often divided in scholarly work into neatly separated national cinemas, which are then examined in isolation, an approach that often inadvertently implies separate ethno-cultural histories, and perhaps more importantly, an isolated present in which any one post-Yugoslav ethno-national cinema originates within and becomes meaningful only inside its own narrowly defined ethno-national context.[10] That framework does disservice not only to the shared film history, but also to a growing number of regional co-productions that often bring together, through the process of filmmaking, many former Yugoslav republics. Commenting on such collaborations, Andrew Horton states: "Indeed, it is remarkable how often the filmmakers of the former Yugoslavia still come together despite the trauma of the wars of succession" (2013: 260). But perhaps it is precisely *because* of trauma, and not despite it, that filmmaking seeks to re-stage the shared Yugoslav past through collaboration. If films originating in different post-Yugoslav national contexts reflect something about the shifting dynamics of collectivity that pertains not only to such narrowly defined ethno-national spaces, but also to a more broadly envisioned geopolitical context, then scholarly work on such films might benefit from expanding its scope so as not to inadvertently reiterate strict ethno-national divisions as such.[11] Post-Yugoslav films stemming from different ethno-national spaces reflect something about the shared history, and about the violent process of Yugoslavia's end and its aftermath—they constitute an intimately interconnected archive of screen memory that should be considered relationally rather than in isolation whenever possible. What alternative collectivities might post-Yugoslav cinema envision and how might it work to create an archive of dislocated screen memory that denies primacy to ethno-centrism? What is more, focus on these strictly regional interconnectivities does not imply their isolation from the more transnational cultural flows of meaning, as such attempts would further impose impermeable borders where they do not exist. But it is to take into consideration local contingencies that bind some spaces together (here through histories of traumatic injury), even when they are separated by administrative borders as such.

I propose an analytical shift away from focus on the history of violence and toward focus on *a* history of trauma. Jasmina Husanović has pointedly argued that

> casting a look at the symbolic and political constitution of Bosnian/Balkan realities may prompt us to think of the Balkans as trauma, and yet urged to bear witness to it, we are bound to mark this very impossibility in our speech and through our acts, and seek justice from a radically uncertain ground.
> (2009: 103)

Indeed, a closer focus on a history of trauma, one that acknowledges the "uncertain ground" from which trauma can be locatable and knowable, moves us away from fetishizing the sheer fact of violence (that both Balkanism and self-Balkanization perpetuate) and orients us toward considering how and why a recurrence of traumatic injury happens, what reverberations the past—real or imagined—carries toward the present and future, and what the role of traumatic memory is in the solidifying of history as well as in its repetition. Perhaps it is not history that repeats itself—it might be trauma that recurs through a repetition compulsion, which happens when the experience is not consciously worked through or fully overcome in the first place. Such dynamics are at times quite overtly addressed in post-Yugoslav cinema, for instance, in films that self-reflexively explore the role of memory as an object of cinema. From the aforementioned *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* to *The Professional* (Dušan Kovačević 2004), *The Fourth Man* (*Četvrti čovek*, Dejan Zečević 2007), *Like a Bad Dream* (*Kako los son*, Antonio Mitrikeski 2003), and *Halima's Path* (*Halimin put*, Arsen A. Ostojić 2012), and many others, these works of cinema offer a wide range of approaches to screen and (traumatic) memory, often overtly pointing to the dialectic relationship between remembering and forgetting, and between knowing and not knowing. Some of them—for instance, *Pretty Village*, *Remake* (Dino Mustafić 2003, Bosnia-Herzegovina), and *Go West* (Ahmed Imamović 2005, Bosnia-Herzegovina)—are entirely structured as flashbacks experienced by their central protagonists. Flashback, as one of the most recognizable cinematic devices for evoking memory and breaking down the separation between temporal frames, is also a prominent device of representing trauma. Referring to Turim's insightful work on flashbacks in films, Joshua Hirsch notes that "the history of the flashback is at the same time a meta-history, charting the changing models of historical consciousness disseminated in films" (2004: 89). This makes Hirsch pose the following question: "in what ways has the flashback modeled a masterful, secondarized, or 'narrative' (in Janet's sense) historical memory, and in what ways a posttraumatic one?" (89). While important to consider, this question needs also to be historicized so as not to imply a singular meaning that flashback inevitably implies in any cultural or historical context. In the context of post-Yugoslav cinema, flashbacks have, indeed, been a way to cinematically depict the workings of traumatic memory in a temporally dislocated framework that blurs the clear distinction between *here* and *there*. Moreover, in this particular context, flashbacks often enact dislocated screen memories as modes of working through (and at times acting out) war trauma as a recurring motif that haunts cultural memory. As such, they collectively call attention not only to the distinction between history and memory, but also to their unavoidable connection and mutual co-dependence. As Maureen Turim

argues, "if flashbacks give us images of memory, the personal archives of the past, they also give us images of history, the shared and recorded past" (1989: 2).

Flashbacks in post-Yugoslav cinema have frequently been deployed as cinematic devices of recovering the missing links between traumas, old and new, suggesting their mutual connection. Bosnia's *Remake*, for instance, starts with its protagonist, Tarik, residing in Paris, remembering his days spent in Bosnia. His flashback takes us to Sarajevo just before the war, where Tarik is writing a screenplay titled "A Man from Nowhere," about his father Ahmed's life during WWII. Throughout the film, the events in Tarik's life are frequently intercut with scenes from his father's past. The film draws overt parallels between the father's WWII story and the son's experience in the Bosnian war, and it is formally structured through a layering of memories, where one time frame interrupts, and is in turn interrupted by the other. (A more feverish interruption of the time frames of traumatic memory structures the flashbacks in *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, a film I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2.) Moreover, *Remake* casts the parallels between the two wars in self-reflexive cinematic terms—similarities and repetitions are evoked in the titular, overtly cinematic term "remake," and Ahmed's story is conceived as a *screenplay* that his son has written. Their mutually intertwined traumatic memories are connected through the medium of film. The screenplay, ironically, saves Tarik's life when he is released from the Bosnian Serb labor camp after the French decide to finance his film. In what Ellen Klein calls "its postmodern fascination with itself via the more general subject of film," *Remake*'s *mise-en-abyme* structure—where the scenes from WWII are eventually revealed to be scenes from the film that the French are producing—is simultaneously constituted as a critique of the objectifying external gaze: the French elites who are financing Tarik's film seem to be deeply invested in the spectacle of the suffering of an exoticized Other (a dynamic that is, somewhat less overtly, also present in *Go West*, discussed in Chapter 3).

To a certain extent, *Remake* can be seen as perpetuating a troubling exercise of self-Balkanization, by depicting violence as an irrational inevitability akin to ancient hatreds of inherently violent people. However, as I have suggested earlier in this chapter, the overt links between the repressed traumas of the past, particularly of WWII, and the more recent violence, might also historicize the last war in ways in which the conflict is revealed as not appearing out of thin air, but perhaps closely linked to the suppressed memories of the violent past that has not been worked through in meaningful ways, and therefore recurs in pathological form. Moreover, the film's self-reflexivity evokes cinema's intertextual connectedness through reverberations of trauma and, moreover, overtly calls attention

to the Balkanist stereotypes reproduced through film form. For instance, the French producer notes that in Balkan films, everyone always dies in the end, a statement that echoes an earlier conversation between Tarik and his Serbian captor. In the film's final scene, Tarik returns to Bosnia as a soldier and accidentally wounds his best friend, the Serb Miro. Miro activates a bomb, and before both of them die in the explosion, they play one last game of charades to guess the film in question: smilingly, Tarik's last word is "domestic," referring to the film that is about to end, and whose protagonists will, stereotypically for Balkan films, all be dead. In this self-reflexive approach, *Remake* foreshadows its own ending, but does not reiterate stereotypes as much as it calls overt attention to them by being conscious of its own role as a film unable to shed the limitations of normative screen fatalism within which its history (and traumatic memory) is located.

Similarly to *Remake*, Croatia's *The Living and the Dead* (*Živi i mrtvi*, Kristijan Milić 2007) draws overt, borderline supernatural links between the violence of WWII and the Yugoslav war. The film starts with a quote from Ivo Andrić: "We are all already dead, just waiting to be buried one after another." This quote positions the film and its ethos deeply within self-Balkanizing fatalism, but its structure of doubling might also reveal something about traumatic recurrence. One of the film's storylines takes place in Bosnia in 1993, another in 1943. The precise 50-year span between the two chronotopes plays into the local stereotype that there is a war in the Balkans every half a century. And like *Remake*, the film follows parallel events of men's war experience, seamlessly switching between the two time frames to drive home the point that, regardless of the current shape of a particular conflict, wars (or at least these two wars) are virtually the same event, one driven by absurdity and irrational obsession with violence. The switch from one time frame to another is often triggered by parallel action undertaken by soldiers, such as the lighting of cigarettes that triggers a switch from the Bosnian war to WWII. In one scene, the Ustasha unit in WWII receives orders from their new commander. As he delivers instructions in a strict tone, the scene is feverishly cut by various medium and extreme close-up shots, as if to convey a fragmented and overwhelming experience of volatile reality. The men in both wars eventually stumble upon the very same site, the so-called "Field of the Dead," where bodies of many different soldiers, "Ustashas, partisans, and other regulars," are buried. The parallels are further strengthened by the fact that several actors play different protagonists in both time frames, including Filip Šovagović, who plays a soldier in the Ustasha unit in WWII, and his grandson in the Croatian army in the Bosnian war. Another protagonist from the WWII storyline notes that his father died in the same

field (presumably in WWI), thus pointing to a farther-reaching history of (irrational) violence. It is not difficult to infer that the field of the dead stands in for the Yugoslav territory (and perhaps the Balkans) itself, as emphasis is put on its saturation with the bodies of men killed in violent conflicts. Again, such potentially self-Balkanizing emphasis on the history of inevitable violence might be considered as an inadvertent indication of a history of traumatic injury, where cinematic texts reflect a repetition compulsion as a way to attempt to work through the unresolved traumas of both past and present. In the film's climax, the two time frames converge and the dead soldiers from different wars stand around the two surviving men from the Bosnian war. After one of them dies, the other puts a gun to his head in the film's last shot, presumably to end his own life. The warring (and defeated) masculinity is thus doomed in the convergence of various historical times onto one location where they all come to die. The claustrophobic nature of warring experience is accented by a saturated visual palette, particularly in the WWII time frame, which adds to a sense of the men's stuckness in an endless cycle of (confusing and seemingly pointless) violence.

Supernatural and horror genre overtones are similarly present in the Serbian film *The Enemy* (*Neprijatelj*, Dejan Zečević 2011) as a further exercise in staging the recurring scene of male war experience in a claustrophobic cinematic light. The film's story again takes place in Bosnia, this time in 1995, beginning on the "seventh day of peace." The opening scene casts memory as a device of survival as one of the protagonists is walking around a minefield, trying to remember where he buried landmines two years prior. The reliability of his memory is uncertain, but also, quite literally, made into a question of life and death. If his memory fails him, he will fall victim to the mines he buried in the ground. In the recurring claustrophobic *mise-en-scene*, where an isolated military unit is coming to terms with various real and imagined demons, there are many parallels between *The Enemy*, *The Living and the Dead*, and *The Blacks* (all made by members of a younger generation of filmmakers, who have, as Dubravka Lakić notes, a certain "historical distance" from which they observe the recent violence in the region[12]). These films are framed as psychological war dramas with horror overtones, and present intimate dissections of military unit dynamics, each depicted in a constricted time and space in which the cycle of violence seems to be perpetually closed onto itself. They focus on the psychological consequences to masculinities in war, from perpetrator trauma, untreated post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—a medical term that denotes the mental condition of survivors of extreme trauma—to the pathological perpetuation of violence. Moreover, the *mise-en-scenes*

in these films are largely singular sites seemingly cut off from the rest of the world (as one protagonist notes in *The Enemy*, upon unsuccessfully trying to reach the headquarters by radio phone: "The rest of the world disappeared as if it never existed"). And while all three point to the sites of the uncanny, in *The Enemy*, the story takes most overtly supernatural overtones when mysterious and unexplained events start happening, and when the unit increasingly becomes convinced that the mysterious man that they found walled inside a dilapidated factory is Satan himself. One by one, the men succumb to irrational violence and kill each other as if the "Satan" put a spell on them. By the end, only one unit member survives and goes back to wall the "Satan" back into the place where he was first found, as a way to interrupt the cycle of violence. The mysterious man asks the soldier: "Do you really believe that you can resolve things this way?" This ironic question echoes throughout the film, which simultaneously pushes the supernatural elements forward enough to make them believable to some characters, and balances them out with rational explanations for those who refuse to believe in the supernatural. For instance, the film's only female character, Danica, does not believe that the mysterious man is a demon. In the end, she leaves the last surviving solder with the words: "Everyone sees whatever they want to see. He is nothing." Rather than favoring the supernatural, the film therefore proposes it as a possible framework for those who are willing to believe in it, as well as a framework that is inherently deceiving and manipulative. The demon himself is the site of repressed uncanny, an embodiment of the figure hinted at in an earlier Serbian film about men and war—the "Ogre" in *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, who is frequently evoked as a possible explanation for the violence, but never overtly materializes in that film. The "Ogre" materializes in *The Enemy* and remains an ambiguous figure, a repository of impossible answers and repressed-yet-undeniable histories of violence.

Rationally, the explanation for the mysterious landmines that start appearing around the unit's base comes when the unit's soldier nicknamed "Ass" comes forward and admits that he had been secretly planting them in order to get everyone killed, since he suspected that, upon return to the military headquarters, he would be "betrayed" for killing civilians and tried for his crimes. By eliminating his unit's members, he was attempting to eliminate the witnesses of his war crimes. There is, therefore, for those willing to accept it, a rational explanation for the seemingly supernatural events—in this case, a soldier's attempts at concealing the history of his war crimes. Those for whom "irrational hatreds" brought on by demonic forces are a more acceptable explanation (and a suitable symbolic substitute for

facing perpetrator trauma), see in the mysterious stranger the devil himself and attempt to lock him away as a means to lock away the "truth" about the uncanny brutality. But as the "demon" himself asks at the end, does his locking away—or suppression—truly resolve things for those left to cope with the nature of unspeakable violence that they were involved with? In *The Enemy*, perpetrator trauma is trans-ethnic, as soldiers of different warring sides fall victim to violence toward one another, and their dead bodies are thrown into a common grave where their ethnicity becomes irrelevant (Figure 1.2).

This film, like several other post-Yugoslav war films—from *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, to *The Living and the Dead* and *The Blacks*—explores the burdens of masculinity and perpetrator trauma in particular, with female characters virtually non-existent, or secondary to the plot's central narrative. Moreover, it might be noteworthy to observe that Bosnia is persistently, for Croatian and Serbian filmmakers, the go-to site of war so much so that Bosnian war appears to be playing the role of screen memory by displacing a cinematic focus on conflicts that might be equally as important to consider in the contexts of Croatia and Serbia—those of Croatia's own Homeland war and the Serbia-Kosovo conflict, respectively. Moreover, persistent cinematic return to the role that WWII plays in the more recent wars stages, by virtue of its repetition (through variously encoded meanings), something akin to a repetition compulsion in the domain of the mass cultural medium that is cinema. By offering various interpretations of the role that WWII might have played in recent ethnic conflicts—some explanations more self-Balkanizing than others—these diverse films constitute an archive of cultural memory that seems to *still* be working through the traumas of the past and selectively using them to address the more recent recurrence of violence. Arguably, the recurring role of WWII and its links to the more recent conflict, as depicted in post-Yugoslav cinema, culminates in Kusturica's *Underground*, a film that I discuss in detail in Chapter 4. As an archive of films that purport to dissect a seemingly impossible question—why does violence stubbornly recur?—these films speak to one another and to the same histories of trauma. If it is true, as Gordana Crnković argues, that "much of the prominent artwork—from all new post-Yugoslav countries—creates connecting pathways and energizing links with the artistic and intellectual, living legacies of a once common and now divided space" (2014: 31), then the films discussed here might be considered an archive of post-Yugoslav trans-ethnic trauma cinema, as cultural works that might not necessarily offer satisfying resolutions but certainly point to attempts at working through the collective, shared, or inherited trauma—attempts that transgress the primacy of ethnic boundaries as such.

Figure 1.2 Warring masculinities, perpetrator trauma, and genre overtones (*The Living and the Dead*, *The Enemy*, *The Blacks*, screen grabs)

Accented Cinema Against Ethnocentrism

With an emphasis on trans-ethnic tendencies of post-Yugoslav cinema, I am invested in dislocating firm ethnocentric registers of interpretation. Moreover, where cultural politics of the local are concerned, I am particularly interested in the films' circulation as meaningful within the region that they purport to depict. I am, therefore, not as invested in the analytical framework of an "external gaze," a framework that has been a frequent stumbling block in the charges of self-Balkanization. A simple binary divide between internal/external gaze should be challenged, as I wish to do, all the while retaining local applications over trans-historical/universalizing paradigms of address. I want to illustrate the problem with the internal/external gaze on a post-Yugoslav film that challenges a firm rootedness in singular ethno-national origin and actively dislocates itself from any such positionality—Goran Paskaljević's *Someone Else's America* (1995), a "diasporic film" (Iordanova 2000) that could also be described by Hamid Naficy's term "accented cinema" (2001).[13] *Someone Else's America* is simultaneously about identity and the impossibility of identity, about locality and the impossibility of it. Marciniak, Imre and O'Healy put forward the following observation with respect to exilic cinema and national borders:

> Increasingly, in film studies, we find references to such categories as "cinema of the borders," "cinema of migration," and "cinema of displacement," terms that are intimately linked to the experiences and discourses of exile, immigration, and border crossings. These labels attempt to classify new filmic narratives which, because of their thematic foci and complicated production contexts, cannot be linked exclusively to a single national culture. Furthermore, these new terms consciously depart from the ghettoizing rubrics of "ethnic cinema," "minority cinema," or "immigrant cinema".
>
> (2007: 9)

Made at the height of violent friction back in the former Yugoslavia, *Someone Else's America* is, perhaps, the director's exercise of escape into the weightlessness of diasporic dislocation, but it is also about the inescapable anchoring that eventually returns us to reality. An attempt at reading this film makes obvious the inadequacy of the division between external and internal gaze, since it is impossible to determine what its authentic locality is—the one of the mythical "home" or of the weightless diaspora. They are both material and immaterial in equal measure. Benjamin Halligan notes that Paskaljević avoids positioning himself in this film as the "foreign eye" of a European auteur, of the kind that, for instance, Theo Angelopolous engages with in *Ulysses' Gaze* (2000: 75).

It is impossible to say precisely "whose" film this is—made by a Serbian director and with several Serbian actors, it is an international coproduction, with international crew and actors; many languages are spoken in it. Perhaps the most precise denomination of ownership would be to call it diasporic, or accented, but that also means it does not belong to anyone in particular and to everyone at once. It is a story about immigrant lives in New York (some from the former Yugoslavia) and about the hopes and dreams, joys and losses of those who have come from elsewhere and are attempting to re/create a sense of home in a new land, with differing levels of success. The title of the film reflects the question of ownership as well (America is always someone else's). In this film, America belongs to immigrants, as they come from many parts of the world and create intricate bonds of simultaneously belonging and not belonging to the exilic space they find themselves in. But their national home spaces are not theirs anymore either, as it is poignantly illustrated throughout the film that a sense of national pride and belonging proves to be a futile structure of feelings (particularly mocked with the Yugoslav whose mantra "We no surrender," spoken in broken English, is used to illustrate the absurdity of such national self-aggrandizing when his entire home country has, in fact, surrendered to self-destructive violence at that very moment).

The question of how we *know* that something is home permeates the film, as different characters express their longing for an ephemeral place that seems to exist only in their imagination. That space of the mythical home is recreated through bodily experiences of consuming food and drinks from "back home," or playing its music, but it is always an evasive place, never fully recreated or attainable. The final scene of the film, in which the two central characters and best friends—the Montenegrin Bayo, and the Spaniard Alonso—get together after all the trials and tribulations of each losing family members, can serve as a metaphor for the diasporic, accented space in a larger sense. The two friends are sitting together on discarded car seats, and after they playfully buckle up and get ready "for takeoff," they indeed do take off in a moment of magic realism and levitate over the iconic New York City skyline, having arrived "at a happy isle of immigrant confusion in the middle of the seemingly indifferent setting of urban North America" (Halligan: 71). This is the diasporic space but also the space of dislocated screen memory: up in the air and uncertain, unanchored, neither here nor there, but affectively recognizable to so many across various borders of division. It is also the space where, I want to argue, a vast quantity of post-Yugoslav cinema resides, where home is impossible to pinpoint but nevertheless strived for, where language is a broken, inadequate, yet still possible means of communication, and where answers are often in the magical parts of realism rather than in fixed facts (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Levitating in diaspora (*Someone Else's America*, screen grab)

Finally, if we were to envision the spectator the way Dubravka Ugrešić envisions a reader, the following words might apply:

> If the reader envisages the state as a house, it will be easier for him to imagine that for many inhabitants of former Yugoslavia, along with the war and the disappearance of their country, many other things have been confiscated: not only their homeland and their possessions but also their memory.
>
> (1996: 32)

This confiscation of memory has been an important aspect of the shifting perspectives on belonging to a collectivity in the aftermath of Yugoslavia: if war and rampant ethno-nationalism indeed had such a "confiscating" effect on those who endured it, how does postwar culture work to reinstate or repair at least some fragments of what has been lost, filling the gaps with screen memories of a different kind? This is dislocated screen memory in another sense—a recuperation of lost memories with an understanding that they will always remain dislocated from their original context (where the notion of an original context might have been partially dreamed up in its own right) and that they will always be shifted by the clandestine workings of trauma, which continue to permeate the post-conflict realities within which these films are rendered meaningful as narratives of dislocated trauma.

2

Unsettling Empathies: Screen, Gender, and Traumatic Memory

In the opening scene of *Three windows and a hanging* (*Tri dritare dhe një varje*, Isa Qosja 2014, Kosovo), three elderly men sit under a tree and bicker about their diverging memories of some fairly irrelevant past event. Then the film cuts to an interior in which a journalist is interviewing a woman who is at first off camera, silent. The journalist (played by the iconic Serbian actress Mirjana Karanović) inquires, in English and through a translator, about the time that her interlocutor, a Kosovo Albanian woman, was raped by Serb soldiers, along with three other women in her village. The woman answers the questions slowly, in stuttering, brief sentences, her voice trembling. As the camera slowly zooms out, we see the back of the woman's head but never her face. Her short answers about the brutality she endured are not accompanied by an image of her face, as if the film's camera cannot face her directly. At the very end of the film, the same woman, Lushe, offers a more detailed, voluntary testimonial of her trauma, this time to her husband. Yet, as she gives an account of the events that led to her rape, she is again offscreen, as the camera rests on her husband's pained face instead. Her husband had just returned from captivity and found that his wife had been ostracized by the village they live in because she talked to the journalist about her rape—not only did many residents stop talking to her, but she also lost her job as a schoolteacher when the villagers stopped sending their children to her school. It appears that more harmful to this traditional patriarchal community than the fact of women being raped is the fact that one of them talked about it publicly, and thus "brought shame" to the village. Moreover, some male residents call her story into question, since "you can never trust a woman," as one of them states. Other men struggle with this information, notably Sokol, who

suspects that his own wife was one of the other three women also raped. Sokol asks Lushe whether his wife was one of the other three, but Lushe repeatedly refuses to tell him, ultimately suggesting that his wife, Nifa, was not raped. Reassured, Sokol happily tells his wife that he is relieved that she was not one of the three other women Lushe spoke about. After crying in her pillow at night, Nifa hangs herself in the morning. Her suicide suggests that she was one of the rape victims after all, and that she did not find it possible to continue living under the circumstances in which rape—and particularly admitting that it had happened—is considered to be a thing of ultimate shame.

Back at Lushe's house, things are left unresolved after her admission. She ends her emotional, offscreen testimonial by telling her husband: "I waited for you to come back. Here I am, so do whatever you want with me." As the husband slowly turns his head to look at her, the scene ends, and the film finishes with another banter from the three elderly men under the tree. We therefore do not get a resolution, as resolutions under such circumstances are perhaps impossible. Brutalized during the war, the women are shamed for it after and ultimately have to place their destiny in the hands of men. The three windows and a hanging of the film's title refer to the four raped women: three of them look out their windows awaiting the news of their fate, which will be decided by men, while the fourth one hangs herself. The patriarchal stigma of rape not only makes it impossible to acknowledge the traumatic effects of wartime sexual violence, but also insists on negating the experience altogether, because admitting it would mean admitting not only the "flaws" of the women brutalized this way, but also of the community that they brought "shame" to.

Films such as *Three Windows and a Hanging* offer an important critique of the traditional patriarchal attitudes toward sexual violence and shaming, by addressing, in their own way, the painful and still-relevant question of whether the subaltern can indeed speak (in this film, it appears that she cannot). At the same time, a critique of patriarchy that is predominantly premised on depicting women as impassive and victimized social actors might run the risk of inadvertently perpetuating the notion that, in war, women are victims and victims only. War stories, typically premised on normative gender assumptions, often run such risks, as their prevalent attention to masculinist violence to which women are subjected has the cumulative effect of re-stabilizing the rigid, binary, and traditional gender roles even when its individual pieces might be geared as a critique of such roles rather than their perpetuation. Margaret R. Higonnet argues that "War must be understood as a gendering activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants" (1987: 4).

In the most general sense, war film as a genre typically heightens the extents of traditional gender performativity rather than challenge it. When we think of the term "war film," the association usually takes the shape of envisioning chaotic battles where men die, are gravely wounded, or otherwise engaged in what might be deemed normatively masculine, or masculinist forms of wartime action. Women (together with children and the elderly) are most commonly cast as casualties of war and as civilians who are by default innocent victims (thereby making men into war's acceptable victims). Or, as Miriam Cooke puts it, "The War Story reinforces mythic wartime roles. It revives outworn essentialist clichés of men's aggressivity and women's pacifism" (1996: 15). Is the representational tendency of war film reflective of something that is genuinely indicative of lived war experiences themselves, or does it pose a mere fallback to stereotyped narrative conventions? Or, to reposition the question: if we were to fully negate differences in the gendered experiences of war, would we also be unfairly erasing the externally imposed structures that indeed often position male and female war experience as utterly different? The dilemma might be at least partially resolved with a focus on the deconstruction (rather than negation) of the structures and norms that make such experiences different rather than suggesting that the disparities arise from inherent gendered difference itself. In this chapter, my starting assumption is that there *is* a gendered difference in war experience, albeit one that is structurally imposed rather than "natural." This difference is reinforced by the logistics of war itself, and, in turn, performatively reinforces traditional gender roles, which are subsequently mistaken for reflecting the "natural" differences between men and women.

In her analysis of American war films, Tania Modleski finds that sexual charge and war violence are often closely related, albeit in a male-dominated formation within which the woman always represents the threat of uncontrollable explosion (1991). Moreover, others have used these perceived gendered polarities of war experience to argue that war is an enactment of homoerotic male sexual desire in which women are but occasional—yet significant—supporting players who figuratively embody the threatening mass, or the uncanny (Theweleit 1987). In any case, the normative polarity—between men as active participants of wars and women as its passive and innocent victims—has been as persistent on screen as it has been in the wider cultural discourses about what war is and how it affects people differently. Yet precisely because women are often cast as marginal actors of war, they are positioned as its witnesses and spectators, able to see more than their seemingly passive position would initially entail (Gallagher 1999).

The Yugoslav wars, particularly the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia, have persistently been interpreted through a distinctly gendered prism in which women's bodies served the role of literal battlefields, particularly in the heinous practices of mass rape (Stiglmayer 1994). With the extensive amount of attention that feminist scholars and activists have brought to the existence of sexual wartime violence, it has been difficult not to, even inadvertently, reiterate the notion that men are inherently violent and that women are perpetual victims and victims only. Dubravka Žarkov has referred to this tendency as an "overpowering presence of the victimized female body in feminist studies on war in Yugoslavia" (2007: 15).[1] Rarely, in such approaches, are either gender or ethnicity taken as *performative* categories constituted through contextual action—rather, they are assumed to exist as a priori features of both perpetrators and victims alike, and moreover, defining factors for attributing innocence and guilt. This static and naturalized understanding of how gendered violence takes shape in an ethnic conflict has frequently been deployed toward furthering ethnic divisions, by feeding into ethno-national(ist) ideologies that position an entire ethnic group as either a perpetrator or a victim (Helms 2013).

In this chapter, I look at three post-Yugoslav films that overtly deal with gender as a prism through which to represent war trauma, and thereby touch on some of the complexities illustrated above. These are certainly not the only regional cinematic texts that put gendered war experiences to the fore (to a certain extent, any film about war does so, explicitly or implicitly), but they represent key moments in the trajectory of women's cinematic presence (or, in some cases, absence) when it comes to the interplay between gender and war trauma depicted in cinema after Yugoslavia. I am particularly interested here in the *failures* of normative gender frameworks to sustain a traumatized subject. Throughout the chapter, I ask how irresolvable trauma works to destabilize naturalized gender tropes that delegate men into aggressors and women into the role of helpless victims whose pain is rendered either entirely invisible or overwhelmingly indicative of womanhood-as-identity. Moreover, by highlighting the instances in which women's war experience is made not only visible, but also complicated in ways that transgress the boundaries of traditional gender roles, I ask how the presence of such complexities of war trauma might elicit better understandings of not only how trauma is gendered, but also how gender is traumatic in its own right. I also examine how different valences of screen trauma often resist standard categorization and escape both the narrative frame and the ideological interpellation as such. It is precisely through such modes of (in)expressibility that gendered war trauma on screen has the potential to challenge conventional framing of both gender and ethnicity and, moreover, invite spectatorial empathy that is

not ethno-nationally aligned. The proliferation of affective responses to trauma—that extend beyond mere visibility of an ethnic subject—is a potential pathway toward an empathically unsettled, trans-ethnic, dislocated spectatorial alignment to which I turn in later sections. That alignment might overcome the potential hurdles that some of these films, and the politicized context that surrounds them, otherwise represent in their provocative stances toward the role of gender in ethno-national divisions during and after the times of war.

I start with an analysis of one of the best known, but also most notorious films about the Bosnian war, *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* (*Lepa sela lepo gore*, Srđan Dragojević, Serbia 1996). It is a decidedly masculine-centered text whose positioning of gender roles nevertheless often ruptures and reveals cracks through which women literally appear as ghosts that can only temporarily materialize in the visual field of the men whose traumatic memory permeates the screen. As the film unfolds, the normative male warrior becomes increasingly defeated and cannot maintain the full grasp over the narrative frames of his wartime memories—his memories become increasingly unhinged under the burden of repressed traumatic memories (memories which, importantly, include the traumatic experiences of women and ethnic Others).

After illustrating how the return of the repressed in *Pretty Village* points to illuminating dynamics between traumatic memory, ethnicity, and gender, I turn to two Bosnian films made by female directors: *Grbavica* (Jasmila Žbanić 2006) and *Snow* (*Snijeg*, Aida Begić 2008). Considered to be two of the strongest films made about the postwar realities in the region to date, they both have women and postwar life at the center of their narratives. I position these two films as direct and poignant counterpoints to *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, since they insist on the materiality of the women's experience of war not as a temporary device that punctures the narrative of the otherwise masculinist wartime story, but as a sustained, central prism through which war is experienced and remembered to begin with. If Socialist Yugoslavia's cultural memories of women's participation in WWII were marked by an incessant emphasis on "iconic idealization of the woman as a symbol of the noblest revolutionary goals" (Jambrešić Kirin 2009: 67), perhaps Žbanić's and Begić's respective films point to a reversal in the cultural memories related to the last Yugoslav conflict: a denial of ethno-national(ist) mythologizing of women's experiences and a focus on women's trauma as a subjectively non-essentialist mode of remembering. With insistence on women's experiences and points of view, *Grbavica* and *Snow* touch on some of the most striking ways in which trauma seems to constitute and is, in turn, constituted through gender. Even though *Pretty Village*'s dominant framework is one of masculinist

wartime realities, and those of *Snow* and *Grbavica* are seemingly its exact opposites, I suggest that all three films point to very significant processes by which gender interplays with traumatic affect in ways that might displace the dominance of normatively ethno-centered frames of reference.

The films' internal cinematic features, as well as the extra-cinematic circumstances of their production or reception, point to the complicated ways in which (post)war film often functions as both an object around which cultural memory gets (re)created in mediated ways, and as a first-hand articulation of traumatic war memory in and of itself. This double bind of (post)war film as both an object of memory-work and as an authentic site of cultural remembrance posits film on a particularly sensitive terrain. By examining the possibility of reading these cinematic texts against the dominant ethno-nationalist grain, this chapter argues for the importance of cultural production that engages in post-conflict memory-work which does not subscribe to narrative norms at any cost, but rather gives voice to the anti-redemptive features of dislocated screen memory. There is a potential in embracing an inescapable dialectic between remembering and forgetting, if only for dislocating trauma from a firm fixity within traditionally rigid understandings of both gender and ethnic identity.

Engendering the Trouble of War

Before reclaiming gendered war trauma as a site of dislocated screen memory, it is important to acknowledge that trauma has already been gendered within ethno-nationalist rhetoric itself, and filtered through the gender-normative framework that sees men solely as warriors and women solely as victims. Moreover, women are often positioned as symbols of entire ethnic groups—and therefore, the violation of the wives and mothers of the enemy side became all the more effective as a strategy of war (Žarkov 2007). In focusing at the thusly positioned wartime fortification of the most rigidly traditional gender roles, it is easy to forget that many exceptions or deviations from such norms persisted nevertheless (for instance, the fact that there were women who fought or otherwise actively participated in the war and, likewise, that there were men who did not). This simplification of the scales of gender performativity has frequently been perpetuated even in the declaratively feminist critiques of gendered wartime violence, critiques that are oftentimes more invested in reiterating the very dichotomy that predisposes such violence rather than posing a challenge to it (Helms 2013).[2] Moreover, it appears that within these debates, gender is invariably always only twofold, and considered through a distinctly "cisgendered" framework, where female bodies are assumed to always align with feminine gender and male bodies with masculinity.

These, as Judith Butler calls them, "received notions of femininity and masculinity" (1999: vii) are decidedly heteronormative and, moreover, set up "exclusionary gender norms within feminism, often with homophobic consequences" (viii). The framework of the chapter at hand is such that I must engage in acknowledging the material realities of normative gender performativity while remaining cautious not to inadvertently naturalize it. Gendered valances of post-Yugoslav trauma cinema have typically remained firmly within the received (cisgendered) notions of femininity and masculinity, even when they are declaratively feminist in focus and affinity.

These investments, both feminist and ethno-national(inst), in gender-normative dynamics have, in the post-Yugoslav context, often aligned with a static understanding of ethnicity as such: namely, Bosniak Muslim women have been cast as the purest (and oftentimes only) victims of sexual wartime violence, while Serbian men have been cast almost exclusively as violators. In *Innocence and Victimhood* (2013), her book about Bosnian wartime violence against women, and activist efforts to address it in meaningful ways, Elissa Helms has suggested that relying on numbers as the only guidance for establishing who gets to claim trauma runs the risk of silencing some voices and privileging others, a process which often further plays into the hands of ethno-nationalist ideology. Helms considers how the authenticity of suffering is constituted through an ethno-national lens, but also the impossible double bind that women survivors face: they are marked as ethno-national heroes at the same time as they are socially marginalized, shamed, and silenced. Helms points to the uneasy gray areas which show that both public prominence and complete silence around sexual wartime violence are desired and unwanted in equal measure. Moreover, claiming one's story, but not being objectified and made into a mere symbol of an ethno-national collectivity, is a moving target difficult to pin down.

Helms notes that, while there has been a notable pushback from local feminists against stereotyping victimhood along ethnic and gender lines, the dominant trope of sexual violence during the wars that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia has remained reductively prevalent nevertheless. The framework of binary stereotyping has displaced potentially transformative critiques by reintroducing naturalized understandings of gender as a means by which to reiterate stable ethnic divisions. Dubravka Žarkov has argued in *The Body of War* (2007) that the use of the narratives of threat to women's bodies of one ethnic group, as a means of propaganda against a totality of another group, does not do anything to alleviate the reality of gendered violence, but rather coopts gender into a device that not only drives ethnic divisions further, but also *constitutes* ethnicity to begin with.

In Žarkov's words, "without notions of femininity and masculinity, and norms of (hetero)sexuality, ethnicity could have never been produced" (8). Moreover, Rada Iveković has argued that the rise of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia has inextricably been coupled with the rise of misogyny, and that "the gradual deterioration of the position of women in the last few years of Socialism were a warning sign that precipitated the escalation of nationalism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia" (2000: 16). In this ethno-nationalistically inclined shift to women's role in society, normative gender and sexuality become constitutive of ethnicity, and without their stabilization into stereotypes, the stability of pure ethnicity would not have been as effective a tool of warmongering propaganda. Gender and sexuality are revealed, in the ethno-nationalist discourses that framed the Yugoslav wars, as key elements by which the ideology of ethnic exclusion is reiterated and perpetuated. It is precisely because of this that their relationship to the rise of post-conflict and posttraumatic cultural memory needs to be examined. How does such a culture further reflect, or on the contrary, possibly challenge the premises of ideologically slanted gender and sexual normativity, aligned with (imagined) ethnic purity?

Dina Iordanova (1996) has argued that in post-Socialist film, women remain mostly marginalized figures, just as they had been during Socialism, but that the nature of that marginalization changes. In Socialist film, women were usually represented as being oppressed by aggressive men. But in post-Socialist film, Iordanova claims, they are predominantly oppressed by the set of historical and political circumstances themselves. Her insightful analysis of the shifts in how gender inequality is perceived, but also produced as such, illustrates why it is imperative that gender is not examined in isolation, since it is not a secluded wheel in the mechanism that drives the formations of identity, agency, and subjectivity. Following Žarkov's influential work, my analysis takes the valences of gender performativity to be closely articulated to the constitution or, in turn, destabilization of ethnic identity, but also to a range of affective responses to trauma that come to frame identity in (post)war times. In the subsequent chapter, I focus on sexuality, a vector of identity closely linked to but nevertheless irreducible to gender and vice versa.

The films I discuss in this chapter take on the question of gender rather overtly, and they arguably fall on different sides of the issues posed above. All three at times veer dangerously close to fortifying the traditional gender binary that firmly separates the male and female spheres of experience (of war and its aftermath). But, as I will illustrate below, even the more reactionary moments in them reflect fissures that allow dislocated screen memory to destabilize the narrative frame and expose a proliferation, rather than normativization, of gendered experiences during wartime.

The Tunnel Vision of Screen Memory: *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*

Srđan Dragojević's *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* is one of the most infamous films about the Bosnian war, and one of the most polarizing works of post-Yugoslav cinema. It was filmed on location in Bosnia in the last year of the war and released in 1996, immediately receiving cultural prominence and inciting public debates around its representation of said war. One of the most notorious facts about the film, often used by its critics as proof of the director's questionable complicity with Serbian nationalism (complicity that he denies), was that it was filmed on location in Eastern Bosnia while the war was still raging and that the production was reportedly using the resources of the Bosnian Serb army. Although critically controversial, the film became a regional hit with the audiences. Perhaps the fact of it being made in the midst of ongoing warfare gives the film a unique aura, a sense of immediacy and presence in time and space (to allude to Walter Benjamin), which might contribute to a sense of authenticity when it comes to the film's depiction of war experiences. Deeply complicated in its formal structure and cinematic style, *Pretty Village* not only received a fair share of critical praise and dismissal, scholarly scrutiny, and feminist critique, but has also been hailed as "one of the most audacious antiwar statements ever committed to the big screen."[3] Daniel Goulding classifies the film as "anti-war" and, moreover, notes that it offers a "scalding indictment of the Milošević regime's cynical appropriation and vulgarization of Serbian national myths" (195), while Igor Krstić points out that regardless of its being "shot from a clearly Serbian narrative perspective" (2000b: 35), the film nevertheless went on to achieve commercial success in neighboring Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. Krstić attributes this to the film's blurring of viewer sympathies, which "ultimately provokes introspection" (60), and concludes that *Pretty Village* does not take an ideological side but is rather "a genuinely complex exploration of the Bosnian war and, moreover, an exploration of the Serbian self-deception, steeped in fantasies of ethnic hatred, blood enemies and the myths of national identity" (60–61).[4] Similarly, Iordanova notes that the film exposes "the whole range of contradictory sentiments inhabiting the Serb psyche" (2001: 145).

In terms of gender, this film, perhaps more so than any other made about the war, centers on a decidedly masculinist depiction of wartime reality, reflecting what Raya Morag has, in a different context, called "defeated masculinity" (2009). In her analysis of New German Cinema and American Vietnam War cinema, Morag finds that "while defeat was repressed in these films, the defeated male is present" (17). Moreover, she notes, "the male body that carries the burden of defeat is missing masculine power, is left non-sexual, and deprived of gaze" (28). It is through

defeated masculinity, then, that the traumatic aspects of collective defeat are channeled and processed in some war cinema through latency and repetition that both play on and undermine gender norms. In the context of *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, a similar emphasis on defeated masculinity has been frequently interpreted as a problematically nationalist and misogynist representation of history. Svetlana Slapšak (2000, 2007) finds the film troubling in its suppression of female war experience and describes it as filled with "rampant misogyny" (2007: 37). On the contrary, Matthew Evangelista asks: "Do the wars of former Yugoslavia really constitute an archetype of male nationalist violence confronting female peace-loving cosmopolitanism?" (2011: 81) With respect to *Pretty Village*, he notes that the film's treatment of gender (and of ethno-nationalist violence, for that matter) does not allow for easy conclusions as many characters are revealed to be more complex than initially thought, with surprising twists that challenge the premise of simplified conclusions. It is undoubtedly true that *Pretty Village* represents a challenging cinematic text whose narrative and formal complexities perpetually defy easy conclusions. To some extent, the varying analyses of the film are all pointed, as there is excess of textual evidence to support many diverging inferences. But the film itself escapes the boundaries of a singular interpretative frame. I here wish to add a potentially reparative prism of understanding *Pretty Village*, one that centers on the contingencies of traumatic memory as a primary mode of re/constructing gendered wartime experience. Instead of casting the film as "merely" reactionary or one-sidedly problematic, I want to further probe its approach to gender, ethnicity, and trauma in order to mine the question of what we might discover once we leave aside the deliberations of its nationalist versus anti-nationalist stances (which might on some level be inscribed in the text, but do not necessarily foreclose the potential for seeing otherwise).

As it has been argued, the film's absences are, quite often, more important than what is clearly seen or heard (Krstić 2002; Levi 2007). Those absences—of the casualties that the Serb army leaves in its wake—not only reflect Serbia's long-standing denial of accountability,[5] but also, quite tellingly, haunt the film's narrative structure and threaten to break its already fragile narrative coherence. Ethnic others, and women in particular, are tellingly absent in the film, and when they do appear, they are either outsiders to the conflict (a confused Western journalist), cynically detached from it (nurses in the hospital), or dead, voiceless, and ghostly figures (Milan's mother and his schoolteacher, Mirjana). Importantly, the mother's and teacher's ghostly appearance marks a poignant break in the masculinist mold of trauma that otherwise orients Milan's traumatic memory (and by extension, the film, which is framed by that memory). Such

absences are pivotally important to consider, since, as Freud has argued with respect to screen memories, "we must first inquire why it should be that precisely what us important is suppressed and what is indifferent retained" (1976: 490).

Moreover, I want to put forth the idea that the film's absences might offer more than a mere confirmation that either the film or its director are aligned with the dominant Serbian ethno-nationalist politics of denial by way of erasure. To equate absence with denial is to simplify the valences of in/visibility when it comes to trauma. In the context of trauma and New German Cinema, for instance, Thomas Elsaesser has looked at "*absence as presence*, i.e., what in the cinematic self-representations of Germany in the 1970s was also absent, or rather *what was present in its persistent absence*" (2014: 10, emphasis in the text). Moreover, a straightforward alignment of discursive visibility with meaningful acknowledgment might perpetuate what Foucault, in a different context, has termed "the repressive hypothesis" (1990): an assumption that the lack of discourses inevitably reflects repression and vice versa. Such simplification threatens to elide the ways in which trauma often functions as ineloquence and intelligibility (Berlant 2001), or as invisibility and unclaimed experience (Caruth 1996). I therefore wish to reconsider those absences (and the eventual, often overlooked, yet central, *return* of the repressed) by way of acknowledging that certain traumatic experiences defy normative representational frames of clear and unambiguous visibility.

The plot of *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, loosely based on a true story, is constructed around a complex web of flashbacks—to which Halligan refers as "a camp Proustian framework of recollection" (2000: 84)—experienced not only by the film's main character, a Bosnian Serb soldier Milan, but also by the film's several secondary characters. As Milan is lying wounded in a Belgrade military hospital, his flashbacks take us through a non-chronological narrative of his growing up in a multiethnic Bosnian village, his childhood adventures with his Muslim best friend Halil, and then through the breakup of Yugoslavia, the loss of friendship with Halil, and the war experience leading up to Milan getting wounded and ending up in the hospital. *Pretty Village*'s opening sequence is filmed in a mock-documentary mode, depicting the opening of a "Tunnel of Brotherhood and Unity" in 1971. As the black and white footage slowly turns to color, the Socialist official cutting the ribbon cuts his finger by accident, splashing blood all over a young girl's face. This foreshadowing of violence is quickly ignored by the ensuing party for the masses, offering commentary on the Socialist officials' tendency to suppress the unwanted, volatile aspects of Yugoslavia's aforementioned brotherhood and unity.

The film's central event, and the one on which Milan's flashbacks linger the longest, takes place during the Bosnian war, where his army unit is captured in this very tunnel and surrounded by enemy soldiers. The film follows the unit's efforts to survive the ordeal. The tunnel is close to Milan's childhood home and, as we find out through the flashbacks of his childhood, becomes over time increasingly dilapidated as if to mime the gradual unraveling of the brotherhood and unity for which it supposedly stood. Moreover, the tunnel becomes a source of fear for young Milan and Halil, a site of the uncanny, because of the rumors that an "Ogre" lives there. When the same tunnel ultimately becomes the place of Milan's imprisonment during combat, it serves as a literal space of a final showdown with his childhood friend Halil, as well as a symbolic space of a showdown between the grownup Milan, now a Serbian soldier gradually turning more nationalist, and the idea of Yugoslav brotherhood and unity that he deeply believed in only for it to reveal its dark underside in the most violent way.

The tunnel as a site of the uncanny can be viewed as a symbolic representation of the elusive nature of the traumatic memory itself. Since trauma cannot be fully processed in the present, it returns in fragments, but rarely through narrative coherence or in a linear manner. Importantly, the events of the war are in *Pretty Village* always already memories, brought to us by Milan's nightmarish flashbacks that jump from one time frame to another. Krstić points out that this flashback structure signifies "both traumatic repetitions and cinematic technique" (2000b: 54), whereby most events in the film are depicted from a highly subjective point of view of a character grappling with the burden of his perpetrator trauma. Moreover, Halligan argues that many of the film's flashbacks "have an exaggerated and hallucinogenic quality that calls into question the objectivity of the *mise-en-scene*" (2000: 84). That Milan's flashbacks are fixated on the tunnel longer than on any other event of the war points to a tendency to locate the traumatic memory within a contained space which can then be more easily controlled by his consciousness. Almost paradoxically, then, the tunnel—the site of Milan's worst childhood fears—now becomes the exact opposite: the only memory (and only plot line in the film) that is allowed linear progression (albeit in fragments incessantly interrupted by other, temporally and spatially dislocated memories). The tunnel thus acts as Milan's screen memory, a site of remembrance that helps him (temporarily) repress other unwanted memories. By entering the tunnel, Milan enters a narrowed down space of screen memory in hope that the tunnel's walls would offer protection from unbearable aspects of his accountability. Furthermore, the space of the tunnel allows for a convergence of Milan's flashbacks with those of the film's secondary characters who are trapped there. It is only those who are in the narrowed down corridor of screen memory who

are allowed to remember—and thereby remember selectively, screening off unwanted memories, which leads to the very absences pointed out above. Through the joint web of flashbacks and memory-work of the soldiers in the tunnel, we witness a collective memory being created through erasures that sanitize many aspects of their war experience. Most men in Milan's unit who are captured in the tunnel are given flashbacks that explain how they ended up in war. The combination of those flashbacks offers an interesting insight into the gendered construction of a warrior interpelleted through ethno-national(ist) ideology—on closer inspection, most of them are revealed to be largely *failing* the nationalist ideals of masculinity. While the film shows that some of them were indeed driven by a (dwindling) desire to defend the ethno-nation, others ended up in the war through sheer accident (for instance, Brzi, a junkie who accidentally fell into an army truck while high on drugs), or to prevent loved ones from going (Velja, a criminal who enlists in order to save his younger brother from being drafted).

It is not entirely clear when or how Milan joins the war. But his erratic memories are the film's organizing framework. What is Milan's memory screening off from conscious recollection? Pavle Levi points out that one of the film's most prominent absences is that of civilian victims in the scenes that show Milan's unit rampage through Muslim villages prior to getting captured in the tunnel. Depicted are only burning villages (referenced in the film's title), as if the Serbian army's greatest casualties were buildings and other material things, not people. Like the tunnel itself, these titular burning villages might act as screen memory—a focus on remembering the more benign ("pretty") aspects of perpetrator trauma in order to screen off the more unwanted ones. However, even such "pretty" memories are interrupted: for instance, the sequence that sees the soldiers burning down villages is accompanied by the non-diegetic sound of the Električni orgazam song "Igra rokenrol cela Jugoslavia" ("Entire Yugoslavia dances to rock'n'roll"). The upbeat song is, in turn, interrupted by the diegetic sounds of gunfire and distressed sheep. The sequence ends abruptly, in another interruption, as the film cuts to young soldier Marko entering one of the houses. The camera embodies his panicked point of view, and several times, the scene cuts to an extreme close-up of Marko's face as a way of reflecting his claustrophobic unease. When Marko unleashes rapid fire on a closet, Milan notices that blood starts leaking onto the floor. He asks for Marko to be removed from the room so as to spare him the realization that he killed someone. This is followed by a shot from inside the closet, as if from the dead person's point of view, with Milan facing the camera, his face framed by closet doors on each side. Milan stands there silently as his face reflects ambivalence and hesitation to look inside. After this shot, the

film immediately cuts to a different scene of battle. We, therefore, do not see the casualty in the closet, nor do we see Milan seeing the dead person—his flashback in interrupted by another event as if to erase the memory of civilian death.

Pavle Levi argues that this erasure of civilian casualties is one of the film's most problematic aspects, as these absences suggest that the film is deeply invested in glossing over the Serbian war crimes. However, it is Milan's subjective structure of traumatic memory (which is the film's primary mode of representation) that tries to erase the human victims in an act of attempting to reign in the deep trauma of his violent complicity, thereby illuminating something important about repressed perpetrator trauma. Moreover, these flashbacks function similarly to how Radstone has analyzed the flashback structure of *The Long Day Closes* and *Cinema Paradiso*—as dieges-es that are *discursively* rather than *historically* enounced. She elaborates on the difference between the two in the following:

> Historic enunciation denies its selectivity, partiality and limitations by means of strategies through which it represents its version of events as "always already there." Discursive enunciation, on the other hand, lays bare its partiality, limitation and selectivity by associating its viewpoint not with the always-already-thereness of History, but with the situated, and therefore fallible, perspective of a chastened individual viewpoint.
>
> (1995: 42)

In *Pretty Village*, that chastened partial and incomplete individual viewpoint is the *only* framework of representation (apart from the quasi-documentary footage that bookends the film). Moreover, repressed memories are not entirely erased, but rather resurface in the film's key sequences. And with this, rather than being dismissed as a mere tool of misogynist or nationalist propaganda by way of repressive hypothesis, the film might be better understood as a reflection of the vicissitudes of a perpetrator's traumatic memory, marked by un/representability and ineloquence that extend in many directions. As a cinematic depiction of perpetrator trauma, *Pretty Village* invites the spectator, somewhat uncomfortably, to identify *with* the perpetrator—an invitation that, as Žarkov has argued in a different context, might not be inherently problematic so long as it is not the only thing the spectator is invited to feel.

> Individual regrets and torment of the perpetrator must not be used to replace, or to hide, the larger political context within which his crime is perpetrated. For it is this context that gives specific meanings to the war crime that go far beyond the meanings the crime might have for an individual perpetrator, or a victim for that matter,

argues Žarkov (2014: 181). However, focus on perpetrator trauma might open up a space where the structural accountability is approached through intimate impact rather than collective abstraction. I side here with Morag, who hopes that

> Ideally, acknowledgment of perpetrator's trauma will set in motion society's acknowledgment of the perpetrator as its envoy, and its relation to (usually ethnic) others. This acknowledgment is a first step towards a fuller consideration of life with others and thus of mourning those who were previously conceived as ungrievable.
>
> (2013: 6)

In *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, the film's organizing structure of perpetrator trauma reflects a dialectic relationship between repressed traumatic memories and the ideological frameworks that sanction war crimes through the prism of dislocated screen memories that (dis)organize its cinematic frame.

Milan's flashbacks, although non-chronological and often feverishly disorienting, keep returning to the tunnel as a way to anchor memory and return to the temporary coherence of a singular chronotope. They enact a repetition compulsion as a way to assimilate not only Milan's trauma, but also, perhaps more importantly, the traumas of others. It is because of the latter that Milan is haunted—even though his memories attempt to anchor themselves to a single site (the tunnel), they are perpetually dislocated by other unwanted memories. The tunnel is thus positioned as screen memory, a site of remembering that focuses on some things as a means to repress others.[6] While Levi notes that the tunnel is the film's central metaphor, he finds that the space "functions as a sort of black hole that, during Yugoslavia's communist years, stored everything that was repressed from the surface" (141). Indeed, the tunnel is a site not only of repression but also of revelation, as it becomes a dialectical space where both are enacted in dynamic interplay. Perhaps it can even be considered a repository of those ideologically suppressed memories of WWII that resurfaced in the more recent war (Bet-El 2004; Jambrešić Kirin 2009), which now, in a reversal, become a place to escape to, a shelter made out of the previously inaccessible uncanny repurposed for rationalizing violence as inevitable (Levi: 141). Even though Milan's escape into the tunnel offers his memories temporal (and temporary) coherence, unwanted voices nevertheless threaten to erode the walls of the contained linear memory, embodied in the constant threat of the enemy soldiers' voices that float, disembodied, above the tunnel. The voices of the enemy that surround the tunnel are voices without faces. Are they the voices of an actual physical enemy then,

or the voices of those unseen dead from Milan's repressed deep memory, which cannot be fully controlled even within the tunnel?[7]

One of the film's notable absences is that of women—they are often rendered incoherent in direct address, or depicted through mediated, removed representations, such as disembodied voices heard through phone lines, or as figures in photographs. Milan's mother's death, and the implied rape by enemy soldiers, takes place offscreen. Milan goes to the destroyed family home in which his mother had been killed, and, unable to find out the details of her demise from the local profiteer Slobodan (except for Slobodan's opportunist suggestion that it was "Halil's unit"), he attempts to exhume his mother's body. At the gravesite, however, he is overwhelmed by the sequence of fragmented images of a bloody knife and the mother's almost unrecognizable face, convulsing in pain. The mother's dead body is never seen, and this erasure marks Milan's impulse to react to the trauma of her violent death by quickly repressing it, thus mirroring a larger tendency of war film to erase women's experience and, through that erasure, perpetually mark war as a decidedly male experience. But it also mirrors traumatic memory: if the film is structured as largely comprised of Milan's nightmarish point of view, the repressed aspects of his trauma become as unavailable to the viewer as they are to Milan's psyche, and yet continue to haunt. His mother's death finally pushes Milan—deeply conflicted about ethnic violence until that point—over to the nationalist and more violent side, as the trauma of her death is channeled as an excuse to clear his own conscience about war participation.

During Milan's unit's capture in the tunnel, the only woman present is an American journalist who is there by sheer chance. Local women of any ethnicity are almost unseen, except in one of the film's central and most striking scenes in which the repressed story of women's war experience threatens to enter the tunnel in all its vivid realism. In this scene, the unit's captors announce that they are "dispatching a visitor" to the tunnel, and as the announcement is made, Milan's elementary schoolteacher—a Serbian woman who, we learn in another flashback, carried on an affair with a Muslim neighbor before the war—enters the tunnel and starts approaching the group. She is half-naked, bruised and scarred, bleeding and barely recognizable, her face grimacing (echoing the image of Milan's mother, who was similarly unable to produce coherent words, as language proves inadequate for expressing their agony). Milan and others in the tunnel are petrified by the teacher's approach, their faces showing a mix of sorrow, disgust, and shame. Her presence creates panic because of the possibility that she was sent in by the enemy to detonate a bomb in order to kill them all. As she is slowly approaching, a decision is made to kill her before she gets too close. Still, no one seems to be able to do it, until, ironically,

the American journalist screamingly pleads for someone to "please shoot her." Fork, one of the soldiers in the tunnel, then kills the teacher before she is able to get closer, become too visible, and have her story be fully representable.

Incidentally, the request to "shoot" the schoolteacher is stated in English (since the American does not speak the local language), and her choice of the word "shoot" tellingly evokes Sontag's (2004) assertion that quite often in war photography, the camera's lens is aligned with the barrel of a gun. The American journalist spends a lot of the time in the tunnel "shooting" the events with her camera, mediating her experience in order to make it more bearable (even telling herself at one point, as she looks at others through her camera, that "this is all a bad dream and you [the soldiers in the tunnel] are all a bunch of electronic images"). When she yells out that someone "please shoot" the schoolteacher, she inadvertently exposes her own complicity in the violence of (any form of) "shooting" in a strikingly literal way. Before the teacher is killed, Milan's flashback takes us to his schooldays, where the teacher gathers children for a school photo. And just as she says to the young Milan and Halil: "let's go, it's picture time," the film cuts back to the moment of her death in the tunnel, yet again aligning the taking of an image with a moment of death. Similarly, camera's gaze and the barrel of a gun are overtly equated in another scene, when the film abruptly cuts from Milan and Halil having their picture taken in front of Halil's car repair shop, to Milan shooting the Serbian soldiers who had just burned down that same shop.

Because the film coheres around a subjectively and feverishly framed masculinist traumatic memory, the teacher's attempt to approach the captured unit has to be stopped in order for her story to be repressed by containment—after she is killed, Milan sadly observes that she "didn't explode," implying that they did not have to kill her after all. But symbolically, Milan's memory *had to* kill the teacher because otherwise, she would have exploded with a story of trauma and suffering which would threaten to shatter the already fragile stability of the tunnel walls and, therefore, also shatter the attempts at repressing women's experiences by way of screen memory of the male-dominated wartime reality. Modleski argues that women's trauma in war films is often tied to sexual subjugation, since sexual domination and wartime aggression are so intertwined that "sexuality is manifested in violence, and violence carries an explosive sexual charge" (1991: 62). Women's stories, repressed in traumatic memory that is the organizing framework of *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, puncture the dominant narrative every so often and threaten to further dislocate the emotional stability of the main protagonist, who preserves a semblance of psychic coherence by virtue of being able to (barely) suppress facing the

full extent of trauma experienced around him. The death of the two significant women in his life triggers Milan's passage from mild-mannered to extremely intolerant and violent—and thus, from an ambivalent almost-bystander, to an active member of a warring ethnic group, as he now embodies the normative masculinity of aggressive warmongering. With this gendered transformation of the male protagonist, women's stories serve as traumatic triggers and, moreover, as justifications for Milan's violent activity. The fear of female explosion—which Modleski claims is central to the impulse to "subjugate femininity and keep it at a distance" (62)—is made literal when the teacher is suspected of carrying a bomb and killed because of it. Her unceremonious death contains that threat, as Milan absorbs the extent to which his complicity in the teacher's demise is ultimately an unredeemable moment.

Through the compulsion of making Milan and his group confront the ghostly voices floating above the tunnel, as well as by making them catch a glimpse of a tortured woman who poses the threat of symbolic and literal explosion, the film perpetually suggests that attempts at sanitizing perpetrator trauma, by erasing unwanted traces of repressed memory, only succeed up to a certain point. Instead of being treated as a problematic symptom of nationalist discourses about the war, *Pretty Village* might be better understood as a trauma text that offers insight into the processes of engendering traumatic memory. War seems to be an event that produces rigidly static possibilities along the scales of gender performativity. It appears that women's stories can be either repressed or appropriated into tools for patriarchal ideology. Without condoning either, the film explores both mechanisms at once, revealing how frantically intertwined they can sometimes be. The one thread that seems to permeate both is the failure to maintain a coherent narrative frame.

In the feverish final part of the film, Milan manages to crawl out of his hospital bed and drag himself to the room where an ethnic Other—a captive enemy soldier—is lying, wounded and scared. As Milan drags himself across the floor in pain, he leaves a bloody trace behind him—on the symbolic level, this bloody trace is another rupture in Milan's memories of the war. The bloody trace behind Milan tellingly emerges in the film's final moments, and precisely at the time when Milan is finally about to be seen doing something that his flashbacks could not address—the act of killing another person. The bloody trace then finally reveals that which Milan's psyche has seemingly repressed—a history of his murderous participation in the war, which continues to haunt him to the end.

Milan's attempts at harming the enemy soldier are intercut with flashbacks of his final moments in the tunnel, as an attack is underway. In terms of memory, the simultaneity of these two storylines enacts Milan's

attempt to silence the overwhelming excess of dislocated screen memory threatening to overtake him (channeled through the overtaking of the tunnel itself) by actively attempting to obliterate a physical reminder of that memory—the Bosniak soldier in the hospital. This simultaneity stands as an enactment of the here-and-there of traumatic memory in which the border between the past and the present becomes increasingly blurry. As the attack on the tunnel becomes more dramatic, Milan steps up his effort to kill the Bosniak soldier in the hospital. Milan is "possessed" by his memory to such an extent that he has to reenact it in the present moment, attempting to kill the soldier in the hospital precisely as he is experiencing flashbacks of the moment when he finally left the tunnel and was forced to confront the one person that haunts his repressed memory most dramatically—his childhood friend Halil. It turns out that Halil was on top of the tunnel, as if pressuring Milan's memory to allow him (back) in. The reappearance of Halil in Milan's memory, at the very moment that he attempts to kill the Other in the hospital, reveals a process of transference by which Milan is simultaneously overwhelmed by repressed traumatic memory and repeats it in the present.

In Milan's flashback, Halil is standing on the top of the tunnel, looking down on Milan. Halil says: "So you went into the tunnel . . . " to which Milan replies, "So, I did." This exchange suggests betrayal—Halil's accusation that Milan went into a space (both mental and physical) in which he attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to repress Halil from his memory. Then the following words are exchanged:

Halil: "Why did you burn down my shop?"
Milan: "Why did you cut my mother's throat?"
Halil: "I didn't cut anyone's throat."
Milan: "I didn't burn any shops, don't ask me about it."
Halil: "Then who should I ask? Should I ask the Ogre from the tunnel?"

To this last question, Milan does not have an answer, as Ogre is a cop out, reserved for unanswerable questions as well as for unassimilated aspects of perpetrator trauma. Leaving the question of who is to blame and who not to blame open performatively illustrates the dynamics that organize the film: namely, that attempts at achieving a stable narrative of absolute guilt and innocence collapse under the pressure of unassimilated trauma, and those admissions are often reserved for the domain of frantically interrupted dislocated screen memory rather than overt, linear address.

The death of Milan's mother is the one thing Halil is accused of here, as violence toward women once again emerges as a pivotal theme—here a device that frames the ethnic Other as an enemy and as an unequivocally hostile subjectivity. Milan, at the same time, knows that the ideology driven

by the notion of an absolute evil ethnic Other is futile, because his accusation, instead of eliciting a cathartic admission of guilt by Halil, falls flat with his simple "I didn't cut anyone's throat." And with that, Milan is made to face a person he knew his whole life, not some mythical enemy Other. Because this chasm between the threatening, larger-than-life ethnic enemy and the non-threatening, almost intimate presence of the individual that Milan knows well cannot be surmounted, both men turn to the Ogre, a repository of unanswerable questions and irresolvable ruptures between grand ideology and intimate subjectivity. The space between the two extremes proves to sometimes be impossible to travail or untangle, except through interrupted flashes of dislocated screen memory.

The final exchange between Milan and Halil is feverishly intercut with the film's other temporal frames—their conversation takes place just as Milan, in the film's present, reaches the bed of the anonymous soldier and pauses, with his fork lifted in the air. "Go ahead," says the soldier. "You go ahead," says Milan, and the film cuts to a brief bird's eye shot of young Milan and Halil, their faces bloodied in an ominous foreshadowing, having the same exchange while lying in the grass. This intercutting reiterates Milan's transference between the anonymous soldier and Halil. The film then cuts to the moment of explosion that kills Halil, who falls right at Milan's feet. As the camera dollies out and away from Milan standing over dead Halil, explosions and fire raging around them symbolically depict an explosion of Milan's repressed memories: the moment of death of his best friend, and his own complicity in it. The film then immediately cuts back to the hospital scene, where an extreme close-up of Milan's face reveals that he is momentarily overtaken by emotions after this last flashback. He then collapses to the floor and says: "Ogre. Fuck him." The figure of the Ogre returns as an archive of incongruities, a way to acknowledge the inadequacy of linear logic to fully explain atrocities. Perhaps the Ogre is the dislocated screen memory itself, an elusive collection of those experiences that cannot be contained within an entirely stable narrative frame.

The film then cuts to that which has been left out from its frame and from Milan's memory: in an *imaginary* flashback, the bird's eye shot of the panning camera reveals a pile of dead bodies back in the tunnel—men, women, and children, some dressed in the attire of Tito's pioneers, possibly those who participated in the ceremony of the tunnel's opening in 1971. The sequence is accentuated by the haunting melodic leitmotif, compulsively repeated throughout the film as a repository of grief, loss, nostalgia, and often absurdity: a popular Yugoslav ballad "Bacila je sve niz rijeku" by the Sarajevo band Indeksi. This single sequence that marks the return of the repressed finally reveals what has been haunting Milan's memory, albeit in a phantasmic, dislocated way, centered on the tunnel as,

yet again, an organizing framework of Milan's traumatic memory. At the end of the row of dead bodies, we see the grown-up Milan and Halil, also dead, lying next to each other. Symbolically, their warring masculinities, just like their friendship, did not survive either. And just above them, in a reversal of the earlier scene in which Milan is standing above the dead Halil, the ten-year-old Milan and Halil are standing and taking in the sight of the dead bodies, before quickly turning away and running out of the tunnel. Only the childhood Milan and Halil are allowed to escape from this memory of violence and death. The film then cuts to its fourth time frame—adult Milan and Halil having "rakija" (plum brandy) just before the war breaks out. In a series of extreme close-ups (which suggest both the claustrophobia of imminent war and the intimacy between the two men), Halil asks: "So tell me, will this war happen?" to which Milan's final words in the film are uttered through a mix of laughter and tears: "War . . . no way, dude." Finally, the film returns to its opening scene, the mock-documentary footage from the Socialist Yugoslavia, where the ceremony of opening "the Tunnel of Peace" or "the Tunnel of Brotherhood and Unity" is taking place. We have come full circle and, through denied linearity of temporal experience, returned to the foreshadowing of bloodshed that has already taken place (Figure 2.1).

The film's incessant, circular calling attention to the dynamics between conscious and unassimilated memories, which interrupt one another by blurring the lines between different temporal frames, makes it difficult to delegate *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* into a firmly and unambiguously ethno-nationalist frame of address. When traumatic memory is

Figure 2.1 The sequence that marks the return of the repressed (*Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, screen grabs)

understood as the film's organizing framework, ethno-nationalist ideological interpellation becomes a factor in the film's treatment of trauma, the beginning of the story rather than its end. The end of the film (and the end of Milan's story) settles on the lack of resolution, resigned on giving up on trying to make sense of things. Rather than a cop-out, this may be the only place where certain traumatic memories can reside. Now I turn to an entirely different film, one that might be deemed *Pretty Village*'s polar opposite, not only in thematic and stylistic terms, but also in the ways that it has been lauded as a decidedly and unambiguously transformative vision of women and gendered wartime violence in Yugoslav wars.

Secrets and Lies: Feminine Trauma, Loss, and Melancholia in *Grbavica*

Reconfiguring the stark absence of women's stories about the war, Bosnian director Jasmila Žbanić has, in her film work, consistently shifted the lenses in order to challenge the position of women as supporting actors, socially and culturally. Žbanić's films, Jasmina Husanović claims, "represent one of the most productive ethical and political treatments of traumatic events and experiences in the context of (post-)war Bosnia" (2009: 104). In her films, women's stories are central for staging a cinematic encounter with witnessing. Her early documentaries, such as *Crvene gumene čizme* (*Red Rubber Boots* 2000) and *Slike sa ugla* (*Images from the Corner* 2003), intimately chronicle the trauma and loss of women, a theme she continued to explore in her narrative features. In *Na putu* (*On the Path* 2010), Žbanić places on her young female protagonist a dilemma: stay with the man she loves and comply with his growing religious fundamentalism (that limits her freedom), or turn away from love and toward emancipatory loneliness. In her *Za one koji ne mogu da govore* (*For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* 2013) (discussed in Chapter 1), Žbanić seeks to unearth repressed memories of war crimes in the Bosnian town of Višegrad, placing a foreign journalist as the central witness to atrocities and their denial, and positioning her film as a counter-memorial. In this chapter, I focus on Žbanić's first narrative feature, and culturally most prominent film to date, *Grbavica* (translated in English alternatively as *Esma's Secret* or *Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams*). Critically lauded and generally recognized as the first regional film to address the issues of mass rape as a war crime, the film is also an intimate and challenging portrayal of female traumatized subjectivity and survival. Made ten years after the Bosnian war, its story is accordingly situated in the postwar present which is, nevertheless, burdened by the (still fresh) memories and aftereffects of the conflict. After its premiere at the Berlin Film Festival, it went on to win the main prize.

During her acceptance speech, Žbanić famously criticized the Serbs for failing to arrest their remaining war criminals and extradite them to the ICTY. This speech caused controversy back at home, and Bosnian Serb officials accused Žbanić of "unnecessarily" politicizing an awards show. As a result, *Grbavica* was banned in Republika Srpska (the predominantly Serbian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina). However, this extra-cinematic politicizing of the film does little to interfere with its poignancy as a representation of unessentializing women's war trauma across ethnic lines.

Since its release, the film has been taken up as an important cultural script about women's war trauma. In Bosnia, which has, as Jasmina Husanović argues, "become a dislocated, traumatic kernel of the always-already liminal Balkans" (2004: 15), the emergence of such a cultural script presents an important stepping-stone in the process of coming to terms with the recent traumatic history of violence. In a way, *Grbavica* begins where *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* ends. The war is over and we move from defeated masculinities and warfare to looking at the difficulties of going back to life's daily routines with a pretense of normalcy, when this very normalcy is made impossible by the recurring traumatic memories and aftereffects of the conflict. The erasures of civilian lives in *Pretty Village* are reversed in *Grbavica* so that the latter depicts only that—civilian everydayness, mainly of women and children, in postwar Sarajevo (Grbavica of the film's title is a neighborhood in Sarajevo), a city which itself carries many physical war wounds across its landscape. The film's central protagonists, a single mother Esma and her 12-year-old daughter Sara, navigate life through the wounded city, deeply affected by the recent atrocities and war in ways suppressed by Esma, and not fully known to Sara. Namely, Esma's secret is that, during the war, she was a prisoner in one of the infamous Serbian rape camps, where she became pregnant with Sara. Despite Esma's efforts to bury the traumatic memory of what happened to her during the war, the truth eventually surfaces, and late in the film, Sara finds out that her father is not a Bosniak war hero killed in action (as she had been led to believe), but rather an unknown Serb soldier, one of many who raped her mother during her forced stay at the camp.

As opposed to *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, the structure of *Grbavica* allows for no flashbacks, opting instead for a fairly linear form of cinematic storytelling, which is only occasionally, yet very importantly, punctured by significant, disorienting breaks in the narrative flow. These breaks, however, do not take the form of transferring the narrative or the characters to a different time and place (the one of trauma's origin, as in the case of the tunnel in *Pretty Village*), but rather represent more of a rupture in the present, a puncture which does not completely break the continuity of time so much as it disrupts it by inserting a parallel temporality that

introduces the past back into the present. Noting the return of past trauma in the film, Gordana Crnković argues that "these visual echoes also bring that past into the present, or show what of that past is still very much alive in the present" (2014: 149). During one such situation, Esma is commuting on a crowded public tram when she sees something that precipitates a rupture in narrative linearity. It is an unknown man's chest, especially his neck and a golden chain hanging around it that upsets Esma, most likely, we are led to think, reminding her of one of her numerous rapists in the camp. For a moment, Esma is paralyzed with fear, and then quickly gets off the tram in a panic, attempting to run away from such a literal, embodied reminder of trauma.

This sudden re-emergence of traumatic memory and its literal physical transference into the present time breaks the neat coherence of present temporality and exposes trauma as a process of always "working through" the past, which is never completely separate from the present. Indeed, LaCapra states that

> In memory as an aspect of working through the past, one is *both* back there *and* here at the same time, and one is able to distinguish between (not dichotomize) the two. In other words, one remembers—perhaps to some extent still compulsively reliving or being possessed by—what happened then without losing a sense of existing and acting now.
>
> (2003: 212, emphasis in the text)

It could be argued that the breaks in the linear narrative flow of *Grbavica* illustrate the inability to dichotomize between the present and the past more so than a flashback structure, which to some extent recreates boundaries between "now" and "then." Esma's brief paralysis and subsequent running out of the tram illustrate the tension between existing in both temporal frames, being *there* and being able to do something about it *now* at the same time, as inexplicably bound together to create meaning in complicated ways.

Similarly to *Pretty Village*, two central scenes in *Grbavica* are panning shots, here deployed, however, to entirely different ends than in the previous film. In the film's opening sequence, the camera pans across a colorful, traditional rug and a woman's hand, slowly reaching and panning across the faces of anonymous women sitting in a crowded room (one of them is Esma), somber and deep in thought, reflecting together and in silence, as a woman's song, seemingly non-diegetic, is heard on the soundtrack. We later learn that this is a support group for women who have lived through similar traumatic experiences to Esma's. We also learn that Esma is usually a silent participant, when she is gently rebuked for her silence by the

group's coordinator. Apparently, Esma shows up for these meetings mostly on the days when the women are given financial aid. It appears that Esma initially does not believe in the usefulness of such a group and, by extension, in the usefulness of speaking up about trauma more generally. Yet, even with this knowledge of Esma's initial skepticism, the opening shot stands as a striking introduction into the space of trauma as a shared experience by a group of anonymous women, before the film moves to a more conventional device of storytelling through linear narrative progress. As the camera pans across their faces, the women are silently reflecting, and the camera's uninterrupted movement from one face to another establishes the unspoken links between them. Their silence is, at the same time, rich with meaning and reflects a sense of solidarity that does not need to be spoken. Moreover, the scene and its staging viscerally evoke the sense that, for many survivors of trauma, silence and reflection are often the most important modes of interaction, and that speaking up does not always have the necessary therapeutic effect that is often uncritically assigned to it (Figure 2.2).

In this sequence, women are connected through their feminine injury, rather than through ethnic identity. Indeed, the emphasis on the feminine—on women's hands and the ways in which their bodies touch as they lean on one another—highlights gendered aspects of trauma, rather than ethnic or national aspects of victimization. This approach marks

Figure 2.2 The panning shot of silent women, arriving at a close-up of Esma (*Grbavica*, screen grabs)

the film throughout, and with it, *Grbavica* stubbornly denies the coopting of gender and, particularly, of women's war trauma into ideologically (in)formed ethnic divisions, precisely because trauma is here always first and foremost feminine, regardless of what ethnicity any of the women in the sequence might be. Moreover, *Grbavica* makes overt the dialectic between the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of expressing trauma, as well as its equally intimate and shared nature. This is particularly reflected in the scenes of the support group. Arguably, the film's conscious effort to prevent gendered trauma from becoming an ideological tool of ethno-politics was somewhat overshadowed by the extra-cinematic controversies that surrounded the filmmaker's Berlinale acceptance speech and the Bosnian Serbs' subsequent ban of the film. This is why it is pivotal to acknowledge that the film itself opens up spaces for cross-ethnic spectatorial alignment along the lines of feminine trauma as a means to negate ethno-nationa(ist) politicizing of women's bodies. Patricia White pointedly notes that "rather than representing the violated woman's body as national trauma, the film looks askance at rising nationalism, peopling the screen with competent, reticent women and men divested of economic or patriarchal power" (2015: 184–185). Moreover, *Grbavica*'s "incommensurable gaze" (181) invites active spectatorship rather than passive witnessing. This cross-ethnic spectatorial alignment is certainly not a guarantee, but neither is it guaranteed that the political controversy surrounding the film would limit the affective responses to it. As it stands, its "controversial" extra-cinematic positioning may have helped its prominence and visibility (particularly in the territories where it was officially banned, since films are increasingly less obtained through the officially sanctioned modes of availability).

In the film's climax, Esma has a big argument with Sara, during which the mother finally tells her daughter about the rape and the child's conception. Then another scene—almost identical sequence to the opening panning shot—takes place at the support group meeting. But this time, the scene starts with a shot of the woman singing the song. When the slow panning shot traveling across the faces of women in the room reaches Esma, she is crying. Then Esma speaks up for the first time. She tells the story of finding out that she was pregnant, then unsuccessfully trying to give herself an abortion, giving birth and not wanting to look at or feed her daughter, only wanting to give her up and forget about her existence, yet eventually learning to love her child. Esma's act of speaking up conjures up the complex interplay between the imperative to tell one's story in order to survive (Laub 1995), and the staging of witnessing as an ethical act. After initially being skeptical about speaking up in group meetings, Esma eventually finds that the group is, indeed, the one place where she *can* speak her

trauma in ways that do not coopt her story into a generalization or simplification of the suffering—within the space of the support group, Esma's trauma is allowed to remain specifically and concretely feminine. James Young (2009) has argued that, in the context of women's trauma and the Holocaust, the concretely feminine aspects of women's suffering are often sacrificed in the interest of creating a more symbolic, and less concrete, narrative of collective pain of an entire group for which women become but a figurative stand-in. *Grbavica* effectively resists such a cooptation, because in the space of the support group, Esma's story is both unique and one of many, both specific and shared, albeit in ways that deny the pain's assimilation into the symbolic domain of collective suffering. Jasmina Husanović has argued that "the film's nuanced storyline and characters resist the vicissitudes of victimization and simplification and yet seek to engage us in a dialogue about the relationship between injury and identity, sociality and betrayal of trust in contemporary post-conflict post-socialist transitions of power" (2009: 106).

Quite poignantly, the act of speaking up is not treated in *Grbavica* as a device of a cathartic, redemptive resolution of women's trauma. Instead of fetishizing the act of speaking up as a means of achieving redemption or self-realization—that common trope of "the culture of intelligibility-as-law" (Berlant 2001: 50)—the film carefully avoids such conclusions by not offering a redemptive closure or catharsis. Indeed, when she speaks up, Esma talks about her daughter's coming into the world—her story begins and ends with Sara. Esma's life in the camp thus remains an elusive anti-narrative, locked away in the deep corners of traumatic memory, expressible only in fragments. When Esma speaks, the camera remains on her face in medium close-up, while the faces of other women silently reflecting are seen behind her. Zdenko Mandušić claims that in *Grbavica*, "the visual image is not subordinated to the narrative but rather denies a sadistic scopic pleasure and de-objectifies the feminine body" (2012: 1). Moreover, the film's visual staging of witnessing does not privilege trauma's redemption or resolution, but rather emphasizes the unspoken links between women who bear witness to each other's pain. And even though some aspects of Esma's trauma remain unspeakable, their continued presence is reflected by visual means, displacing the primacy of language and turning to the "somehow cinematic" frameworks of narrating trauma's lasting effects on subjectivity.

Esma's sharing of her story with the group is preceded with the scene of Sara, back in their apartment, struggling to come to terms with the newly discovered truth about her origin. In one earlier scene, in which Sara still does not know the truth about her conception, she asks her mother which aspects of her physique resemble her father the most. Caught in a difficult

situation, Esma quickly answers with "Hair. Everything else is mine." As a direct result, in this later scene, and while Esma is sharing the story of Sara's coming into the world with the group, Sara is seen shaving off her hair. In this act of resistance toward accepting anything she might have gotten from her biological father, Sara attempts to create a radical break with the violent nature of her origin. This is, simultaneously, where the visual, cinematic means reflect the absences in Esma's story about her trauma. With her shaved head, Sara visually comes to embody precisely the imagery of that which is missing in Esma's story—the daughter's shaved head is a chilling echo of the familiar imagery of a camp victim, caught in a situation in which her body is exposed as not completely her own, no matter how much she tries to reclaim it. The unspeakable in Esma's story thus becomes visible through Sara's physical transformation.

Since Sara cannot know the extent of her mother's trauma firsthand, her experience can be described in terms of what Hirsch (2008) has called "postmemory," a lived experience of a second generation of survivors, children of those who lived through violence and trauma firsthand, who vicariously inherit the consequences of living with an impossible memory. Importantly for Hirsch, postmemory is not constructed merely through stories about the traumatic past, but often precisely through the silences about it, and through randomly collected and discovered artifacts which might reveal something about that hidden past. In an important sense, postmemory is never complete, never linear, or fully discoverable to those who experience it. Parts of it always remain obscure, yet always influence the present-day reality, sometimes in ways not fully known to consciousness.

In a way, Sara's postmemory begins long before she finds out the truth about her origin (which only takes place toward the film's ending). Her mother's frequent silences, exaggerated emotional reactions (as when the two play and Esma suddenly panics when Sara sits on top of her and holds her hands down), and her persistent avoidance of talking about Sara's father, construct for Sara a reality of postmemory before she can fully apprehend that its presence has been shaping her own existence all along. Frequently in the film, Sara is seen wandering the streets of Sarajevo, with ruined buildings surrounding her—a cinematic device that invites us to draw parallels between the fragmented and bruised landscape of the city and Sara's attempts to construct a narrative of her own unknowable past from the fragments she discovers along the way. In a way, the ruined landscape is the space of dislocated screen memory, of the fragments of trauma that remain as reminders that the work of memory is never done. Moreover, the false story Sara is told—that her father was a war hero killed in action—becomes her screen memory, a pleasant phantasm meant to

replace the more uncomfortable, traumatic truth. Sara has a friend, Samir, whose father indeed was killed in action, and before Sara finds out that her story is different from what she was raised to believe, she and Samir talk about their fathers in an attempt to make these ghostly presences in their lives more concrete through the fragmented stories they share. In one such scene, Samir brings Sara to a destroyed building in which he keeps a hidden box with artifacts that used to belong to his father. The box in itself is a literal embodiment of Samir's postmemory, an assemblage of random objects that stand in for the absence of a coherent story. Furthermore, that this postmemory is located in the ruins of a devastated building speaks to the dislocated and fragmentary nature of its construction, which always threatens to collapse and lose the fragile balance that both Sara and Samir work hard to achieve. Samir shows Sara his father's gun, which the two of them then proceed to shoot inside the ruined building. The gun operates as a threatening reminder of the buried history (and, inevitably, presence) of violence hidden under the wrinkles of this postmemory, inherited yet unknowable to Sara and Samir at the same time.

This gun subsequently ends up being the literal trigger for Esma telling Sara the truth—after one of Esma's elusive answers about Sara's father, Sara points the gun at her mother in desperation, which in turn provokes angry Esma to bluntly tell Sara the story of who her father really was ("I was raped. You are a Chetnik bastard"). The conflict is initially instigated by Esma's inability to produce an official state certificate issued to the families of war heroes ("shehids"), a document which would allow Sara to go on a school excursion by getting a significant financial discount. This search for the official certificate spans throughout most of the film and becomes a symbolic substitute for Sara's search for her father, whose absence, coupled with a mysterious lack of her mother's stories about him, causes a great existential crisis for the teenager. At the same time, for Esma, the certificate functions as a reminder of the looming threat, a bureaucratic artifact that might (and eventually does) cause her screen memory to unravel in the final revelation of the screened-off trauma that she has worked so hard to conceal.

In Sara's insistent quest for a reclamation of the memory of her father (before she finds out he was not who she thought he was), she reflects what Freud (1976) has called the state of melancholia, as means to hold on to an object-cathexis which cannot be fully experienced because the object in question has been lost and became substituted by a fantasy. Indeed, throughout the film, Sara tells invented stories—screen memories, as it were—about her father's bravery in which the father becomes a larger-than-life figure who ensures Sara's identity. In his analysis of melancholia, Freud claims that it is a state closely linked to, and often mistaken for

mourning. Yet, even though the origins of both states might be similar (most commonly the loss of a loved person, or loss of an abstraction important for one's existence), mourning is never treated as a pathological disorder, but rather as an inevitable process of learning to live with loss. Melancholia, on the other hand, is, for Freud, a pathological condition in which the person "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him" (3043, emphasis in the text). In effect, melancholia is a largely unconscious state in which ego itself becomes "poor and empty" (3043), and this emptiness has to be compensated for with a fantasy object which stands in for not knowing what exactly has been lost in it.

Because Sara never knew her father, she cannot know what exactly she has lost, and therefore, what she is mourning. When she comes to associate her own body parts with her father (namely, her hair), she is looking for a physical manifestation of a sense of loss in order to fill the void that the father's absence leaves otherwise. This void is an absence of an object that would provide a coherent personal history inscribed in the normative ethno-national frameworks of fathers as war heroes. Sara fills these voids by making up stories about her lost father's heroism. These narratives of heroism displace Sara's melancholia about the loss of something she cannot know and turn it into a form of affective investment akin to Berlant's cruel optimism, a "cluster of promises" that "points to a condition different from melancholia" (94). It is a structure of feelings different from melancholia because it is turned toward the future, and also because it represents an attachment to an object ahead of its loss. What Sara had not yet lost prior to learning the truth about who her biological father was is *the ability to invent* the stories about his heroism, and therefore, the ability to attach her father to the norms of heroic ethno-national(ist) masculinity. With the ability to invent such stories, Sara is able to solidify her own identity as an ethnically pure descendant of a war hero. The futurity thus relates, more than anything else, to the promise of who Sara would be, especially as she assumes her identity to be firmly rooted in acceptable ethnic singularity. But as it usually is with cruel forms of optimism, when Sara learns that her father was not only not a war hero, but also an unknown enemy soldier who raped her mother instead, Sara has no choice but do away with the fantasy, or screen memory of heroism. Sara's newfound knowledge signifies not only a dramatic dislocation of the melancholic attachment to the screen memory of the fantasy father, but also a doing away with the cruel optimism about her own futurity, as she is revealed to be a child born out of extreme injury and trauma, a hybrid identity whose conception was simultaneously an act of grave violence inflicted upon her mother. Sara's failure to maintain the fantasy of the ethnically pure, unambiguous futurity reveals a crisis of every category that has come to inform her subjectivity up until that point.

It also reveals the cruelty of optimism that maintains heroism and ethnic purity as the only acceptable modes of existence for a child born out of war trauma. Sara now has no choice but do away with the fantasy of who she might be. She performs this through an act that marks the doing away literally—cutting off her hair and shaving her head. Mima Simić has noted that Sara's act symbolically establishes a line of identification between the mother and the daughter, through which Sara rejects "the ultimate symbol of (the inevitably imposed) 'femininity' " (2012: 195). Moreover, the head shaving represents a visceral indication of change in Sara's formative object relation, which now transfers to her mother, as her shaved head becomes visually evocative of a camp victim. The object that defines their history is revealed to simultaneously be the foundation of the mother's traumatic past and the daughter's traumatic postmemory (Figure 2.3).

Yet, the act of Esma and Sara facing the reality of their traumatic past does not mean that trauma gets resolved and put to rest through closure. By the end of the film, the two have barely spoken since the revelation, the only affectionate and hopeful gesture between them occurring in the film's final moments, as Sara's school bus is driving away, taking her and her schoolmates on that long-planned excursion. Sara never got the discount offered to the families of war heroes, but instead, Esma's female friends at a factory all chipped in to collect enough money for Sara to go, in one of the film's most movingly understated depictions of female solidarity. As a sad Esma looks on, Sara presses her palm against the window, to give her mother the much wanted recognition, a gesture that makes Esma's face turn into a happy smile as she starts to wave back enthusiastically. This

Figure 2.3 Sara shedding the postmemory of trauma (*Grbavica*, screen grab)

gentle, silent scene marks the beginning of a process of the joint "working through" for the mother and daughter, who now have to find a way to both face and forget the trauma in equal parts, never fully able to achieve either. This final scene reminds the spectator that not every form of optimism is cruel and that there might be a way in which Esma and Sara will find a way to make peace with the fact that they were brought together by trauma, since that trauma now connects them more than divides. Furthermore, these gentle hints of attainable optimism between the mother and the daughter suggest that acknowledging the trauma of wartime violence against women might become a point of mutual recognition, rather than further separation.

Loss, Absence, and Attainable Optimism in Aida Begić's *Snow*

When loss is the organizing framework of being in the world, a structure of optimism eventually develops to compensate for the feeling of emptiness by attaching itself to the hopeful affect of fulfillment in the future. Whether that optimism necessarily turns out to be cruel is a different matter, yet important in the structures of optimistic attachments that permeate the films I discuss here. In *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, cruelly optimistic attachments are mainly organized around Milan's attempts to remain subsumed within the ideological formations that position gender, among other things, as a way to stabilize (and stereotype) ethnicity toward creating the mythical ethnic Other, the ultimate enemy. When the promise of such a larger-than-life enemy figure is proved to be unattainable, and the Other exposed as merely human, Milan turns to "the Ogre" to deposit inconsistencies and unresolvable questions. In *Grbavica*, optimism functions differently, and initially relates to Sara's melancholic attachment to the lost father, as a way to maintain a cluster of promises optimistically angled toward her own futurity as a person who belongs to the collectivity in normatively sanctioned ways. When that optimism fails her, Sara turns to her mother, and the promise of their mutual affective re-attaching, so to speak, reveals a different kind of optimism, one that need not be necessarily cruel. That hint of attainable optimism is an important element to note, as it represents an affective investment within which optimistic attachments do not necessarily fail as a general rule (as Berlant at times implies that they do), but instead might reveal a potential for a more sustained maintenance of promise, and even fulfillment. It also marks the possibility of resolving melancholia into mourning, through the recognition of an object that has been lost. If mourning and melancholia have been, as Charity Scribner argues, prominent modes of memory in post-Socialism, an examination of their mutual interplay is critical for the understanding of each. Scribner

asks: "how is the labor of memory divided by gender" and, moreover, "how will the visual turn that has followed upon Europe's socialist crisis influence feminist cultural politics?" (2003: 160). Female directors such as Žbanić and Begić, and particularly their films discussed in this chapter, offer some poignant answers to these particular questions in the postwar, post-Yugoslav context.

In Aida Begić's *Snow* (*Snijeg* 2008)—after *Grbavica*, one of the most important films about the Bosnian war and women's experiences—optimistic attachments, both attainable and unattainable, are exposed as affective regimes that play a pivotal role in post-traumatic coping. Cynthia Simmons (2012) claims that one of the key premises that guides Begić's film is that facing the truth about atrocities is pivotal for the region's future. The story of the film spans over several days in 1997 (two years after the Bosnian war had ended) and takes place in a tiny Bosniak village of Slavno, somewhere in Eastern Bosnia, a place populated largely by women, since men and boys, as we slowly discover, had all been taken away during the war and were never heard from again (the only male inhabitants of the village community are the imam Mehmed and an orphaned boy he takes care of, Ali). The film evokes the landscape of tragedy and loss that emerged in the wake of the Srebrenica genocide, during which the Bosnian Serb army systematically executed more than 8,000 men and boys over the course of a few days in July 1995. Many of the bodies are yet to be found, and the event remains one of the key stumbling blocks in Bosnia's return to postwar unity (Wagner 2008; Nettelfield & Wagner 2013).

The film's central protagonist is a young widow Alma, who lives with her mother-in-law, Safija, as they quietly share grief over the loss of Alma's husband and Safija's son. The void that the disappearance of male family members creates in the village community is experienced on a daily basis, as women live in a tightly knit community whose familial relations are not entirely clear, and ultimately irrelevant for understanding the story. What is important is that they are bound together through loss and through hope that their loss, so undefined (since they do not *know* what happened to their loved ones) and yet so constitutive of their postwar lives, will become resolved in some way—either by the men's safe return or at the very least by the discovery of their remains.

Snow does not approach the representation of trauma through a decidedly realist register the way that *Grbavica* does, and it contains several notable instances of magic realism. The first such instance concerns the boy, Ali, whose hair keeps mysteriously growing long overnight every time it is cut short. To the villagers, this does not seem like such an unusual occurrence, but rather a sign that Ali "got scared" again. Quite possibly, the growing of Ali's hair is connected to the fact of his survival, as it is hinted

that the boy was not taken away by the Bosnian Serb soldiers because he was mistaken for a girl. Begić herself has stated that this motif of gender misidentification as a way of survival was inspired by a real-life story of her friend who survived precisely because of his long hair.[8] But Ali's hair growth also signals the impossibility of his survival, as his trauma is lodged in his body and takes control of his physical appearance. This motif of hair cutting and growing intertextually connects Ali to Sara from *Grbavica*, as both children attempt to come to terms with the ways in which trauma inscribes itself in the body and marks it in permanent ways. In both cases, the children cut their hair in an attempt to shed trauma from their bodies, thus refusing to be entirely sublimated within its confines.

The devastating loss that the village community had endured becomes so formative of their everydayness that the film meticulously depicts a process of loss turned into a structural *absence*, the latter being the more pathological variation of the former. The key distinction between loss and absence, according to LaCapra (1999), is that loss is rooted in the process of mourning for something specific and can therefore bring "the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or a re-cathexis of, life that allows one to begin again" (713), whereas absence becomes rooted in melancholia, a pathological state of mourning for an abstraction in which, as Freud states, the ego itself becomes empty. While loss is historical, absence, as an unresolvable state, becomes structural, formative of the world. For the women in the village, the disappearance of men cannot be maintained at the level of loss and specificity because they do not *know* what happened to them, whether they are dead or alive, and *where* their bodies (dead or living) are located. This makes it impossible for the mourning to be rooted in a concrete sense of loss, and therefore loss turns into an absence, a phantom structure that is marked by a persistent state of melancholia as a way of being. This melancholia structures the women's lives so much so that everything in their day-to-day activities seems to be geared toward sheer survival as they *wait*, while any form of affirmative affect is suspended until they are finally able to *know* what happened to their men.

The impulse to know, the desire to have the knowledge gap filled, is the only instance of enthusiasm that the film initially allows for: throughout their deprived existence, the women remain hopeful that some day, sooner or later, they will find out what had happened to their men and *where* the men are located. The insistence on the location marks a desire to transform absence back into loss by attaching it to something concrete: to a concrete location of the men's bodies, whatever state those bodies might be in. The optimism that the women maintain about the prospects of knowing is one of the film's most devastating aspects, because it is implicitly understood

from the beginning, by the spectator as well as some characters on screen, that this optimism is always already cruel and that whenever the women do find out what happened to their men, the state of things as they had been before the war is never going to be restored, the promise of regained fulfillment always an already failed promise.

And indeed, the women eventually do find out that the men are dead, but not before a series of significant events shake up their monotonous everydayness in the village. First, Miro, a Serb from a neighboring area, arrives accompanied by a wealthy investor looking to buy off village properties for the development of vaguely defined corporate projects. The women are torn about whether they should sell their properties and move elsewhere or stay in their village (what if the men return and the women are not there, some of them ask?). But more than the dilemma about selling their properties, what disrupts the peaceful veneer of their everydayness is the arrival of a Serbian man, a potential accomplice in what happened to the women's husbands, fathers, and sons. First, they tiptoe around Miro's presence, but slowly, some of them become increasingly agitated and eager to ask Miro if he knew anything about what had happened to their family members. When first asked, Miro assures the women that he did not participate in the actions they wanted to know about, but the unease around his presence does not let off. Some of them insist that Miro *must* know something. And this insistence attaches directly to the workings of their melancholia shaped into structural absence: the specific, historical trauma of the men's disappearance has turned into structural trauma, a non-concrete, trans-historical form of trauma that becomes formative of reality to begin with. In other words, the trauma of losing their loved ones is not just something that *happened* to them, but becomes formative of *who* the women are. And by extension, when they become so defined by the fact that they lost their loved ones—and particularly through not knowing how and why they lost them—the women cannot see past Miro's ethnic identity, as they come to equate him with an entire ethnic group and with the knowledge that is so unattainable to them. To the women, Miro is the bearer of the knowledge that they strive to obtain, as he belongs to that (ethnic) Otherness an understanding of which has been shaped through the structural trauma that has come to define their identities. The ethnic Otherness formed this way *knows* what happened because the women see its totality as responsible for it.

The film plays with our expectations by hinting that there might be an element of the irrational in the women's obsession with whether Miro *knows*. But just as it seems to become clear that he indeed does not know anything, a magic realist turn of events takes hold and a heavy fog and rain descend on Slavno. Moreover, Miro's car breaks down when he attempts

to leave, resulting in his extended stay in the village. This prolonged stay seems to take its toll on Miro, and in one of the film's central scenes, he comes face-to-face with Ali (who ran way upon seeing Miro in an earlier scene). When their eyes meet, Miro becomes overwhelmed by the boy's gaze and utters the following, fragmented admission: "People . . . I didn't do anything. I was telling everyone to let them go . . . They have been haunting me for years . . . I did not kill anyone . . . You saw it yourself," he says looking at Ali. "Don't," Miro continues, "let them go." "Where are our children?" asks the imam. "In the Blue Cave," says Miro. And with this admission, suddenly, a place is suggested, a *location* to which mourning could finally become attached. The scene makes overtly pronounced the difference between Miro's perpetrator trauma and the villagers' traumatic loss as survivors. Whereas Miro always already knows, and is haunted by the fact that he was there and that his supposed efforts to stop the atrocities were unsuccessful (thereby admitting he knew what would happen *in advance* of it happening), the villagers' traumatic loss is marked by what they do not know and by the fact that their knowing about the atrocities arrives *always already too late*.

After Miro's admission, the film cuts to the elderly Fatima finishing the traditional rug that she had been weaving throughout the film, as one of its recurring visual motifs. The villagers then go to the cave and find the remains of their men, but the camera does not follow them there. Rather, the spectator stays behind, not intruding on the encounter with concrete loss. This cinematic approach to representing atrocities speaks to the impossibility of screening trauma in a straightforward way, as well as to the film's ethical refusal to sensationalize atrocities for the sake of visual spectacle. The visit to the Blue Cave offers another instance in which the film makes use of magic realism. Before they get to the cave, the women have to cross a stream, and here, Fatima spreads the rug that she had been weaving, and the rug makes the passage to the cave look as if it was suspended in the air. With this, the path to facing loss is shown as partially surreal, fantastical, somehow magic, and not purely rooted in realism.

The elements of magic realism, as one of the key approaches to traumatic loss in *Snow*, render literal realism inadequate to fully encapsulate the spectrum of trauma's affective consequences. Sheer realism is further countered by the elements of nature itself, as water, wind, rain, and, finally, the snow from the film's title, frame the reality of the film in a way in which the nature itself becomes infused with loss and pain, not separated from it. The thick fog that descends on the village when Miro and Marc visit the village signals the vague, suspicious future that their corporate deal would offer to the community. The heavy rain that follows the fog brings out the truth, as it unsettles Miro to finally come clean. The snow itself, referred

to earlier in the film, finally starts falling when the women enter the Blue Cave, as it represents a metaphysical reminder that facing trauma can often happen only under the guise of a somewhat surreal removal that subsumes the elements of nature itself. The snow here seems to have a healing effect, covering loss with a soft blanket of mourning rather than melancholia.

After they find the remains, the women are finally able to bury the bodies of their loved ones and return structural absence into a process of mourning for something historically concrete. Being able to perform a proper burial is significant in the restoration of mourning because, as LaCapra claims, "through mourning and at the very least symbolic provision of a proper burial, one attempts to assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers" (713). This observation becomes important beyond the boundaries of a cinematic text because it points to a pivotal truth about the process of postwar coping, especially in societies where meaningful reconciliation remains a challenge, as it does in Bosnia. What *Snow* so effectively shows is that unresolved melancholia, caused by the lack of knowing what happened, and thus made into a structural absence that defines life, forces trauma to become an unattached entity that becomes formative of identity itself. When identity is formed this way, the cycle of perpetuating ethnic prejudice and essentializing cannot be escaped, precisely because knowing and not knowing are delineated along strict ethnic lines of division. This perpetuation of ethnic divisions can be resolved only when atrocities are admitted to, historicized, and made concrete and locatable, as it is only then that traumatic loss, too, can become historicized within a specific place and event, and the work of mourning allowed to be anchored by a concrete loss, not an abstract absence. This way, the loss does not become a device for a perpetuation of divisions (the way that structural absence does), but is instead allowed a concrete attachment to what happened, arrived at through perpetrator's confession. With this, reconciliation does not become a guarantee, but it does become more plausible, as the mourning attached to knowing is able to change and transform itself into something at least partially resolvable through healing, much more than the melancholia attached to not knowing is. Gordana Crnković has noted as much in her claim that *Snow* shows that "one's constructive attitude towards the past includes the closure of that which should be closed" (139), here achieved through burial rites.

In more ways than one, *Snow* is about the clusters of promises attached to cruel optimism as a way of survival. In one iteration, as it relates to the melancholia and the not knowing of what happened to the missing family members, that optimism is decidedly cruel: as much as the women remain hopeful that the men would one day return alive, that hope ultimately proves to be a cruel investment. Another form of cruel optimism can be

traced in the narrative of an investor attempting to buy off the village in its entirety. He promises, quite literally, a better future for the women, one detached from the physical space of their trauma. And some women get invested in this promise of dislocation-as-relief, but eventually, as the truth about their men surfaces, the village comes to a unified stance about not selling out after all. Now that the women know what had happened to their men, they decide to stay in the village as an act of defiance and survival, their existence slowly becoming detached from that structural absence of knowing that marked their postwar years. Their melancholia can finally become transformed into a process of mourning the remains of their loved ones—concrete, material. To that end, the film shows a cluster of fresh graves at the end, before it cuts to the final shot: the sight of the orphaned girls playing next to construction material, which signals rebuilding, not just of the physical space, but of life itself.

The concretization of trauma is further deepened by the film's chronotope: the events take place in eastern Bosnia (which was the site of the Srebrenica massacre in 1995), and they develop over the course of one week in 1997 (two years after the war), with each day clearly demarcated with titles. Moreover, this concretization suggests that women may carry the burden of post-conflict reconciliation and healing to the greatest extent. Mima Simić notes that "in *Snow*, paradoxically, women step into the (film) scene only at the moment when all (sexually) 'able' men are removed from it" (2012: 195). But the women's stepping "into the scene" is rooted less in the traditional gender norms of women perceived as healers, and more in the concretely historicized representation of Bosnia's postwar reality, where women are, indeed, often those who survived, and men the ones who paid the ultimate price (as was the case with the Srebrenica genocide). Furthermore, as in *Grbavica*, women are depicted as members of a subtle network of solidarity and mutual care. Their lives are permeated not only by sadness and loss, but also by humor and optimism. It is necessity that positions them as the ones in charge of coping, brought on by the cruel logistics of war. Their lives were spared because they were women, and thus the burden of survival rests with them as well.

The optimism of mutual care particularly attaches to the film's central protagonist, Alma, who optimistically maintains throughout the film that the women's future is in the village and that the preserves and other produce they make would eventually feed "half of Bosnia." Early on in the film, Alma meets a young trucker Hamza, who promises to come to the village and buy off their entire supply of produce for distribution. When he does not show up on a set day, Alma's hopes are deflated. But in the film's closing moments, an attainable form of optimism reemerges, when Hamza finally shows up, and thus the hope of developing a small business gets reignited.

And with this, Alma's optimism proves to be quite attainable, as an opportunity arises for a new cluster of affective investments for the women in the village: a turn to a productive future, and quite literally, materially so. This motif of a self-sustainable material future places the coping with traumatic loss in the context of neoliberal exploitation (which would, it appears, count on the traumatized to leave the dwellings where their trauma occurred), and the survivors' resistance to it by way of self-efficient living. Turning down the offer to be bought off by a wealthy foreign corporation, the women turn to their self-sustained business instead, as a way of securing a brighter future for their community. This turn to a potential of local sustainability and growth proves to be an important element of post-conflict healing from trauma in *Snow*, as the micro-economy of self-sufficiency offers a promise of the more attainable optimism for a wounded society that is Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the very end of the film, it appears that optimism has turned into concrete results: next to the construction material, we also see Hamza's car (signaling his continued presence), presumably all signs of the rebuilding of productivity, the village, and of the community that inhabits it.

A significant visual repetition, akin to screen memory, is marked in *Snow* by Alma's recurring dream that sees her walking to the water fountain to wash her face. In this silent dream, the camera stays close to her as she puts a colorful scarf on her head and the breeze flutters through it. The ritualistic repetition marks a soothing memory of contentment, one that screens off the more painful memories of loss. Each time the dream recurs, it lasts slightly longer and moves further forward, until, in one recurrence, Alma walks to the prayer site and is seen praying with an unidentified man—quite possibly her dead husband. These memories of a pleasant ritual dislocate the trauma of loss and return Alma to the comforting fold of uninterrupted everydayness. Then she awakens and begins her postwar daily routine marked by structural absence (thus evoking Caruth's question regarding trauma: "What does it mean to awaken?" where the refusal to awaken functions as a refusal to return to the state of not knowing). Moreover, Alma's headscarf, which she wears voluntarily while several other young Muslim women in the film do not (a similar theme appears in Begić's next film, *Children of Sarajevo*), seems to also be attached to the structures of coping with trauma and loss. The headscarf and the veil have been a contested topic of feminist debate, which ultimately trickles down to the question not only of female agency, visibility, but also of historically and geopolitically contingent notions of bodily freedom and subjectivity. Rather than understanding the veil as holding an "exceptional status—as though it is not clothing but an absolute barrier to women's visibility and presence" (Gokariksel & Sekor 2014: 179), it is more productive to attempt

Figure 2.4 Dream, repetition, melancholia (*Snow*, screen grabs)

to understand it as an artifact that is rendered meaningful in many different ways through embodied practices of the women who wear it. Mima Simić is critical of the film's "re-patriarchalization" of its heroine through her choice to cover her head (197). However, I want to suggest that this act can be read as re-patriarchalization only if the headscarf is understood to be, inherently and inalienably, a tool of women's submission under patriarchy, an external sign that she has internalized her oppression—an assumption that I find troubling and simplistic. Contrary to this interpretation, I see the headscarf in *Snow* as Alma's externalized and self-imposed mechanism of coping, most pronounced in her recurring dream—a symbol of soothing comfort that protects her body from being exposed to pain by retuning it to the simple and reassuring routine of everyday life (Figure 2.4).

Trauma Cinema and the Potential for Empathic Unsettlement

With its traversing from abstract absence back to a concrete loss, *Snow* moves in a different directionality from *Pretty Village* and *Grbavica*. The latter two start off with the concrete only to suggest that there is importance to be found in the non-verbalized, non-locatable, irresolvable traumatic memory. In *Snow*, the process goes in the opposite direction, where lack of knowledge is all the women initially have, and since it is a state of impossible melancholia, they have to obtain something more concrete with which to anchor their post-traumatic coping, especially their mourning.

And while these three films are moving in different directionalities along the scale of concrete to abstract with respect to trauma, all three prove the importance of the interplay between both, since it is only then that a hopeful form of understanding—of what happened and of the pain of Others—can be allowed to take (literal) place.

It is important to consider here the films' positioning when it comes to the question of gender and the process of coming to terms with traumatic memory. For the reasons I have illustrated above, *Pretty Village* is self-reflexively positioned as a film about defeated masculinities, yet one that also offers poignant commentary on the absences of female experiences from the normatively masculinist spaces of warfare. *Grbavica* and *Snow*, on the other hand, are decidedly films about women's war and postwar experiences, as they reverse the normative formula and put women in focus, delegating men into the category of absence. While the warfare—and traditional war film itself—is shown to be an almost exclusively male domain within which there is little to no room for articulating the stories of women, the postwar phase seems to here be positioned as the exact opposite: a decidedly feminine domain of coping, exacerbated by the absence of men, who dominated the time of war itself. While traditional gender fixity might be assumed to inform this taxonomy of men dominating the framework of war and women dominating the affective post-conflict domain, there is, nevertheless, an important insight into the workings of trauma through gender hetero/normativity to be observed as well, one that is closely linked to the establishment of not only gender, but also ethnicity, for it is precisely through the prism of the gendered nurture of injury and loss that the characters in all three films are positioned as traumatized in various ways. Be it through sons losing their mothers (*Pretty Village*), daughters losing their idealized fathers (*Grbavica*), or women losing their entire male side of families (*Snow*), it is always the process of one gender subjectivity losing its (heteronormatively positioned) opposite that frames the channels and inflictions of trauma in these films. Furthermore, this gendered prism of trauma then provides a pathway toward stabilizing ethnic identities as such, as when the hero of *Pretty Village* is pushed into militant radicalism only after his mother is killed, or the women in *Snow* into inability to see past the fact that someone in their midst is ethnically a Serb. This link between gendered trauma and the production of ethnicity proves to be a powerful mechanism by which divisions can be perpetuated. Yet, these three films do not stop at this nexus where gendered trauma merely produces the ethnic Other, but rather insist on pointing to these mechanisms as inherently fraught and futile reiterations of division. The importance of that insistence is enormous where the archive of post-Yugoslav dislocated screen memory is concerned.

Caruth's observation that the recurring nature of repressed traumatic memory informs and structures our understanding of history should figure prominently in any discussion of cinema's role in the processes of archiving memories, be they prosthetic, screen, or otherwise. It is well established by film theorists that a film taps into the spectators' conscious and unconscious desires by providing pathways to identification with the objects on screen (Mulvey 1975), whose stories in turn move the viewer often in ideologically driven ways (a process which, on the contrary, does not preclude the so-called "aberrant" readings, which go against the ideological grain). What effect does a filmic text have if such spectatorial mechanism of identification is interpolated with Caruth's observations about trauma, memory, and history, especially when it comes to those films representing catastrophe, war, and unspeakable atrocities? In concealing the dynamics of screen memory and its dislocation, film can play an important role in assisting the sanitized standardization of history that accompanies ethno-nationalist projects (Hughes-Warrington 2007). At the same time, cinema's meanings are rarely contained only in the fact of erasure or simplification through repression. *What* is erased and *how* it comes back to haunt the screen in clandestine ways might be the more important questions to ask. The films discussed in this chapter point to (and occasionally become aligned with) gender normative ethno-national interpellations, yet nevertheless offer illuminating glimpses into the way trauma disrupts ideological framings of identity, precisely because trauma's unknowing aspects cannot easily be assimilated by ideology.

Instead of understanding film as necessarily contributing to or constituting problematic collective memories through erasure, more attention needs to be paid to the way cinema often balances between knowing and not knowing in ways which articulate the ongoing dialectic between them by way of dislocating fixed identity positions, which are revealed as inherently traumatic in their own right. I contend that *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, *Grbavica*, and *Snow*, in their differing ways, represent precisely that kind of fragile dialectical balance. They show that "working through" is an ongoing process marked by a perpetual balancing between language and the breaking down of language, between the representable and the unrepresentable, between the knowing and the not knowing. They also reveal gender and ethnicity as mutually constitutive in circular fashion, yet never entirely reducible to one another or attainable as absolute categories. Žarkov has contended that gender and ethnicity are both "a relation and a category of *power*" (2007: 11, emphasis in the text) to which living individuals are never fully or entirely reducible. The irreducibility becomes particularly glaring when valances of traumatic memory shatter the frames of coherent reality. In a different context, Žarkov has argued that certain

frameworks of representing the pain and suffering of others are "*not* a ground for 'common humanity' but for further ontological differentiation" (2014: 165, emphasis in the text). Rather than reiterating the appeals for universalized humanity, Žarkov argues that sustained ethics of recognizing the pain of others needs to be premised on specific local histories, geopolitics and struggles, as well as on awareness of how the notion of the subject is produced locally, and through what discourses. I want to extend that assertion to the context of post-Yugoslav cinema in order to argue that it occupies a significant cultural domain within which such historically specific attention to local struggles has been taking place, where some of the problematic premises of what constitutes a "grievable" life have been perpetually challenged or dismantled through trauma as the central framework of representation.

LaCapra has asserted that so-called testimonial art (in which he includes film) produces "experimental, gripping, and risky symbolic emulation of trauma in what might be called traumatized or posttraumatic writing" (2003: 221). This emulation, in turn, acts performatively toward opening itself up for the spectator's "empathic unsettlement"—that is, the kind of empathy that does not allow for full identification with a victim's story, but rather leaves room for reflection and anti-closure. In other words, empathic unsettlement always already assumes an a priori difference in experience, but nevertheless strives for an ethical encounter, not despite of the difference, but perhaps precisely because of it. Elsewhere, LaCapra has argued that, like the trauma of victims, perpetrator trauma must be worked through if "perpetrators are to distance themselves from an earlier implication in deadly ideologies and practices" (2001: 79). Without such distancing—which, I argue, the staging of perpetrator trauma in *Pretty Village* and *Snow* overtly enacts—there cannot be empathic unsettlement either.

These three quite different films about the Bosnian war represent a kind of "posttraumatic writing," where unsettled or *ethnically dislocated* empathy can be allowed to become the orienting affective regime through which reading, or in this case spectatorship, may take place. To evoke Enver Kazaz' call for "transethnic memories of the war,"[9] such memories can happen only when remembering is dislocated from the normative frameworks of ethno-gendered identity. Their depictions of the process of experiencing and working through trauma by losing stable frameworks of gender and ethnic identity unhinge each of these cinematic texts from firm ethnic identifications, since such processes cut across ethnic, national, gender, and other lines of division. These films perform the notion that working through trauma is an ongoing process marked by a perpetual balancing between language and the breaking down of language, between the

representable and the non-representable, between the redemptive and the anti-redemptive, between that which can be remembered and that which is inaccessible to memory, and between normative ethnic and gendered identities and their ultimate inadequacy, so much so that both categories are displaced from their fixity in ideology.

The films discussed in this chapter demonstrate these dialectics in different ways—yet each by attaching gender and ethnicity to the question of what it means to be traumatized, whether as a victim or as a perpetrator. The films examine how trauma not only displaces the stability of the categories that might have precipitated it, but also becomes constitutive of the new ways of approaching the difference between Self and Other, be it in gendered or ethnic terms, or at those points where the nexus of the two creates our understanding of what it means to survive. That understanding might create a form of optimism significant to hold on to, if for nothing else, than for its promise of deeper empathy toward an Other. But this potential for empathic unsettlement or dislocation, instead of being a romanticized vision of the trans-universal possibilities of affective connection simply through exposure to the stories of others, should instead be viewed more as an extended invitation to a localized spectatorial alignment that foregrounds dislocation and unsettlement as a way to circumvent, even temporarily, rigid ideological interpellations of trauma and identity. This potential for a sustained form of empathic unsettlement that reveals Other as constitutive of Self opens up a space for understanding that trauma defies locally imposed gendered and ethnic borders and that the promise of an ethno-nation is most commonly a source of trauma in its own right, rather than a reprieve from it.

3

Happily Sick: Trauma, Nation, and Queer Affect

Yugoslavia's rich cinematic tradition rarely tackled the themes of queer desire overtly, perhaps mirroring the overarching lack of public discourses on such topics in a country in which homosexuality in some republics remained illegal well into the 1990s. If and when the themes of homoerotic desire appeared—for instance, in Srđan Karanović's *Virdžina* (1991) or Živko Nikolić's *The Beauty of Sin* (1986)—their representations of queer subjectivities typically veered toward a more figurative use of its subversive potential, most notably toward critiquing patriarchal traditions of a "backward" region such as the Balkans. Queerness was therefore inevitably linked to subversive or transgressive tendencies, pitted in a binary opposition to an inherently reactionary heterosexuality. Moreover, these approaches, as instances of critically reflexive self-Balkanization, were at times overt attempts at linking traditional patriarchal, heteronormative rule to nationalist tendencies. Yet, what remained out of reach in such frameworks is a consideration of queer desire outside of the binary framework that has to perpetually pit it against heteronormativity in order to position it as visible or readable (Jelača 2012). In the years following the violent Yugoslav conflict, there has been an increasing number of films that tackle the topics of non-conforming sexualities and gender identities, a cultural turn which is linked to the increasing efforts of the regional LGBTQ groups to achieve greater rights and public acceptance for persons of non-normative gender identity and sexual orientation. In that sense, we can classify the emergence of a greater number of LGBTQ-themed films within the domain of what Jurica Pavičić has called the regional "cinema of normalization" (2010). LGBTQ-themed films are an important element of such normalizing cinema, particularly since LGBTQ rights (or lack thereof) have been one of the main stumbling blocks for some of the regional nation-states' EU integrations.[1] A direct link is therefore

created between LGBTQ rights and the EU integrations—a link that carries as much potential for a perpetuation of reductive dichotomizing between the "civilized West" and "backward East," as it also represents an arguably effective tool of political mobilizing on either side of the ideological coin.[2] As Marko Dumančić argues, "the question of gay/lesbian visibility in the Western Balkans is indivisible from anxieties about national identities burdened by the wartime mythology, the fear of being classified as Balkan/non-European, and the EU expansion" (2013: 80–1).

In this chapter, I wish to temporarily put aside the focus on the role of LGBTQ visibility in the pro- and against-European discourses in order to look at the mechanisms through which the greater visibility of queer desire in post-conflict cinema after Yugoslavia engages in the establishment of affective regimes by which to deny the primacy of heteronormative understandings of and responses to trauma. I use the term "queer" rather than other alternatives such as gay, lesbian, transgender, or LGBTQ in order to maintain the implication of categorical unfixity of identity as such (as much as that is possible). I lean on Halberstam's useful definition in which " 'queer' refers to nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time" (2005: 6).

The topic of queer trauma is largely neglected in the studies of post-Yugoslav queer-themed cinema. I aim to probe how a circulation of queer desire, and queer trauma, as an overtly political, as well as affective intervention in the more dominant heteronormative deployments of collective national traumas, is constructed culturally and by extension, politically. I examine the potential of the queer-themed films to intervene in the processes by which the claiming of trauma is typically made possible only for those citizens who successfully re/produce, literally and figuratively, the "ideal" heterosexual body that is inevitably linked to ethno-national ideology. I suggest that post-Yugoslav queer-themed films—for instance, Serbia's *Marble Ass* (Želimir Žilnik 1997) and *Take a Deep Breath* (Dragan Marinković 2004), Croatia's *Fine Dead Girls* (Dalibor Matanić 2002), and Bosnia's *Go West* (Ahmed Imamović 2005)—establish, to differing extents, temporary regimes in which queer emotions are put into cultural circulation in a way that stages an intervention into the (hetero)normativized affective economies within which the cultural memory of trauma is typically contained, thereby effectively queering national feelings and trauma in particular, by making it into a more malleable and unfixed entity.

I refer to the films discussed in this chapter as queer-themed rather than simply "queer," because it is questionable whether they are examples of what might be viewed as a consistently queer mode of vision. While Mima Simić (2012) and Kevin Moss (2012) place focus on the fact that most of

the filmmakers (and actors) in these films are of heterosexual orientation, I do not wish to assume a taxonomy between queer and straight cultural texts that is tied only to the identity politics as such, nor assume the level of authentic queerness of a text to be directly linked to its makers' own bodies and sexual orientations (moreover, this is made particularly important in the cultural context in which LGBTQ persons rarely publically identify as such for safety reasons). I am cautious about deeming these films "queer" for a somewhat different reason, one that has to do with their depiction of queer desire that, as I will show, in some cases never entirely steps outside of the framework of a heteronormative gaze. While such articulations at times veer on objectifying, they nevertheless stage an illuminative envisioning of what Halberstam has called a "queer time and place" (2005), away from the normatively dichotomized sphere of envisioning desire, even when it is just a fleeting vision. I am particularly interested in such fleeting instances of queer vision outside of the gay/straight binary, and their importance for establishing a dislocated, queer archive of cultural memory of trauma as it relates to post-Yugoslav, post-conflict cinema. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to delineate a boundary which would separate "legitimately" queer texts from those that are not (as those delineations inevitably rest on identity politics and binary frameworks of various sorts), I posit that, out of the several films discussed in this chapter, Žilnik's *Marble Ass* comes closest to being deemed a queer and not just queer-themed film, not only because it uses performers who identify as queer outside of the boundaries of the film, but also because of the film's relentlessly provocative alternate, queer vision, both in terms of narrative and aesthetic form (whereas most other films discussed here are much more conventional in both aspects). In *Marble Ass*, that which is within the frame and which remains outside of the frame are often tragically intertwined in a way that blurs the lines that separate them and, with it, makes a convincing case that screen presence is not a "mere" representation of "reality" that is inevitably somewhere else.

No matter how mutually different, these queer-themed films work on dissecting negative emotions—hate and shame in particular—in order to expose the mechanisms with which these affects do not circulate in isolation, but are articulated to a number of ideologically slanted processes that insist on the purity of the ethno-national body, rid of its unwanted deviations. Sara Ahmed (2004) has described how hate provides an affective economy often circulated with the intention of achieving the ideal of national purity, whereby intolerance of the Other is disguised as love for the nation. Shame, on the other hand, is often located with those being hated—here with queer subjects who are expected to be ashamed for failing to follow the well-trodden heteronormative paths with which to help reinforce the vitality of the national body (such vitality pivotal

for the emerging nation-states and their ethno-national ideologies). Yet *Marble Ass*, *Take a Deep Breath*, *Fine Dead Girls*, and *Go West* all articulate, in different measure, traumatic affect in a way that dislocates these regimes of normalizing hate and imposing shame, by performing a reversal of sorts, in which queer affect is, somewhat paradoxically, seen as the only productively affirmative response to national trauma. By doing so, the films stage an intervention into assumptions that queer bodies are firmly attached to the notions of unproductivity and delegated to the outside boundaries of the nation. Here, affirmative queer affect is "stickier" (to use Ahmed's term), and therefore more productive than the shame that queer protagonists are expected to feel, or the hate that is directed at them.

The vitality of a queer response to national trauma—a process not linear in its nature, since a queer subject is always already imbued with an archive of trauma in the process of becoming herself (Cvetkovich 2003)—works then to challenge the normativity of the affective economies in which to be queer is to be denied the affirmation that comes with the more widely generative response to trauma. To that end, Cvetkovich argues:

> Events are claimed as national trauma only through cultural and political work. This production of a public culture frequently privileges some experiences and excludes others (. . .). The turn to memory is also a turn to the affective or felt experience of history as central to the construction of public cultures, to give a range of people the authority to represent historical experience, and often implicitly to suggest a plurality of points of view. Yet questions remain of what counts as a trauma history and whose feelings matter in the national public sphere.
>
> (2003: 37)

In the films discussed below, the opposite might be true: queering the public archive of affective responses to collective national trauma might be a way to productively divorce that trauma from the ideology that forces bodies to act violently in order to become building blocks for a healthy nation. In other words, they suggest that being "sick" might be the more affirmative way to be, or to cope with trauma. My analysis exposes the ways in which collective (here ethno-national) war trauma is typically understood, assumed, and constituted as a heteronormative experience. At the same time, I examine how these queer-themed films perform a reversal, whereby centrality is given to queer traumatic affect and queer cultural memory. With such analysis, I aim to move away from the currently more standard scholarly approaches to these films—approaches that, although important, have sought to identify the films' lacking as queer texts and have, therefore, often veered into the domain of sheer dismissal that rests on the premises of (in)authenticity. For instance, in his critical examination of

the different levels in which post-Yugoslav queer-themed films are lacking as queer, or "progressive" texts, Kevin Moss concludes that "Western films on gay themes, which should have been known to the directors, but apparently were not, could also have provided models" (2012: 366), whereby "models," in Moss usage, refer to the legitimized (and therefore normativized) scripts within which queer desire is typically understood as always inevitably progressive. Aside from the implicit subtext of such assessments—where "Western" models of understanding and representing queer desire need to be applied to non-Western cultural domains in the process of civilizational "progress"—I find that a scholarly approach that seeks to dismiss a text based on what *is not* there misses an opportunity to consider a text as a machine with many gears (to evoke Deleuze and Guattari), a machine that *does* rather than simply *is*. A machine whose meaning is, moreover, closely tied to the context of its emergence rather than to the missing references to more legitimized and recognizable queer scripts made elsewhere. In what follows, then, I offer a less critical reading of how queer desire—authentic or inauthentic, progressive or non-progressive—is circulated by these post-conflict queer-themed films as a means to disrupt the ideologically driven processes of coding collective trauma in one-dimensional terms.

Ethno-Nations and Sexual Health

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, it became not uncommon for the newly formed nation-states of the region to assess their national strength through the metaphors of health (Žarkov 2007). This is not an unusual occurrence, since nations are often discursively constructed as bodies: the national body is envisioned as comprised of a finite number of self-policed particles, and the health of the collective body depends on the health of each separate particle. It is an assemblage of sorts, one that interpellates its citizens into an affective economy within which emotional investment into the well-being of a nation plays a crucial role in the maintenance of the health—and of the sound futurity—of said collective national body. The notion of self-policing by means of biopolitics, then, becomes one of the central mechanisms through which a nation is constituted and understood. Moreover, affect—or feelings of belonging through love and hate intertwined—becomes the key for a nation's understanding of itself as such (Ahmed 2004).

For post-Yugoslav ethno-nation-states, this emphasis on ethno-national health is most prominently organized around the concept of purity and contagion—most notably ethnic purity (where contagion is fended off through ethnic *cleansing*—the grounds on which some of the new

nation-states were constituted as such). The region's bloody ethnic wars brought about an almost hysterical insistence on the complete overlap between nation and ethnicity: in order to be a healthy nation, the ethnic group that solely comprises it has to fight the threat of contagion and be rid of any other ethnic bodies that might compromise its purity by way of contagion. However, Mary Douglas has asserted, in her seminal study of the role of purity and contagion in social orders, that

> The whole universe is harnessed to men's attempts to force one another into good citizenship. Thus we find that certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion, as when the glance or touch of an adulterer is held to bring illness to his neighbors or his children.
>
> (1984: 3)

Douglas adds that

> [I]deas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created. (4)

She concludes that "whenever a strict pattern of purity is imposed on our lives it is either highly uncomfortable or it leads into contradiction if closely followed leads to hypocrisy. That which is negated is not thereby removed" (1984: 164). It is, therefore, the impossibility of a finite removal of contagion that may position nationalist ideologies inside the framework of paranoia, which I elaborate on in my reading of *Fine Dead Girls*.

Because of the incessant conflation, in the post-Yugoslav spaces, between ethnicity and nation, in this book I often refer to the region's successor states as ethno-nations instead of simply nations, to bring to the fore the regionally dominant ideology by which nation and ethnicity are made to overlap in a dynamic that further perpetuates the centrality of unadulterated ethnic purity. Ethnic identity, however, is not the only measure by which the well-being of a nation is measured. As has been claimed by postcolonial queer theorists, most notably by Jasbir Puar (2007), the discourses around ethno-national integrity are never separated from the kin discourses of healthy reproductive national bodies, sexual normativity, and propriety of desire. Desire, gender identity, and sexual orientation as such are, therefore, not separate from the notions of national or ethnic identity, but rather constituted through and by them. Indeed, as I noted in the previous chapter, Dubravka Žarkov shows how sexuality and gender were used

during the Yugoslav wars to *manufacture* ethnicity as the only path toward an ideologically interpellated—or acceptable and recognizable—identity. In the problematic discourses that marked the wars, gender and sexuality were often used as means of manipulating and constituting ethnic divisions, thereby further drawing a clear border between the collectivities of Self and Other that are closely tied to gender and sexual normativity.

The emphasis on the question of ethno-national health is, moreover, closely tied to another important vector in the equation that comprises collective ethno-national bodies as such: that of who gets to access, identify with, or claim collective national trauma. In the post-conflict ethno-national(ist) discourses of the region, trauma becomes a commodity allowed to some and denied to others: the question of who can claim a traumatized existence, or whose story can be made meaningful, becomes a political device of the ideologically assigned roles designated to reaffirm that the ethno-nation arose as a result of the suffering of the always already pure, healthy national victims, who sacrificed the sovereignty of their bodies for the sake of the health of the collective ethno-national body.

In the films that I discuss here, all of the above mentioned factors function, to a differing extent, as a backdrop against which a reversal takes place, one which pits these films as rather provocative texts that dare to turn the ideology of ethno-national purity on its head. Through such reversals, many of them show that what is considered healthy about a nation might, in fact, be a pathology that denies a proliferation of alternatives to the strictly ethno-nationalized way of being in the world. And furthermore, the same reversal that the films perform recasts the very illnesses that a healthy national body is trying to defend itself from as the only affirmative mode of national existence. Through an affective turn that they engage in, the films make the narratives of illness sticky in a way that becomes affirmative in its creation of an alternative, queer temporality and spatial economy, one temporarily unhinged from the confines of the ethno-nation, but, very importantly, not outside of nationality itself. With this, they create a fleeting archive of dislocated queer memories that temporarily divorce trauma from its otherwise firm links to heteronormativity, as they re-inscribe queer trauma into an ethno-national script of emergence. This becomes particularly important when the contexts in which the films are made and refer to are brought into consideration. The post-breakup region of the former Yugoslavia is still fraught with tensions that arise from the compulsive insistence of the resulting ethno-national hegemonies to separate themselves from their neighboring nation-states. But even further than their local/ized applicability as subversively sticky objects, the films offer a broader insight into the workings of the assemblages that come to define our understandings of who gets to claim national citizenship after

Yugoslavia, under what circumstances, and in what relation to trauma. To that end, they explore what the point of entry into citizenship is for those whose relation to the trauma of national existence (Cvetkovich 2003) is available only at a slant, if it is available at all.

The Horror of Lesbian Desire: A Nation Watches Over the *Fine Dead Girls*

Dalibor Matanić's *Fine Dead Girls* is delivered in a paranoid format of a feverish horror film, reminiscent of some of the most disturbing work of Roman Polanski, films that deal with the threatening invasions of the body and of the psyche, and that are tied to the confined physical space of a single building—most notably *Repulsion* (1965), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *The Tenant* (1976). In *Fine Dead Girls*, a lesbian couple who is at the center of the story, as well as at the center of spectatorial identification (another aspect of the movie that performs a reversal—queer subjects are not only looked at, but they are also identified with), finds itself trapped, both literally and figuratively, by the walls of the building that they live in, where virtually all other tenants engage in pathological forms of surveillance of the behavior of others. That this building, with its oppressive walls and dark and menacing rooms, functions as a metaphor of the totality of the ethno-national body becomes obvious as soon as the spectrum of its inhabitants is brought to light. There is a range of pathologies that can be tidily linked to the significant developments in the history of the nation: from an elderly former communist party member who is keeping the body of his dead wife in the apartment (refusing to let her go presumably out of fear of letting go of his past life, one he had before the breakup of his formerly Socialist country), to an abusive war veteran of the Homeland war, who waves the new ethno-national flag, suffers from PTSD and abuses his wife and children. Other tenants—a young sex worker, a doctor who illegally performs abortions on young girls and catholic nuns alike, and the lesbian couple—are all under the strict surveillance of the menacing landlady who takes it upon herself to pry into everyone's business in rather aggressive ways. That the landlady's husband and son are often impotent observers of the exercises of her surveying power is an insightful reversal of the gendered mechanisms at play. Rather than subscribing to the well-established polarity between masculine as active and feminine as passive (which I discussed in Chapter 2), the dynamics here are quite reverse, to the extent where, as Marko Dumančić (2011) observes, virtually all "heterosexual male characters are chronically incapable of assuming patriarchal roles." And with the case of the landlady in particular, the film offers a rather important commentary on the role of the Mother in the process of

nation-building—a mother who here does not serve as a metaphor of a passive territory to be claimed (as women are said to discursively function in relation to nations), but instead acts as an active enforcer and reproducer of the standards to which healthy citizens are to be held accountable. The mother's role is reproductive, but reproduction here has more to do with the maintenance of ethno-national/ist ideology that insists on the policing of established norms rather than with biological function only. In other words, as an ethno-national symbol *par excellence*, the mother is here not merely a conduit of reproductive biology, but rather a symbol of *biopower*, as she quite literally decides who lives and who dies, and, moreover, who procreates with whom. This mother, as an agent of ethno-nationalist ideology, is quite overtly a stand-in for the power of the state itself. Through her concerted efforts, she instills the much-desired phallic power into her own son, but only in the most pathological form it finally takes toward the end of the film, when her son rapes and impregnates Iva, one half of the lesbian couple.

But before that violent invasion of Iva's body, and before the escalation of violence that follows the rape, and in which Iva's partner Mare ultimately loses her life, the lesbian couple moves into the building with hopes of finding a safe space that would offer them privacy in which to enjoy their love. Instead, they find a violent invasion of their bodily sovereignty, as well as surveillance at every corner of the building—an oppressively poignant reminder that they cannot escape the omnipresent policing that the collective ethno-national body performs on the particles that comprise its collective organism in order to fend off contagion. The metaphor of pollution positions the nation as an organic bodily unity, since, as Douglas argues, "there is hardly any pollution which does not have some primary physiological reference" (1984: 165). And even though some form of pathology is detected in virtually every other tenant of the building—from domestic abuse, to PTSD, to necrophilia, to crime—it is the lesbian couple that needs to be eradicated because their affirmative love does not contribute toward the stultifying reproductive "health" of the ethno-nation-state the way that the hate and intolerance on the part of other tenants do. This intolerance is disguised as love for the nation, but, in actuality, it is hate toward Others, those who threaten the nation's health rooted in purity. For instance, when violence against a Roma man is reported on the TV set, and the violated man quoted as saying "I am a Croat too," the landlady's violent son responds with, "The fuck you are." Iva and Mare, arguably the only tenants capable of an affirmative, non-pathological form of loving, similarly become objects of hate from others because lesbian love seemingly cannot be interpellated into the affective economy that contributes toward ethno-national ideology. Lesbian love,

however, is never entirely outside of the ethno-national borders of collectivity (echoing Douglas' assertion that that which is negated is never entirely removed). Anikó Imre has argued, with respect to queer visual art in post-Socialism, that its existence is not always already and inevitably an anti-national(ist) occurrence. Rather, it is permeated by a contradiction that needs to be acknowledged in order to "make one understand how nationalism can *prevent and enable* lesbian identities at the same time" (2007: 161, emphasis mine).

Indeed, *Fine Dead Girls* tackles that contradiction by inscribing lesbian love both within the frameworks of ethno-national collectivity and against it. Moreover, it insists on a spectatorial alignment with the queer subjects on screen in such a way that one is compelled to read those who consider themselves, and are considered by others in the film, as "healthy" members of ethno-nation, as dysfunctional, violently and oppressively confined individuals instead. In other words, the only sensible ethno-national subjects capable of loving feelings in the film are the two lesbians, who therefore become, in the film's provocative reversal, national subjects *par excellence*. This is achieved through the pathways of spectatorial alignment: while the film's form reflects a paranoid mechanism of incessant surveillance that rarely sheds the threatening aspects of the gaze, the spectator is nevertheless invited to identify *against* that controlling gaze, with the anguish of the lesbian couple rather than with those who create such anguish and pose a threat.

Iva, in particular, is the central character who the spectator is invited to align with, since it is through her flashbacks—and therefore, traumatic memory—that the spectator sees the events that transpire in the building. Very importantly, through the prism of such spectatorial identification, a number of problematic discourses—whereby the channels of spectatorial alignment can traditionally go only through bodies that are recognizable in their sanctioned subjectivity as proper citizens—are being undone. In yet another reversal, we see the events transpire only through the flashbacks of a queer character, whose traumatic memory is here the *only* memory available to the spectator. Since *Fine Dead Girls* came out after a decade of many regime-supported films that acted as poorly disguised vehicles of justification of the nationalist ideology disseminated in Croatia during the 1990s, the importance of the reversal of who gets to embody traumatic memory and to what ends cannot be overstated. To have a lesbian-centered framework of identification, which places the spectator within the point of view of a queer body violated at the hand of those, elsewhere very affirmatively coded proper citizens, is a political intervention whose provocative effects need to be acknowledged. The film reveals biopower as one of

the central building blocks of intolerant ethno-nationalist hegemony and, moreover, exposes health as a discursive construct rather than a pure state outside of the ideologically informed economy of (not-)belonging. What it means to be sick, versus what it means to be healthy, is here always already discursively imbued with the ideology of ethno-national/ist exclusions.

These multiple reversals do not, however, entirely erase some of the film's normative frameworks of depicting queer desire. In her criticism of the film, for instance, Mima Simić (2006, 2012) has argued that *Fine Dead Girls* is not only a decidedly non-queer film, but that it also represents a problematic affirmation of the patriarchal, heteronormative gaze, among other things, through the fact that the more active of the two lesbian women has to be punished by death at the end of the film, while the other one is forced to revert to a traditional heterosexual family structure. She argues that "despite the fact that it does not judge lesbianism and avoids the well-known and well-worn perspective of pathologizing it, the film associates it with experiences of trauma so intense that it becomes, in fact, an impossibility" (2012: 95). Simić further argues that the film's insistence on making the building where the lesbian couple lives into an overt metaphor for the nation performs a dismissal of the question of sexuality in and of itself, since that question is always already a stand in for the film's critical examination of the ethno-nation. While it is certainly true that the film insists on the overt building-as-nation metaphor, Simić's critique assumes a separation of sorts in which sexuality is not an element always already *inscribed* in the norms of ethno-national belonging. Contrary to Simić, I suggest that *Fine Dead Girls*' insistence on the metaphor of the nation through the lens of lesbian love brings to the fore the ways in which heterosexuality is normativized so as to be one of the key elements by which one is considered an acceptable ethno-national member. The film intervenes into such a model by inscribing queer desire firmly within the borders of national belonging. Furthermore, Simić, in an otherwise insightful reading, fails to account for the significance of the paranoid vision of the surveilling eye that polices the tenants and their sexual practices as a means of policing the health of the nation, since she ascribes the film's dramatic enactment of the horror genre tropes to a populist fad rather than see it as a telling metaphor for the traumatic constitution of national identity in and of itself. While I certainly agree that *Fine Dead Girls* is more a queer-themed than a queer film—inasmuch as it does not seek to embody a queer vision as much as it is invested in creating a critical anti-nationalist vision of collectivity—it nevertheless stages a rather significant intervention into the processes by which national belonging is revealed

as always normatively sexualized, since such revelation implies that sexuality is never separated from the constitution of nationality as such to begin with.

And while not a queer film per se, *Fine Dead Girls* offers a few poignant glimpses of queer vision, or a queer time and place, to evoke Halberstam's terms (2005). Since Iva and Mare are denied public ethno-national membership because of their lesbianism, they attempt, and at times succeed, to create enclaves—spatial, temporal, imaginary—within which they can love *and* live without constraints. In one scene of their lovemaking, for instance, a bird's eye panning shot shows Iva and Mare so completely transplanted from the confines of the time and space of their physical existence that they do not hear the landlady's subsequent entrance into the apartment and shocked witnessing of the act of love between the two women. That they are being surveyed even, or especially, in this intimate act of physical love is temporarily irrelevant, since Iva and Mare, at least for the moment, exist in a different, queer time and place that makes them unaware of such oppressively controlling gaze. And in another instance, the film abruptly cuts from a shot of sunset and a Croatian flag in the foreground into a dream sequence visually marked as a fantasy space. In this sequence, time-lapse camera and saturated visual palette (all visual reminders that we are transplanted into an alternative, almost utopian spatial and temporal domain) depict Iva and Mare on an idyllic beach, kissing each other. An older woman in a bright red outfit slowly passes the girls, and when her red scarf is carried by the wind and reaches Iva and Mare, it covers Mare's face completely. When Iva pulls off the scarf, instead of Mare, she sees the landlady's son, Danijel, the man who would eventually rape her. Iva suddenly wakes up from this dream-turned-nightmare, as foreshadowing of the violent events to come makes her wake up. That moment is a stark reminder that the dreamy queer time and place cannot yet exist in a longer lasting spatial or temporal frame, without being invaded by the surveilling eye of the ethno-nation. At the end of the film, Mare is dead and Iva is in a heterosexual relationship and with a child (she marries her previous boyfriend), as another reminder that queer time and place is unattainable and that in order to survive, Iva had to return to the "fold" of productive heteronormativity. Yet after the iron door closes behind the heterosexual unit (one of the many shots of doorknobs and closed doors in the film, including the opening and closing shots), the film returns once more to the beach of Iva's dream as the closing credits roll, and lingers on it one last time, perhaps envisioning a more hopeful future in which a queer vision of time and place could be sustained for longer than Iva and Mare were able to sustain it for themselves (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 The iron door closes, and the screen returns to a queer time and place (*Fine Dead Girls*, screen grab)

Recalibrating Sickness Through Subversive Vision: Želimir Žilnik's *Marble Ass*

In comparison to the fleeting nature of queer time and place in *Fine Dead Girls*, Serbia's *Marble Ass* offers a more sustained and perhaps more effectively destabilizing vision of a queer chronotope. The film came out in 1995, at the height of Milošević's power and at the height of Serbia's nationalist fever that marked his rule. Made by a cult Yugoslav filmmaker Želimir Žilnik, who made his name by directing provocative films that consistently focus on people occupying the margins of society—from the homeless, to the Roma, to immigrants—*Marble Ass* is a look at a group of sexual minorities whose lives off-center provide an oppositional view of Serbia's tumultuous present. Importantly, two of the film's main protagonists—transvestite sex workers Marilyn and Sanela—are played by

amateur actors who were transvestites and sex workers in real life. Thus, the film at times plays out more as a documentary drama than as a narrative film, challenging the sovereignty of both fact and fiction while blurring the lines between them. The story takes us through the adventures of the two prostitutes, as they make rounds on the streets of Belgrade by night. And just like the position that they occupy in society, they live on the physical margins of the city, in a dilapidated old building overlooking city blocks of apartment buildings in the distance. Their world is jolted out of its routine when Marilyn's former lover Johnny suddenly returns from the front, where he presumably fought in the Serbian army. Which front exactly he is coming from—Bosnian or Croatian—is never stated, since that fact would not make much difference to anyone in the film, their lives on the margins far removed from the front as an actual place, or war as an actual event.

Johnny initiates a new dynamic in the group, in which he takes on the role of a pimp, but one who is more interested in spending his time playing billiards (often with violent outcomes) on an improvised pool table that he brought from the front lines. At one point in the film, Marilyn learns that Johnny is emotionally attached to the table because his close friend was found dead under it. In a way then, the table is an externalization of Johnny's war trauma, one that he never fully verbalizes or directly acknowledges. Somewhat humorously, Marilyn criticizes Johnny for returning from the front with only a pool table when "everyone else brings TVs, fridges, and so on." This is an implicit critique of one of the often unspoken realities of war, where looting becomes another way in which privacy is invaded through the destruction of homes and property. But more generally, the film offers a stark critique of wartime reality during nationalist times, all the while maintaining focus on a group physically, as well as ideologically, seemingly removed from ethno-nationalist interpellation (and this includes Johnny, who seems to have fought in the war out of his own sociopathic inclinations rather than out of any kind of patriotic identification with the ethno-nation). With this, the film makes a statement about the way in which some bodies are too inappropriate to be interpellated into an ethno-nationalist discourse: two transvestite prostitutes that exist on the margins of society are literally too queer, their lives and uses of both time and place too far removed from convention to be hailed into a collective ethno-national subjectivity constituted as "healthy" through the violence it performs (Figure 3.2).

At the same time, this does not entail that Marilyn and Sanela are not affected by the reality around them in some important ways. For instance, they brush against the realities of wartime ethno-nationalism by the sheer fact that the nature of their work requires them to come into contact with those who might be interpellated as ethno-national subjects to a greater

Figure 3.2 Johnny and Marilyn in a queer time and place (*Marble Ass*)

extent than the two sex workers are. To that end, Marilyn claims that she does a kind of humanitarian work: counteracting the violence of the nation-state with the physical love and affection that she offers to her customers. And through this act, Marilyn actively challenges both the forms of love sanctioned by the nation and the forms of love toward the nation itself, the most normative of which is premised on the ethno-national economy of hate toward Others—that hate here literally enacted in the nearby war. Compared to that kind of aggressive ethno-national love (that is really hate at its core), Marilyn's is an affirmative, subversive act of re-appropriating an affective attachment of love in order to show that the violence of the nation has to be countered by acts that firmly dislocate the links between love and ethno-nation as the only way for love to exist. Thus again—similarly to the lesbian love in *Fine Dead Girls*—we have a queer subject who seems to be the carrier of loving feelings in a more reparative sense than the one mobilized around ethno-national collectivity engaged in a violent war.

This is where Marilyn and Johnny are very different—he comes back from the front determined to counter violence with more violence, perhaps because he is not able to fully escape the masculinist ideology that envelops his body, or to fully come to terms with the trauma that he has witnessed. Indeed, he embodies defeated masculinity, claiming that war emasculates men. At the same time, he is invested in perpetuating a masculine aura of

coolness. It is a telling dialectic in which the hyper-masculine man is at the same time the vulnerable, figuratively castrated man—and perhaps this is precisely why he has to enact masculinity to such an exaggerated, caricaturist extent: to mask the "emasculation" that war trauma has ushered in. From that perspective, the bodies of the transvestite prostitutes seem less vulnerable in their performance of gender and sexuality than Johnny's is in his performance of exaggerated manliness, for Johnny's masculinity is ultimately the cause of his demise, when he is killed by his billiard opponents, on the same table that he brought from the front and that his close friend was said to have died on as well. There is a cycle of violence being repeated here, one immersed in extreme performances of masculinity and closely tied to the kin performances of acceptable (male) ethno-national subjectivity. And similarly to *Fine Dead Girls*, men here are again depicted as incapable of fully embodying the ideal patriarchal masculinity—their performances always already destined to fail the ethno-nation.

Marilyn, who witnesses Johnny's demise but is spared herself, makes one last comment in the aftermath of this violence—and thus utters the last words spoken in the film. As she is walking away from the site of Johnny's death, and looking at his burning dead body, she rolls her eyes and says simply "Men . . . ," with a hint of annoyance and disbelief that masculinity would be enacted to such an extreme as to cost Johnny his life. Johnny attempted to channel normative masculinity, only to end up emasculated through his war trauma, and that is precisely why he needed to perish, his masculinity no longer a productive performance of a healthy ethno-national body. For Marilyn and Sanela, on the other hand, there is an opening for what might be deemed a hopeful end, albeit an affirmatively perverse one—for Marilyn, to keep on healing the collective national trauma by selling physical affection through sex and offering love to hyper-masculine and strung out men, and for Sanela, a queer marriage to another hyper-masculine figure: the nation's champion bodybuilder.

For both Sanela and Marilyn, this hopeful end exists in a queer time and place, since neither would be attainable should the frameworks of ethno-national heteronormativity unequivocally apply. But they do not apply in *Marble Ass* (there are virtually no characters whose lives exist outside of the queer time and place that the film sustains), and thus the film puts at the center the otherwise marginalized vision of queer temporality and spatiality to a larger extent than *Fine Dead Girls* does, with a provocative and unapologetic relentlessness of queer vision at that. It is almost as if the queer subjects are imbued with a rationality and practical thinking missing from other—more normative, "healthier"—members of the society. The film insists that queer bodies cannot be fully interpellated into an ideology of normative, violent ethno-national body, and thus the two transvestite

protagonists exist in their own seemingly parallel universe, albeit one that is nevertheless constituted by its proximity to the normative and violent nationalism that envelops the wartime reality around them.

In one final twist of tragic irony, however, Marilyn's claim that she is better off, and in a safer place than Johnny, does not come true, since Vjeran Miladinović, who plays Marilyn in the film, was found murdered several years after the film was made (the circumstances of the crime were never fully brought to light, and the main suspect was tried but subsequently acquitted of the murder). Sadly then, the queer time and place that the film envisions, one that is outside of the cycle of violence perpetuated by the ethno-national ideology, was proven to be unsustainable in life, where Marilyn was very much vulnerable to that kind of grave bodily invasion. *Marble Ass* therefore offers a hopeful vision of alterity, but one that is shattered by a violent act that ends the life of its queer subject in reality beyond the film—that same reality that the film works hard to recalibrate through a slanted approach to the mechanisms which code some bodies as more appropriate than others for being the carriers of ethno-national identity, and of the memory of ethno-national trauma alike.

Unlike most of the other films discussed in this chapter, *Marble Ass* functions firmly within the time and place of the margins that it, paradoxically, brings to the center of the screen. References to the world outside of this queer chronotope are rare—thereby, this marginalized group is implicitly made into a central collectivity for the process of working through the national war trauma (as Marilyn claims her sex work does). This is important because most other films discussed here deploy the dichotomy of queer desire as constrained and surveilled by the heteronormative gaze—such gaze does not seem to exist, and is thereby dismissed as the only channel of recognition, in *Marble Ass*. The next two films, *Take a Deep Breath* and *Go West*, on the other hand, articulate that queer desire/heteronormative gaze binary quite overtly, as they engage in a perpetuation of the division that some scholars have further deployed when writing about such films: where anything local is deemed hopelessly "backwards," and the so-called "First World" or "the West" are constituted as a "progressive" models to be followed at any cost.

Breathing Bodies, Sex, and Queer Self-Discovery in *Take a Deep Breath*

Serbia's *Take a Deep Breath* (Dragan Marinković 2004), a conventional cinematic drama, positions its central love story between two young women as a freeing alternative to the stifling atmosphere of controlling oppression of a society in transition. The leitmotif of breathing, referenced in the

title, is perpetually invoked as a metaphor for life itself, as when the lesbian couple engages in their first intimate contact, and the more free-spirited Lana tells Saša, after they kiss, that she is just checking if Saša is "breathing." The expression of queer desire is thus equated to the freedom of the body to breathe, or become alive, as it were, for the first time. At the same time, Saša, who is the more burdened of the two protagonists, refers at one point to their romance as "sick," thus perpetuating the theme of the sickness of queer desire as an alternative to the stifling health of the otherwise omnipresent heteronormativity. Their first encounter is staged as a moment in which Lana takes a picture of Saša before introducing herself. Lana is, therefore, immediately positioned as a seeing subject, one who is in charge more actively than Saša. Her subject position is closely linked in the film to her rootedness in Western Europe, as opposed to the tradition-burdened Balkans. But Lana also reveals her early trauma of being molested at 11 years old by one of her mother's lovers. The intimacy of sharing the story of this formative trauma brings Lana and Saša closer, as they become physically intimate soon after.

This omnipresent heteronormativity is yet again seen as a source of great oppression and unhappiness, most notably in the case of Saša's parents' unhappy heterosexual marriage. Saša's mother has an affair and subsequently leaves her husband for a younger lover, who saves her from dying (in a flashback, she is about to commit suicide just before she meets this younger man who brings her back to life—both figuratively and literally). For the mother, then, traditional constraints of a marriage that she feels stuck in are broken once she transgresses the boundaries of unwritten laws by having an affair with a younger man, and becomes much happier (or, in the film's terms, able to breathe again). Perhaps because of that reawakening of life, the mother is very accepting of her daughter's queerness, as they both, in different ways, transgress the boundaries within which female desire is policed and often forced into normative confines.

Saša's father Miloš, on the other hand, has a strongly negative reaction to Saša's lesbianism and attempts to interfere with his daughter's relationship by sending the police to arrest Lana, his daughter's lover. Miloš is a judge, and this proves to be a significant fact since he quite literally becomes the embodiment of the heterosexual laws that police desire as such. Yet, at the same time, he is shown to be a torn figure in his own right, since we discover through a series of flashbacks that he, too, has been harboring queer desire from a very young age, when he was seduced by an older boy in the orphanage that he grew up in. Miloš treats his queer desire as a literal illness and attempts to cure himself by taking medication for an unspecified heart disease, even though his heart is said to be healthy. For Saša, her father becomes the strongest obstructing force on her way to finding happiness

as a queer woman. During a heated argument between the two, Miloš asks Saša what she would do if he died, and she angrily responds with "Start breathing!" It is another reference to a bodily freedom enacted through breathing, as the freedom to remain sick, so to speak, is here directly linked to the perishing of the oppressive father figure and his heteronormative laws. But Miloš does not succeed in either suppressing his daughter's queerness or in denying his own queer desire, as the heart medicine that he has been self-prescribing fails in curing his "sickness." In the end, he is overcome by this imaginary sickness when he longingly watches his young male clerk taking a shower in the locker room after playing tennis. Miloš is so overwhelmed by desire in that moment that he falls ill and is taken to a hospital, where he later dies, although the doctors do not find anything physically wrong with him. It is the unfulfilled queer desire that kills him then, a "sickness" that he was not able to either cure or live with.

His daughter, on the other hand, embraces her "sick" romance (as she refers to it herself) as a freeing force from the general unhappiness that seems to be her life before she meets Lana. Her attitude toward sickness is that it is a welcome change from the supposed health that is her life, and the life of everyone around her, prior to her queer romance. It is the appearance of Lana, fresh from her decadent life in Paris (Western Europe here stereotypically positioned as a beacon of sexual freedom), that acts as a trigger for the undoing of Saša's general inhibition toward "breathing," and toward life. Therefore, contrary to her father's inability to embrace queer desire, Saša welcomes it fully, so much so that the discrepancy between her and Miloš becomes such that she inadvertently lets him die in front of her, since she does not believe that he was sick to begin with.

Crucially here, the free-spirited decadence that queer desire unlocks seems to be a direct import from Western Europe, and is depicted as a different kind of affective approach to life's transgressions, lighthearted and unburdened by traditional norms. Lana embodies the thusly conceived "Western free-spirit," as it were, as her life in Paris is referenced many times, pointed to as the main reason why she seems to be unconstrained in her pursuits of bodily pleasures. This way, the film creates a fairly reductive dichotomy between the seemingly hopelessly traditional, overburdened, and constrained Balkans, and the free-spirited, bodily liberating West (located in Western Europe in this case). This problematic setup is not uncommon in the discourses around LGBTQ rights in the former Yugoslavia, since they are almost without exception framed as an issue important for the regional nation-states reaching EU membership (Blagojević: 2011). LGBTQ rights are, then, taken to be a measure of a country's Europeanness, where such notions as progress or progressive values are never scrutinized as potentially controlling discourses of

civilizational progress in their own right. In that sense, we can talk about Western European homonationalism at play here: processes that imply a higher level of modernity in the West (or "the First World"), as opposed to Eastern Europe (sometimes referred to as "the Second World"), or the Balkans. Such binaries are premised on very narrow, and Western-centric understandings of freedom, visibility, and acceptance to begin with, understandings that actively elide local histories of both queer visibility and queer desire (Mizielinska & Kulpa: 2011). *Take a Deep Breath* goes a step further from merely setting up, or reiterating, the dichotomy of the intolerant Balkans versus the tolerant, progressive Europe, and makes queer romance virtually unattainable on the territory of the thusly framed backwards Balkans. At the end of the film, Lana returns to Paris, as she is frustrated with having to face too many hurdles toward expressing her queer desire in Belgrade, and Saša is abandoned, seen in the film's final scene bungee-jumping alone, when earlier in the film, she did the same free-fall exercise in tandem with Lana. Similarly, Saša's mother leaves Serbia as well, moving to Vienna to start a new life with her younger lover. And Saša's best friend, the sexually ambiguous Bojan, leaves Serbia too, in pursuit of higher education in the West. Through all these stories of departure, leaving Serbia—and by extension the Balkans, or Eastern Europe—is seen as the only way to indeed start breathing. Yet Saša stays put, lonely but possibly hopeful that things might change after all. The "staying put" is often conceived as a less desirable outcome for a queer subject, where departure to a more metropolitan or accepting environment is seen as a better promise of happiness. But, as Halberstam has argued, "we must consider the condition of 'staying put' as part of the production of complex queer subjectivities. Some queers need to leave home in order to become queer, and others need to stay close to home in order to preserve their difference" (2005: 27). The fact remains, however, that in this particular film, transgressions of normative, unwritten laws about sexuality, gender identity, and marital fidelity seem to be only temporarily available, and ultimately unattainable to a more persistent degree at home, because Serbia, and the region by extension, are presented as a land of unchangingly traditionalist character. As opposed to *Fine Dead Girls*, this film does not position ethnonational collectivity as exercising oppressive biopower during tumultuous times, but rather locates the oppression firmly within the tradition as such, while Western Europe is positioned as progressive and permissive. It is the establishment of that inflexible civilizing binary that prevents the film from offering a more sustained vision of queer desire that would be localized but not extensively simplified through reduction. As is the case here, queer desire is simply impossible in such a rigidly constructed view of unchanging, by implication inherently oppressive traditions. This approach too

quickly forecloses more insightful understandings of local queer histories as productive (even when not normatively visible) in their own right, not just in a rigid juxtaposition to heteronormativity. In the next section, I look at another queer-themed film that actively enacts such East/West, homo/hetero binaries, but this time, queer desire is not placed away from national collectivity, war, and conflict, but instead directly within it.

War, Men, and Masquerade: *Go West* and Queer Vision of Alterity

Ahmed Imamović's *Go West* (2005, Bosnia-Herzegovina) is the only film discussed in this chapter whose events take place directly in war. It is a story about a gay couple, a Bosnian Serb Milan and a Bosniak Muslim Kenan, who try to escape Bosnia at the start of the war in order to save their lives and their (secret) love. When they are unable to leave, Milan disguises Kenan into a woman and takes him to his Serbian village, introducing him as Milena. Soon after, Milan is drafted into the Bosnian Serb army, and Kenan is left to live in drag, with his father-in-law Ljubo. When a local eccentric, Ranka, finds out that Kenan/Milena is a man, she forces him to have an affair with her. Toward the end of the film, Milan is killed at the front, and Ranka, in a jealous rage because Kenan does not love her the same way he loves Milan, castrates Kenan and reveals his drag to Milan's father Ljubo. But Ljubo, instead of being upset at finding out the truth, becomes even more determined to save his daughter/son-in-law Kenan, by sending him to Western Europe with false papers. Thus, Kenan's life is saved, and he lives to tell his story to the Western audiences—the film is bookended by Kenan's French TV interview with Jeanne Moreau, in which he recalls the events of the story as one long flashback. Thus, similarly to *Fine Dead Girls*, the film's story is constructed through the prism of traumatic memory of the surviving member of the queer couple (Kenan notes to Moreau: "When the war is over, different ethnic groups will like each other again, but they will always hate queers.")

More than being a film about a gay love story, *Go West* seems to be about the ways in which identity becomes a reductive category during the times of war. This has the effect of situating the film's seemingly rigid approach to violent heteronormativity firmly within the tumultuous time of a bloody ethnic war, an approach that arguably resolves some of the potentially more problematic aspects of such rigidity. As the film insists, a brutal ethnic war brings about an obsessive awareness of people's ethnic belonging as the central way in which their identity matters. Furthermore, ethnicity seems to be inscribed as a bodily trait so much so that the Serbs in the film use the body as the most precise identifying mechanism: examining male bodies and discovering Bosniak men through the fact that the latter are

circumcised. When Milan and Kenan face such a test, Milan passes, as he is proven to be legitimately a Serb by the look of his genitalia, while Kenan survives because of his drag—he is never checked as he is presumed to be a woman. Thus, ethnicity becomes an embodied prison of sorts, an identity that is imposed on bodies themselves, and the only way to escape the grave danger caused by belonging to the wrong ethnic group is to engage in a masquerade by which one manipulates their bodily appearance, as well as their sexual and gender identity, in order to mask or recalibrate their ethnic belonging. Sex and gender are, therefore, yet again revealed as not only related to, but, moreover, also constitutive of the ways in which ethnicity is perceived and policed.

Kevin Moss (2012) has argued that *Go West* is not about gay love per se, but rather uses its homosexual characters to pose a critique of wartime nationalism in general. This is true inasmuch as the film spends very little time on the intricacies of queer desire and completely shies away from depicting gay sex, while heterosexual sex is prominently displayed (albeit in a somewhat queer form, especially in the scenes between Kenan/Milena in drag penetrating Ranka from behind). Less interested in spending time with the queer affect that circulates between Milan and Kenan, the film concentrates more on the troubles of bodily identity and passing, as well as on the practicalities required for surviving. More than anything, the film seems to be involved in diagnosing the ways in which wartime nationalism feeds the obsession with reductive identity organized around the axis of ethnicity, but nevertheless affecting gender and sexuality. But because most of the characters in the film suffer, so to speak, from various forms of excess, their identities are accordingly unable to be reduced to a single ethnic or any other entity. Be it sexual (Milan), gender (Kenan), sexualized (Ranka), expatriotized (Ljubo), excess of identity acts as a form of inoculation that prevents their full immersion into the madness of ethno-nationalism. Similarly to the protagonists of *Marble Ass*, they are too inappropriate to become fully assimilated into the nationalist fold that surrounds them. This is emphasized by Kenan's statement to Jeanne Moreau's French journalist: "In the Balkans, it is easier to have a family member who is a murderer than one who is a fag." Apart from its blatant self-Balkanizing that implies hopeless backwardness, unspoken here is the context in which this statement might be true, and that context is war, since at times of war, the act of killing is sanctioned by the state, while sexuality remains strictly policed and typically forced into heteronormative iterations. In that context, it indeed seems to be true that during an ethnic war, being a killer is deemed a more productive performance of acceptable ethno-national belonging than being gay. By exposing this interpolation between the nation and wartime violence, *Go West* delineates a clear connection

Figure 3.3 A "traditional" queer wedding (*Go West*, screen grab)

between the performance of sexual/gender identity and the construction of normative ethnicity during the times of violent wartime upheaval. Yet nevertheless, that statement by Kenan reiterates the problematic notion of the violently backwards Balkans, especially when the context of its utterance is taken: a Paris-based talk show intended for the sympathetic Western European audiences. Indeed, the film trades in stereotypes to arrive at its adulterated critique of nationalist madness. Its conventional film language, however, largely cannot sustain effective envisioning of queer desire (Figure 3.3).

Even though it was promoted as, first and foremost, a film about homosexual love, I want to suggest that *Go West*'s central character is neither half of the gay couple, but rather Milan's father Ljubo, a Serb who refuses to play into the expected matrix of Serbian nationalist masculinity, and puts on a performance of masquerade in his own right, by steeping himself into the iconography of the American Western frontier. He looks like a stereotypical cowboy, and his village tavern is set up in the style of a frontier saloon. We learn that Ljubo lived and worked in the American West for many years, and thus the iconography that he plays into is logically explained to a certain extent—he has seen places that are less volatile than the Balkans. But this iconography becomes much more than a mere import of Western taste dispositions—it acts as a re-appropriation of Western iconicity toward differently positioned (oftentimes inadvertently political) goals. Moreover, Ljubo does not share, perhaps because of his expatriate position, the nationalist views of his fellow Serbs in the village: he does not think that "only" Bosniaks and Croats should be exterminated

from Bosnia—rather, he believes that Serbs should be exterminated too, and that Bosnia should "finally become inhabited by some normal people, who would be able to appreciate this beauty." This radical view held by Ljubo speaks, somewhat comically, not only to the absurdity of *any* ethnonationalist politics, but also to the absurdity of clinging to violence when there is beauty to be enjoyed in the world, pure and simple.

The film thus gives us two different forms of male masquerade as ways to escape ethno-nationalist interpellation. Kenan disguises in drag in order to mask his ethnic identity and thus survive and become married to his lover Milan, while Ljubo engages in playing a cowboy from the mythically envisioned American West in order to avoid being a part of the mythologizing that is happening closer to home—that of the supremacy of the Serbian nation which informed the project of ethnic cleansing. Kenan's queerness can be sustained only while his ethnicity and sex remain hidden or masqueraded. Ljubo resists the masculinist national myth that is around him by adopting one that is more distant and therefore less invasive and threatening in his immediate context. Both respective forms of masquerade are put to the test when Milan, Kenan's lover and Ljubo's son, is killed: indeed, Kenan's masquerade falls apart, and he is exposed as a man by Ranka, who castrates him in a violent rage. With his drag exposed, his sexual identity is invaded with grave injury, as he is punished by castration for not accepting the offer of heteronormative love by Ranka. Ljubo, on the other hand, channels his rage about Milan's death by dismissing the calls to encapsulate that death into a nationalist framework through giving Milan a religious funeral. Instead, he physically and verbally attacks the figure of the most extreme nationalist prominence in the village, the Serbian Orthodox priest, who is subsequently banned from Milan's funeral altogether. This way, Ljubo poignantly points a finger toward nationalist indoctrination, supported by church, as the most contributing factor to his son's death. For Ljubo, it is nationalism that killed his son, not enemy soldiers. This understanding makes him more determined to save what he has left of Milan—namely, his lover—even when he finds out that Milena is actually Kenan. Without hesitation, he arranges to send the wounded Kenan off to safety ("Go West!"), with the money he had saved from his American days. Ljubo then commits suicide, as he sees no reason to maintain his anti-nationalist cowboy masquerade any longer, his only son killed by nationalism and by war. Non-normative masculinities, therefore, yet again seem to be unable to survive at a time of Balkan war. At the same time, however, normative nationalist masculinity is coded here as self-destructive, fraught, and unattainable even more so. Those who refuse to perform it would rather die, or "go West," than succumb to it, while those who do perform it, die as a result of accepting participation in a bloody

conflict. In that sense, even though problematically positioned vis-à-vis the East/West, backward/progressive binary, *Go West* makes at least one significant intervention into the mechanics of wartime identity interpellation: it captures the sense that subjectivities informed by various forms of desire act in excess of the singularly imposed ethno-sexual identities in the name of which such wars are typically fought.

Queering Ethno-National Trauma

I now turn to the question of how the trauma of being queer in an incessantly heteronormative context becomes closely tied to the cultural memory of war and upheaval, whereby war itself becomes an object of queer memory. It needs to be acknowledged that the starting point here is an understanding that, in its most recognizable iterations, war trauma has distinctly heteronormative overtones—from women's bodies victimized by men through mass rape (where the existence of sexual assault on men is all but suppressed), to the encoding of war as a distinctly masculine experience altogether, as I have discussed in Chapter 2. Trauma in this regard has many valences. For instance, the collective trauma of a nation's emergence, inasmuch as any such emergence is inevitably traumatic (Cvetkovich 2003), is not available to just anyone. Collective national trauma (as the founding experience of national identity) can be claimed only by those national subjects who otherwise enact acceptable forms of citizenship—in the post-Yugoslav context, those forms are still strictly heterosexual and encoded as ethnically pure. Moreover, the trauma of national emergence is here not related merely to some mythical past (even though the elements of myth are often called upon, as I show in Chapter 4), but rather centers on the recent traumatic memory that emerged around the Yugoslav successor wars. For most local ethno-national collectivities, the trauma of emergence into a nation-state is still a fresh memory called upon to further delineate borders that divide. Used this way, trauma gets implicated in the perpetuation of the national(ist) myths of entitlement: because we are traumatized as a young ethno-nation, we perform violent forms of policing the sovereignty of our national body, in the name of preventing further traumatization and solidifying our borders that are simultaneously new and trans-historical. This mobilization of the trauma of emergence translates into a call toward inflicting a different kind of trauma onto others in the name of preventing one's own collective body from being on the receiving end of further harm. Žižek (2000) claims that this is one of the driving forces of ethno-nationalism as entitlement: nationalism gives its citizens the pseudo-freedom to perform atrocities sanctioned in the name of dedication to the nation.

In the films discussed here, these "freedoms" of the collective ethno-national body are pitted against an alternative mode of being in the world, a queer way of understanding precarious wartime and post-wartime reality. No matter how potentially inauthentic as queer texts they might be for some, their depiction of a different kind of affective investment—queer love toward another during wartime—dislocates the primacy of love toward the ethno-nation as the central affect that is to be invested in during ethnic conflicts. And with that, queer love temporarily challenges stable notions of ethnicity as much as it undoes heteronormativity. And even though national trauma is not fully accessible for appropriation to queer protagonists, they are nevertheless impacted, even formed by it, or rather, formed by their marginal(ized) proximity to the trauma of ethno-national emergence. This is a queer approach to national trauma: sideways if you will, as opposed to the direct consideration of the ways in which trauma becomes a commodity traded and circulated within society's dominant structures as a means to claim legitimacy, or legitimize atrocities. This queer approach sees trauma lodged at the nexus where the heteronormative ethno-nation meets its counterpart in a queer form of desire, and that desire has the potential to recalibrate both our understanding of what an ethno-nation is and how it assimilates trauma into ideology.

Cvetkovich has argued that more work needs to be done in exploring the ways in which trauma both forms and informs articulations of lesbian identity—I expand this call to include considerations of the way that trauma in/forms queer identity more generally, especially in relation to the emergence of nations as heteronormative formations in conflict and post-conflict times. In *Marble Ass* in particular, such considerations rest on the premise that to be queer means to be able to access national trauma—and likewise, claims to national identity—only laterally, sideways, or from a slant, to use Ahmed's spatial metaphors. But instead of being a site of lacking, this lateral orientation is treated as a much more productive, effective approach to belonging to a national collectivity during ethno-national/ist (war) times. National citizenship is thus recalibrated into a formation that could use a dose of the affirmatively queer unhealthy, if only to counter the sanitizing insistence on health as an appropriate metaphor for performing ethno-hetero-nationally.

This metaphor of health is particularly prominent in Slovenia's *Varuh meje* (*The Guardian of the Frontier*, Maja Weiss 2002), which follows the story of three women, two of them bisexual, on a rafting trip during which they encounter (at times supernatural) events that overtly focus on the question of the relationship between nation and sexuality. In this film that, like *Fine Dead Girls*, contains horror genre overtones, queerness is positioned as a transgression of the boundary that defines a nation, and is

equated with the issues of immigration, whereby being queer and being an immigrant are both viewed by the Slovenian nationalists as equally dangerous to the health of the Slovenian nation-state. The threatening and mysterious male figure who follows the women on their trip, and appears in many identity guises, embodies the patriarchal border guard who polices the boundaries of acceptable for the sake of national health. Gordana Crnković argues that "both in his actions and his speech, the 'border guard' embodies a potent fusion of nationalist, gender, and sexuality re-figurations that have appeared in post-independence Slovenian culture and politics, separating outsiders (foreigners, 'non-traditional' women, homosexuals), from 'real Slovenes' " (2014: 229). The queer or non-gender conforming women are thus foreign elements to the Slovenian society as much as the Asian immigrants seen illegally crossing the river to Slovenia are. When the girls cross the river themselves, albeit in the other direction, to go to further east, to Croatia, they discover that queerness seems to be more accepted and freely practiced "over there," in this eastern neighboring country, which has, by that point in the film, been positioned as a point of ridicule by Slovenian youth, as a land of backwardness and war. Therefore, queerness in *The Guardian of the Frontier*, unlike in some of the other films discussed here, is not positioned as a decidedly Western occurrence—since Slovenian nationalism positions Slovenia itself as a Western country—but rather a behavior practiced in the "backwards" East, here located in war-torn Croatia. This backward East is a site of violence, war, and sexual transgression alike, and with this, the film locates queerness as a side effect of the breaking down of other civilized behaviors such as peace and order. *The Guardian* shows how within Slovenia's nationalism, queerness is treated as a foreign element, and displaced onto a different territory, but one that is imbued with war and trauma, as if to speculate that there is a close connection between being queer and being otherwise traumatized through a violent conflict.

Perhaps we can extend this notion of cinema's queering of trauma further, and view it not only as an informative approach to alternative forms of affective investments during wartime, but moreover, as potentially *constitutive* of the particular shapes that local queer identities have taken in the postwar reality of people with non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. In this consideration of queer trauma, as attached sideways to the collective trauma of ethno-national emergence, queer subjectivities would not have to perpetually be legitimized through comparisons with their Western counterparts (an argument that plays into the conservative complaints that homosexual orientation is but a Western import, while it also erases much of the local queer specificity), but would rather be allowed to be positioned very locally and idiosyncratically, as orientations

framed through the recent history of trauma as much as their heterosexual counterparts are. If war and national crises police and frame sexuality in particular ways, the resulting trauma cannot but affect any sexual being, the orientation of their sexuality notwithstanding. This way, the trauma of recent warring years becomes constitutive of what it means to be locally queer in post-conflict times, as much as it constitutes the articulations of heterosexuality itself.

It is these very specificities of what it means to be locally queer in conflict and post-conflict times that are often missing in the discourses around the LGBTQ rights in the region altogether (since they quickly turn into the narratives about European values, modernity, the EU integrations, and so on). Perhaps that is why it is all the more important to note exceptions to this rule—cinematic instances in which local specificities of being queer come to the fore, as a way to shape the emerging cultural memory of collective trauma. *Marble Ass* is certainly one such significant and transformative cultural text, because it insists on a vision of being queer that is idiosyncratically local and inextricably bound to the context of its existence: the violent time of war in which ethno-nation acts as an embodiment of hate disguised as love. Moreover, *Marble Ass* insists—formally, visually, and plot-wise—on a dislocation of traumatic memory from its otherwise dominant heteronormative mold, as it offers a sustained vision of a queer, and queerly traumatized chronotope that is nevertheless closely tied to the ethno-national collectivity, albeit sideways. But even in the (conditionally speaking) less accomplished visions of queer locality, some temporary shimmers of its specificity come through, as, for instance, in a scene in *Take a Deep Breath* in which Saša abruptly stops Lana from telling her shocked father Miloš that the two women had had sex the night before. Saša angrily tells Lana: "This is not Paris, we don't tell our parents who we fucked last night!" to which Lana responds with: "If you all did tell, maybe you wouldn't be this fucked up!" Aside from it being another attempt at implying that it would be "healthier" to mimic the Western practices of enacting sexuality—in this particular case by openly telling one's parents about one's sex life, as they, by implication, do in Paris (and here, Foucault's repressive hypothesis could be used as a way to critique the assumption that openly speaking about something automatically implies less repression)—this exchange could be read in yet another way. It could be seen as Saša vocalizing a very local form of being queer (that does not include a claim to "gay identity" per se—indeed, in their exchange, Saša claims: "I'm not gay!"). Thus, local queer subjectivity does not take the moment of "coming out of the closet" to be its inescapably constitutive or legitimizing event. In that sense, the representation of lesbian desire echoes here Imre's claim that in the context of post-Socialism

> [D]iscourses and images of lesbianism are neither foreign nor native but, precisely, always in the process of foregrounding and rendering artificial the boundaries between the two. Lesbian representations now make visible how nationalism is constituted in relation to sexualized discourses and images of the foreign and the global, and, conversely, how popular media flows deemed 'global' are re-embedded and localized within the powerful discursive and institutional channels of nationalism.
>
> (2013: 224)

With respect to the Western queer trope of coming out of the closet, Martin Manalansan (2003) has critiqued the notion that it must be seen as a universal occurrence, a milestone "officialization" for any queer person, anywhere. Manalansan argues that the concept of coming out is, instead, a distinctly culture-specific notion that plays directly into the decidedly Western-modernist meta-narratives of self-realization and individualism attached to visibility and metaphors of voice. Contrary to what the fetishizing of coming out implies—that one is not legitimately queer until they declare themselves openly as such—Manalansan shows that there exist queer communities where queerness is organized around an alternative form of modernity in which silences are valued more than verbal declarations. Moreover, Cvetkovich has argued that the demands for equal rights, gay marriage, and other forms of anti-homophobic legislation "assume a gay citizen whose affective fulfillment resides in assimilation, inclusion and normalcy" (2003: 11). Influenced by such non-normativizing approaches to queerness, which seek to reinstate a sense of anti-redemptive transgression that does not need to be assimilated into acceptable scripts of legitimacy (marriage, visibility, acceptability), I want to suggest that Saša's angry reaction nods toward a similar kind of local specificity of sexual identity in general, and queerness in particular. It is quite possible that Saša does not want to be visibly legitimized through coming out and that she wishes to be queer without having to declaratively denominate herself as "gay," particularly if silences provide not only safety from harm, but also less exposure to the confining norms around her. Silences around queer practices become all the more pivotal in the contexts such as this post-conflict one, where sexual identity is sometimes policed to a distinctly violent extent. This is, indeed, why most of the queer characters are not given "gay" or "lesbian" labels in the films that I discuss here: virtually none of them profess their sexual identity declaratively, perhaps as a testament that in their occasionally problematic representations, some of the local specificity does come through after all, through silences and practices, rather than through words and through visibility. It appears that for many of these characters, declaring queer identity need not be the only way of embodying one.

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the one film in which such identity categories are persistently applied is arguably the least queer film—Srđan Dragojević's mainstream comedy *Parada* (*Parade* 2011, Serbia). It purports to depict the efforts of the LGBTQ community in Serbia to organize a Gay Pride march (a Western script of queer legitimization in its own right), but its central character is a war veteran and an excessively masculine homophobe Limun, whose journey from prejudice to eventual friendship with, and protection of several gays and lesbians during their Pride walk mark the key narrative arc in the film. The audience is here rarely invited to identify with the queer characters—they are, more or less, stereotypical caricatures that serve as comic relief, and as narrative devices that illuminate Limun's struggles to adjust to the changing times in which queer visibility is an ever greater reality. To that end, Marija Grujić asks whether *Parade* could be understood as a Serbian version of Philadelphia (or, as she deems it, "a turbo-folk Philadelphia"), inasmuch as it placates rather than challenges its audience. In *Parade*, Grujić argues, the placating takes place through a series of "ethnically-motivated burlesque sketches" (2012: 180). The film is, indeed, mostly a comedy, although, in true Vito Russo fashion, it ends tragically for the queer couple. At the same time, it frequently mocks normative masculinity, starting with its opening scene in which we see Limun taking a shower, as the camera pans across his many tattoos: some from the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), some apparently from prison, some from the more recent war frontlines, all representing different eras of normative masculinity as it becomes inscribed on the male body itself. Limun's exaggerated masculine aesthetics border on the absurd to such an extent that at times he becomes *the* over the top, masquerading, and somewhat queer figure in the film. At the same time, the gay couple—Radmilo and Mirko—reflects two opposing poles when it comes to the politics of LGBTQ activism in the region. While Mirko is actively involved in organizing the Pride, his partner Radmilo actively believes that public exposure for the queer community is an unnecessary thing as it raises many concerns about safety. Radmilo eventually gives in and, with the help of his new "friend" Limun (who acts under the "orders" of his fiancé), recruits a team of pan-Yugoslav tough guys (all former war veterans of different ethnic sides) to act as security detail during the Pride. In this absurdly comic turn, the Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin, and Albanian former enemies are united in their masculinities to defend the queers against the right-wing extremism during their Pride walk. Jasna Koteska argues that Dragojević's film persistently undermines the democratic efforts as non-violent communication and thus "strengthens the ideal of the violent Balkan masculinity" (2012: 116).[3] I view the film as more ambivalent and torn than decisive in this respect. While Grujić asks: "why is a film

about gays and lesbians actually a film about those who are their main threat?" (190–1), the answer might be more ambivalent than merely problematic. Namely, the premise of a united, trans-ethnic, and excessively masculine security detail is an intervention, however comic and ultimately non-subversive, into the normative positioning of the masculinist war veteran as a guard *against* queer presence. Here, war veterans guard that very presence, aiding its greater visibility, however temporary that visibility may be. Thus, the film performs a shift, starting with the introduction in which titles defining derogatory terms commonly used in the region are displayed: "Chetnik—derogatory for Serbs, used by Croats, Bosniaks, Albanians; Ustasha—derogatory for Croats, used by Serbs, Bosniaks and Albanians; Balija—derogatory for Bosniaks, used by Serbs, Croats and Albanians; Shiptar—derogatory for Albanians, used by Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Peder—derogatory for a homosexual person, used by *everyone*." This humorous but pointed lexical introduction into the politics of derogatory language points out an important commonality. Whoever the ethnic Other is and however arbitrarily those divisions apply, queer subject is here a uniting Other for all ethnic groups, equally despised by all nationalist ideologies in the region. This is why *Parade*'s turn of events represents a significant reversal of sorts: introduced as bigots in the beginning, these various representatives of normative ethnic masculinities of war veterans eventually become united in defending a group of queers as a way to reaffirm that very masculinity. The seeming incommensurability of these elements might suggest that they are by default understood to be too static and non-situational than they are in practice. Certainly, the veterans' change of heart does not occur out of newly discovered altruism (except perhaps for Limun, who has a change of heart during the course of the film), but rather out of their own mutual history of buddy-relations (homoerotic in their own right) and favors they owe each other from the war. Their impulse to defend the LGBTQ population is thus motivated by a masculinist sense of brotherhood and solidarity (Koteska 2012) more so than by a conviction that LGBTQ groups should be defended per se. Hence, the Pride is staged as a moment of visibility for pan-Yugoslav masculinities in solidarity after wartime more so than as meaningful visibility for the LGBTQ group. However, the mutual connectivities between masculinity, sexuality, and ethnic identity are here nevertheless important to note (Figure 3.4).

In terms of its representation of queer characters, *Parade* trades in stereotypes more than depth. Queer love seems to be entirely platonic as there is no physical desire depicted between queer couples. Its one relevant depiction of the dynamics of a queer couple has to do with their differing attitudes toward LGBTQ activism. Yet, even though Radmilo relents

Figure 3.4 A trans-ethnic security detail (*Parade*, screen grab)

and helps Mirko organize the Pride, thereby admitting that Mirko's belief that a fight for greater visibility might be an important step, during the actual Pride the group is violently attacked by hooligans, and even though the security detail does their best, they are not able to defend everyone. Mirko—the greatest proponent of the Pride and the most activist-minded queer character in the film—is the one who gets beaten the most and dies as a result. Thus, he is punished for his belief in the importance of visibility and pays the ultimate price. And yet again, the queer couple ends tragically in order to serve as a device of social critique. In the end, we see Radmilo carrying Mirko's picture and proudly walking in a much bigger Pride, together with Limun and his fiancé, and the implication seems to be that Mirko did not give his life for nothing, and that visibility is being achieved after all.

But that visibility remains an open question: how effective is it and to whom? And, does a successful Pride really reflect significant, meaningful social change? It appears that in recent developments when it comes to the LGBTQ rights in the region, Pride marches have become increasingly understood as the only legitimate measure of visibility. Other forms of public prominence—such as queer visual culture, or queer film festivals (one of which—held annually in Belgrade—is dedicated to the memory of Marilyn, the protagonist of *Marble Ass*)—seem to be relegated to the domain of secondary importance in this scenario. After a Pride held in Belgrade in 2010 (the one that *Parade* depicts at the end)—in which 2,000 marchers were protected by 5,000 police—right-wing hooligans demolished the city and clashed with the police for hours, thereby challenging the notion that the walk for LGBTQ rights was entirely successful if it was held under such dire circumstances and with such material consequences. Perhaps then, more prominence should be given to queer and queer-themed

visual culture as a legitimate device of not only representation, but also of *recognition* in its own right. As Imre argues, the existence of various kinds of provocative "media work by lesbians and feminists in postcommunist countries provide testimonies to the impossibility of choosing between third- and first-world affiliations, between theory and activism, between the combative and the performative" (2007: 154–5). I want to add that in order for it to be an effective kind of intervention into the problematic modes of marginalization, local LGBTQ struggle needs to remain at least partially unaffiliated to any other reductively constructed "worlds," but rather imbued with considerations of its own local specificities instead, even when such specificities are informed by the transnational flows of ideas and people alike. For instance, in the local context, this means paying particular attention to the valences of queer trauma as both constituted by and constitutive of the public cultures centered around the collective traumas of national emergence, as reflected through the recent ethnic wars. Moreover, that implies a closer inspection of some of the themes that the films discussed above point to: namely, how the history of marginalization based on sexual orientation is closely connected to, and often directly dependent on the histories of other forms of social marginalization—ethnic, gendered, racial, classed, and so on. This link is humorously hinted at in *Parade*, when the police chief explains to the Pride organizers why having their walk would not be a good idea: "If we give you, fags and lesbians, human rights, then everyone else will ask for them too." This quote, as deadpan as it lands in the film, reflects an important issue of the connection between the LGBTQ rights and the rights of other marginalized groups. This link cannot be neglected nor easily dismissed, as marginalization of seemingly different kinds often drives the same politics of normativity, be it national, ethnic, gender, sexual, or other. In other words, considerations about local LGBTQ rights cannot be entirely divorced from considerations of the rights of other minority groups—yet such struggles are often kept in strictly separate spheres of cultural and social activism, and therefore perhaps remain unresolvable.

In the mainstream cinematic representations of queer bodies and queer desire within the post-conflict, post-Yugoslav region, we have yet to see a happy ending in which a queer couple might see a more promising futurity. While all the unhappy endings reflect a certain rootedness in grim reality and act as devices of social critique, the fact remains that none of the queer-themed films discussed here linger on, or allow for too many happy moments for their queer protagonists. To be queer is thus still to be inevitably tragic, a positionality filled with deprivation and threat more so than with pleasure or joy. Perhaps a greater intervention in the politics of representing and recognizing queer desire would then be to insist

on *jouissance* over tragedy, on pleasure experienced outside of the familiar frames of representation, as that would create a counter-image to the persistent conviction that to be locally queer is to inevitably be confined to doom.

In its interplay with traumatic memory, queer desire becomes an unnerving presence that exposes the valances which link sexuality to ethno-national identity in its normative formations. And with that, the potential that the presence, however fleeting, of queer desire on the post-conflict cinematic screen carries is important to acknowledge: that potential is of a dislocation of the firm coupling between heteronormativity and trauma to collectivizing ends, whereby participation in the ethno-national imaginary (imagined as inevitably traumatized) is no longer guaranteed only for those who enact acceptable forms of hetero-desire. In its most basic form, queer trauma in post-Yugoslav mainstream cinema articulates a dislocated memory of war that refuses traditional understandings of sexual difference and gender roles to be its defining frameworks of interpretation. Instead, queer trauma becomes an axis around which different, alternative memories are projected—memories of a double bind: of traumas of war and of the harm inflected onto those who dare to love differently and against the grain. Regardless of their many shortcomings either as films or as (in)authentic queer interventions into the existent cultural narratives about non-normative sexualities, all duly noted by other scholars, I wish to return once again to the importance of that basic element of having queer desire be the organizing axis of the representational frame—narrative, aesthetic, affective, and political at the same time: the element of staging a different kind of encounter between two bodies within the context of post-Yugoslav, post-conflict culture that is typically filled, to an overwhelming extent, with images and memories of hateful heteronormative encounters premised on traditional binary divisions. And in that context, suddenly a dislocated love story appears: an encounter between bodies that embrace a different approach to what it means to be healthy, productive, and happy, and what it means to love. The importance of registering such queer dislocated screen memories extends beyond considerations of sexuality and sexuality only, and far beyond the cinematic screen. Such cultural memories have the potential to offer significant roadblocks for further utilizations of love as a weapon of hate, making it into a channel of hope instead.

4

Post-Yugoslav Heritage Cinema and the Futurity of Nostalgia

In her work on the links between memory and the past, Annette Kuhn has noted that "the past is unavoidably rewritten, revised, through memory. And memory is partial: things get forgotten, misremembered, repressed" (1995: 184). Memory is constructed through cinema in multifold ways. Sometimes it is an indirect effect of giving the spectator "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 2004), whereby one acquires, through cinema, inauthentic memories of events that were never organic to the spectator's life, and therefore represent an artificial, prosthetic extension of one's own, more organic forms of intimate remembering. At other times, cinema engages in a self-reflexive task of addressing the very question of what memory, cinematic and otherwise, is, typically by having its protagonists tackle the challenges of memory's (un)reliability. Moreover, there are those screen memories that speak directly to the sense of collective belonging of a community by way of tapping into an imagined, or mythical, past. The construction of such past is often premised on a sense of common ethnic or national belonging, and more than representing a detached form of inorganic, prosthetic memory that is not a part of a spectator's lived experience, this form of screen memory might be perceived as an organic, trans-historical enactment of collective remembering that makes a community (and reality) into what it is. This chapter looks at one such trend od remembering in post-Yugoslav cinema, which has, in particular, brought about various iterations and utilizations of a structure of feelings that commonly thrives during a time of national upheaval—that of nostalgia for a distant collective past. This nostalgia, far-reaching in its articulations, is far from being a singular or one-dimensional occurrence and extends into various trajectories of looking into the past—sometimes

distant, sometimes more recent. For instance, for some former Yugoslavs, as Dubravka Ugrešić argues, nostalgia for the multiethnic Yugoslavia (a structure of feelings typically referred to as "Yugo-nostalgia") is often a politically sensitive affective state because it goes against the rule of ethno-nationalist pride (1996). Nostalgia, therefore, can have political overtones, their effect depending on what kind of romanticized past one is yearning for (or whether that past is romanticized to begin with). This popular Yugo-nostalgic longing for the land of "brotherhood and unity" is often countered by a very different kind of nostalgia, one rooted in the very ethno-nationalisms that brought Yugoslavia to its end, as this latter form of nostalgia seeks to evoke a sense of mythical ethno-national belonging rooted in trans-historical national purity informed by suffering and perseverance. The tension between these two structures of feelings is precisely why nostalgia is never a "mere" affect rooted in escapism, but rather has overt political implications that use the past to orient one in the present and toward the future. In the various present-day re-imaginings of the past, the complexities within which such reconstructions are taking place always influence the form and use that nostalgia might have. Or, as Halbwachs has argued in his writing on nostalgia for the past, "even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu" (1992: 49). He asks a probing question: "Is it not strange then that society causes the mind to transfigure the past to the point of yearning for it?" (51). The social milieu within which such yearning takes place cannot be viewed only as an objective context that frames memory but does not influence it—quite the opposite, present-day social milieu is a framework that limits, structures, or otherwise shifts collective memory in ways that serve a specific purpose. Drawing perhaps too clear a binary that separates the collective memory of multiethnic Yugoslavia from the ethno-national memories of different ethnic groups that comprised it, Ugrešić nevertheless makes an important point about the political uses of memory and argues that "with the collapse of multinational Yugoslavia, the process began of confiscating the Yugoslav collective memory and its replacement by the construct of national memory" (34). And while this ethno-national memory has undoubtedly become the dominant form of collective identification post-Yugoslavia, through her own reflections and through the stories of others, Ugrešić shows how the memory of Yugoslavia (and with it, the performance of Yugo-nostalgia) is alive and well, albeit seemingly delegated to a minority, and to private feelings and spaces where such memory can perhaps be nurtured as a reparative counterpoint to the divisive memories of national myths. In the time since Ugrešić first wrote her essay in the 1990s, however, Yugo-nostalgia has become a more prominent public feeling, overtaking physical spaces (in the form of bars or restaurants saturated with Yugoslav paraphernalia, for instance), emerging

as a political stance, and moreover, mass mediated and commercialized (Volčić 2007).

Charity Scribner theorizes nostalgia as one of the prevalent modes of remembering in post-communist countries, along with mourning, melancholia, and disavowal. Nostalgia for communism is therefore not a uniquely post-Yugoslav occurrence and has been present, as so-called "Ostalgia," in the cinemas of other Eastern European countries (Scribner 2003).[1] As Pavičić argues with respect to this popular phenomenon: "the culture of *Ostalgia* has never been an aesthetic project directed against capitalism, or towards restoring Socialism. Quite the contrary, by capitalizing on the frustrations of the East, this culture carved a specific market niche within the capitalist cultural market, and thus became its functional and successful element" (2011: 77). In this chapter, I examine how both the remembering of Yugoslavia and of mythical national histories have been featured on the cinematic screen since the end of Yugoslavia, functioning as a way to address divisions and anxieties about the post-Yugoslav present. These two different forms of memory could be understood as speaking to and constituting very different collectivities—one multiethnic, the other purely ethnic—and their effects are directly linked to either anti-nationalist or nationalist projects. However, the division between them should not be taken as an absolute boundary—at times, post-Yugoslav films speak to both these screen memories, and at times challenge the authenticity of either. Rosalind Galt has observed that "the idea of a doubled relation to the past is common in post-Yugoslav films, where nostalgia, national politics, and the difficulty of historical memory frequently form the narrative problematic" (2006: 171).

At the center of a nostalgic feeling is not only loss, but also suffering, since the memory of suffering has its dramatic appeal, and many uses in the present. Halbwachs argues that

> The faraway world where we remember that we suffered nevertheless exercises an incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived it and who seems to think he has left there the best part of himself, which he tries to recapture. This is why, given a few exceptions, it is the case that the great majority of people more or less frequently are given to what one might call a nostalgia for the past. (49)

In her influential book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym (2001) argues that this structure of feeling has become a prominent feature of modern life, an affective state in which Western modernity, in particular, is itself increasingly invested (yet at the same time, Boym's most influential work on nostalgia is about its prevalence in the post-Socialist context, which has not typically been considered Western). Boym describes two

ways in which nostalgia operates, but this division does not explain the nature of nostalgia's origin. Rather, the separation into two types of nostalgia is more "about the ways in which we make sense of our seemingly ineffable homesickness and how we view our relationship to a collective home" (41). Furthermore, for Boym, the two types of nostalgia are not "absolute types, but rather tendencies, ways of giving shape and meaning to longing" (41). One version, which she calls *restorative* nostalgia, ignores historical incongruities and instead seeks to restore things as they were at a time of mythical and romanticized heroic past of a nation. Its goal, as Boym claims, is the search for the Truth that would offer closure and coherence, and thus recreate that idealized long lost "homeland" of the past (even if such a thing never existed in the first place). This kind of nostalgia is often utilized for conservative ideological purposes, and aims to create a sense of a national coherence and homogeneity that harkens back to some kind of "authentic" historical time of a nation's origin.

Another kind of nostalgia that Boym identifies is *reflective* nostalgia. This type of nostalgia provides a more multivalent and productive affective space of convergence of the past, present, and future. Without seeking a specific resolution, reflective nostalgia is an affective state that seemingly exists for the sake of existing (although, its existence arguably performs a kind of politics as well). Its goal is not to find closure or satisfaction for its yearnings, and its gaze is projected into a futurity in which nostalgia becomes a way of performing non-ideologically manipulated collective belonging (if such a belonging is ever truly possible). Boym summarizes the key difference between the two nostalgic tendencies thusly:

> Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. The first category of nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth. This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time. (41)

Elsewhere in her work, Boym states another important distinction: "Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future; reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory" (49). While undoubtedly influential in the prolific studies of nostalgia as an important structure of

feelings that permeates the cultures of post-Socialism, Boym's analysis at times falls into the trap of treating the two nostalgias as absolute types after all, as she frequently implies that they exist in an either/or and not a both/and dynamic. In this chapter, I want to explore the both/and dynamics of these two articulations of nostalgia and explore how they might exist and shape cultural memory simultaneously. I am interested in their intricate interactions in several post-Yugoslav films that belong to the genre of the so-called "heritage cinema" (Higson 1995). According to Higson, heritage films actively seek to restore an affirmative vision of the past, in order to attempt to resolve some of the present (and future) contradictions of the post-conflict reality in which they are created. That restoration is usually permeated by an overabundance of affective investment, and it is precisely through affect that the films' utilization of nostalgia is marked as either restorative or, alternatively, reflective.

I want to suggest that the forms of memory being circulated through post-Yugoslav heritage cinema do not have the past as their primary object of interest, but rather metaphorically stand in—as screen memories—for the unresolved conflicts and traumas of the present (particularly those conflicts that have to do with the questions of pure, post-Yugoslav national or ethnic identities). As Higson claims:

> The construction of the national heritage—an ideological space as much as anything else—involves not so much the selecting of only certain values from the past, as the transference of present values on to the past as imaginary object. (41)

In addition, this transference involves a sublimation of present-day anxieties and unresolved conflicts into such representations of the past by way of screen memories. One of the main traits of screen memory is that it is an unreliable source of knowledge because it is often created out of phantasms and inaccuracies more than out of fact. What is often being suppressed in the case of screen memory in post-Yugoslav heritage cinema is a contradiction inherent to the post-conflict, singular ethno-national identity, which frames the nation as an accepting and loving collective body while it actively excludes others from its loving embrace, and therefore trades in hate more than in love (Ahmed 2004). By masking that contradiction with nostalgic representations of a multiethnic Yugoslavia, some heritage films attempt to compensate for the present that critically lacks plurality and acceptance of difference. Other heritage films I discuss engage deliberately, and often exclusively, in the form of nostalgia that restores ethnic animosity as a historical "fact" explained through the problematic notion of "ancient

hatreds." This subgroup of nostalgic films manipulates past political divisions and upheavals to rationalize present-day animosities along a strictly delineated ideological and ethnic split, as a way to imply that violence is an inevitability. After I map out these two often mutually co-dependent approaches to nostalgia in post-Yugoslav film, in the final sections of the chapter I discuss cinematic works that blur the boundary between the two absolute types, and instead represent the past more as a phantasmic carnivalesque vision than as a reflection of facts rooted in reality. I will argue that this hallucinatory state might be the most productive space for a nostalgic heritage film to reside in, as it is the space of hallucinations, unburdened by strict attachments to reality, that reflective nostalgia—that elusive, ephemeral structure of feelings that complicates the links between individual and cultural memories—can most successfully reside in.

In his writing on British heritage cinema, Higson has argued that the question that dominates heritage cinema is often the problem of inheritance—his "who shall inherit England?" (1996: 47) can be replaced by "who shall inherit [insert any national space here]?" to extend to the uses of heritage cinema in many other national contexts. Moreover, for Higson, this question rests on the conservative premises of a noble national past when national identity was in its purest form (as opposed to its purity being threatened in the present, by immigration, for instance). This argument will similarly be applied here to the forms of post-Yugoslav heritage cinema that overtly, and often exclusively, trade in restorative nostalgia—films such as *Nož* (*The Knife*, Miroslav Lekić 1999, Serbia), and *Sveti Georgije Ubiva Aždahu* (*St. George Shoots the Dragon*, Srđan Dragojević 2009, Serbia), for instance—and which rest on the premise of a mythic and noble-yet-suffering national origin (here Serbian) and, overtly or by implication, extend that suffering nobility to justify violence in the present.[2]

Rather than delegating different heritage films into the same rubric, I suggest that they function differently and that there is a trend in some strains of post-Yugoslav heritage cinema that turns against the premises of restorative nostalgia, by circulating a more non-nationally aligned reflective nostalgia, in particular by reflecting a longing for the multiethnic Yugoslavia, which is often as imagined, and as much a screen memory, as the heroic ethno-national histories are. Yet under the banner of Yugo-nostalgia, longing is directed toward an *impossibility*—a country that vanished, an impossible object—as a means of refusing acceptance of omnipresent ethno-nationalisms that arose in its place. Because Yugo-nostalgia has no realistic channels for resolution of its longing, and because it represents a stark resistance to the national myth-making strategies deployed by restorative nostalgias, I consider Yugo-nostalgia to be a form

of reflective nostalgia, a longing for the sake of longing itself. As disillusionment with the post-conflict and post-Socialist reality sets in, Yugo-nostalgia has informed an increasing number of popular cultural texts, including cinema. According to Boym, reflective nostalgia is a form of "social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory" (xviii). By being nostalgic not about a singular ethnic past, but rather about the multiethnic Yugoslavia, some films undermine conservative efforts of those who insist on the ethnic purity of the newly founded nation-states. Instead, these films dream of a pseudo-romanticized, multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, and through it, utilize the affective state of nostalgia as a subversive political tool by which to potentially counter the proliferation of post-Yugoslav nationalisms. At the same time, some Yugo-nostalgic films fall into the trap of overly romanticizing Yugoslavia as a state of omnipresent love and acceptance, thereby masking its more problematic histories of political and other persecutions, hidden animosities, and so on. With that tendency, and with the mechanism of screen memories in mind, this chapter asks if nostalgia can still be used as a productive affective state circulated through and with cinema—in a way that reflects the incommensurability of dislocated screen memory—or if it inevitably flattens the complexities of the past for the sake of present satisfaction? Another issue that this chapter explores is how these different forms of heritage cinema invite the spectator to either reiterate or undermine the dominant post-Yugoslav discourses that take national purity as their central point of departure for any kind of collective belonging.

On Reflecting and Restoring Memories

One intricately humorous example of heritage cinema, Serbia's *Three Tickets to Hollywood* (*Tri karte za Holivud*, Božidar Nikolić 1993), a film made in the midst of Yugoslavia's violent end, portrays Yugoslav society through the microcosm of a small town somewhere in semirural Serbia, a place inhabited by many quirky social types, both likable and unlikeable. The story of the film takes place in 1962, but the time of the film's making has to be considered equally as important for understanding it, as a framework through which its meaning is constituted and circulated. In 1993, when the film came out, the breakup of Yugoslavia was in full swing, with the wars raging in Bosnia and Croatia, and with the Serbian military actively, if unofficially, engaged in both conflicts. Milošević's rule in Serbia was firmly established, and extreme nationalist rhetoric in the political discourse was not only prevalent but virtually the only form of political engagement available. In other words, there were few obvious alternatives to the omnipresence of hardline Serbian nationalism being framed

through nostalgic myth-making about the greatness of the nation, and the righteousness of its fight.[3] In that context, I want to suggest that the emergence of films such as *Three Tickets* represents an important, if overlooked, intervention—in the time of oppressive nationalist singularity, this film offers a complicated study of the nature of collective belonging, the fate of ordinary people during times of political upheaval in which they are forced to pick sides, and a stark critique of autocratic regimes with authoritarian rulers at the helm. It is an exercise in nostalgia that addresses, through dislocated screen memory, the trauma of the region's present.

The three tickets referenced in the film's title belong to three young boys whose plan is to escape that small town and go directly to Hollywood, their infatuation with cinema being the driving force in the desire to escape the provincialism of their surroundings. This is, at the same time, an interesting device for positioning a heritage film, since the narrative that frames it—the three boys' efforts to escape—protects the film from falling into the trap of romanticizing the microcosm of Yugoslavia, even when it makes light some of the more complicated aspects of that society. Moreover, an infatuation with cinema and frequent references to it reflect *Three Ticket*'s self-reflexive awareness of its own textuality. The film's opening scene is a series of long shots of the landscape through which the town's photographer (aptly named Lumiere) and two boys ride on a bike—a profilmic setting of cinematic phantasm. One of the film's first scenes is an upside down shot—through a photographic camera—of the staging of Tito's welcome. With Tito's bust and "Tito—the Party" prominently displayed at the center of the frame, the whole shot is upside down not only as if to immediately invite the spectatorial awareness of a reversal, but also as a way to call overt attention to the screen medium itself (Figure 4.1).

Besides the boys' plan to leave for Hollywood, which bookends the film, the main event that jolts the small but lively community out of its everyday routine is the impending passage through the town of Yugoslav's lifetime president and political autocrat, Josip Broz Tito. The announcement of his imminent "visit"—in fact, just a brief passage on the train—affects the entire community and proves to be a highly controversial event that brings different political affinities to surface. While some residents are thrilled to have the president visit, others voice resentment toward his leadership style (at a time when voicing such resentment might have guaranteed imprisonment). The political drama of the Cuban missile crisis takes place in the background of the preparations for Tito's arrival. This background story proves to be pivotal in the rise of tensions within the small community, as the prospect of a nearly inevitable nuclear war unveils the community's hidden political alliances: some side with the USSR, others with the US, and each side starts preparing for the new world order in which their

Figure 4.1 The staging of the upside down scene (*Three Tickets to Hollywood*, screen grab)

political agendas would win, their preparations ultimately leading to a mass fight in the town's main square, after which the entire community is put under arrest and driven away by the state police who comes to intervene. At the end of the film, all that is left in the town is livestock, a humorous metaphor for the uncritical collective following of the dominant political ideas that do not benefit anyone. This polarizing dilemma—which great political power to side with—serves to highlight the absurdity of the position of those caught in between the cracks of big historical events. Siding with either the US or USSR proves to be a pointless exercise in attempting to achieve relevance in this small town (and by extension, small country), the only thing achieved by choosing either side being that the community is destroyed altogether. Being trapped in such political divisions seems to be the tragic flaw of this community of ordinary people, as they fall victim to an ideological split that informs the way in which they understand the world outside their small community. The film is an examination of the fate of the small people caught in big political events, and it offers a frequently humorous but ultimately solemn study of their prospects. In one scene in which they practice their welcoming parade for Tito, a group of residents carries individual letters which, when aligned as planned, should read "Narod je uz tebe" ("The people are with you"), but after some confusion and shuffling around, the carriers of the letters are inadvertently realigned in such a way so that their banner reads "Narod jebete" ("You are fucking the people over") instead. This humorous moment shows how

a seemingly simple play on words can expose a manipulation of collective political support for what it is—an exploitation of those who are on the receiving end of it.

The film's central protagonist, Gavrilo, is a police officer and the town's authority figure who is in charge of organizing the welcoming parade for the president, but whose main task is, in fact, to spy on political dissidents and suppress the voices that might make it seem like the president is not welcome (because having those dissenting voices out in the open might reflect badly on Gavrilo, as a figure whose main job is to police the political activities of others). The policing of attitudes toward the president, as well as toward the ongoing backdrop of the missile crisis, becomes another way in which the film avoids romanticizing Yugoslavia, since its overt political implications position the society as always having been a contested space in which the cult of one leader is accepted without criticism by some and derided by others. The plurality of opinions on Tito, and by extension on Yugoslavia itself, makes the film function as an example of a balanced instance of heritage cinema in which nostalgia is not used as a device that flattens the past into a singular vision of either prosperity or lacking. Instead, Yugoslav society is depicted *both* nostalgically *and* through a critical comedic lens that exposes its many contradictions and intricate layers of political and emotional investments alike. If anything, Yugoslav society is depicted here as tragically caught in the conundrum that often marks the fate of smaller nations: caught up in divisions bigger than they are, only to end up destroyed by them often in violent, borderline absurd ways.

It is impossible to view the scene of the town's mass fight that results in the community's implosion and not think about the conflict that envelops the region at the time of the film's making—that of Yugoslavia's violent breakup. In that sense, *Three Tickets* can be read as a dislocated screen memory that addresses the demise of Yugoslavia—as much as the look back is nostalgic, the breakup is viewed as an inevitable result of the uncritical following of reductive divisions, and of the internal autocratic policing of the people, coupled with society's being caught in between bigger political and ideological divisions that surround it. The pressures seemed too heavy to bear, and the only way out offered here is a fantasy of a happy ending embodied in the escape to that ultimate factory of illusions—Hollywood itself. As virtually all of town's residents are arrested and driven off by the state police, the three boys infatuated with cinema start their planned trek toward Hollywood by walking away on the train tracks (these same tracks were supposed to bring Tito, a figure who never materializes, but are also reminiscent of the train tracks of the first film ever made). The boys' trek is as unrealistic as are the fantasies produced in the film

industry of their destination, but perhaps being realistic is not the main goal here. Perhaps the boys willingly suspend belief and dare to dream of an alternative cinematic ending, one where stark realities and divisions can be replaced by a meditation on longing for a more accepting world—just as Boym describes the operations of reflective nostalgia. The boys' trek, and with them, the film's final nod toward a longing for a happier ending, does not have to be realistic after all, since reflective nostalgia does not seek a realistic resolution for the loss that triggered it. By letting the boys walk away and start their impossible trip toward Hollywood along the train tracks in the last scene (after they request "three tickets to Hollywood" at the local train station), the film leaves open a space toward dreaming an alternative to violence and conflict that both destroys their community and that enshrouds the reality of the film's making. That alternative, it is suggested, is at least partially in movies, and with that, a *mise-en-abyme* is created in which the film self-reflexively points to itself as one of the ways in which a stark reality can be temporarily suspended in favor of an affirmative longing for, and temporary recuperation of what is lost.

In *Three Tickets*, Tito, although central to the narrative, never materializes, but is always simply somewhere on the horizon, an approaching mirage that never becomes real. As Andrew Horton (2013) notes, the motif of Tito's immaterial, ghostly presence is explored in other films, such as *Tito i ja* (*Tito and Me*, Goran Marković, Serbia 1992), in which Tito appears as a mirage to a little boy who is composing a poem in his honor, and *Tito po drugi put među Srbima* (*Tito Among the Serbs Again*, Želimir Žilnik, Serbia 1993), a mock-documentary in which a comedian dresses as Tito and walks the streets of Belgrade, where many people engage in a conversation with him, addressing him as if he were really Tito. In Croatia's popular comedy *Marshall* (*Maršal*, Vinko Brešan 1999), nostalgia for Tito's Yugoslavia is directly pitted against the reality of post-communist nationalism, transition, and capitalism, which have taken over since Yugoslavia's demise. The ghost of Tito (who was commonly referred to as "the Marshall" during his life) in this film appears to people living on a small Croatian island. The news of this occurrence triggers the arrival of many Yugo-nostalgics, who here appear to be mainly men who fought in WWII and who forged a lasting bond with Tito's communist and anti-fascist vision of collectivity. When the ghost of Tito turns out to be a person from the local mental institution who thinks he is the dead Yugoslav leader, the veterans decide to keep the pretense going anyway, since, as they decide, "any revolution needs a leader, be they real or fake." This aspect of the film represents a humorous yet critical commentary on the cults of personality that often come coupled with social upheavals such as conflicts and revolutions. The motif of constructing a pretense of a cult leader extends to Croatia's more

current situation in which the first democratic president and wartime leader, Franjo Tuđman, became a nearly sanctified father figure for the nationalist movement the same way that Tito was once for Yugoslavia (incidentally, the film came out shortly after Tuđman's death, which only added to its relevancy as a commentary on maintaining the cults of dead leaders, as well as on the ways their ghosts haunt collective national memories). Furthermore, the film represents a commentary on what Ugrešić has called a trend of "collective amnesia", by which the legacy of a joint communist past is now being suppressed at the expense of drawing singularly national histories as sources of collective pride. The state of the "Tito Museum" in *Marshall* depicts this collective amnesia, as it is a building in ruins, cordoned off and barricaded, with only flickers of daylight peering into it, almost impenetrable, just as the memory about the time it memorializes seems to be confiscated as well. Jurica Pavičić claims that "*Marshall* was an obvious comment on the 'ostalgie' trend all over Eastern Europe, which seems on the surface to be a political counterattack against capitalism, but at its core is just the opening of a new consumer niche within the market economy" (2012: 53–4).[4] However, a quick dismissal of the film's "counterattack" as merely another layer in the dominance of capitalism might also dismiss the affective investments that the film, deliberately or not, plays into: namely, a nostalgia toward a less ethno-centric collectivity, even if it now comes commercialized by the capitalist marketplace.

The films that deal with the ghostly presence of Tito are, incidentally or not, usually comedies, which makes them even more interesting to consider within the genre of heritage cinema, as that genre often relies on the grandiose styles of cinematic drama epics, rather than on the arguably more "base" premises of comedy. The use of humor as a means of mediating representations of otherwise stark realities has a long tradition in Yugoslav cinematography (Horton 2002), where a turn to laughter has often been a device with which tragedy is mitigated and disguised as a farce. Some of the most celebrated and canonized Yugoslav films happen to be comedies that simultaneously serve as devastating diagnoses of some of the more problematic ailments of the society that they represent. For instance, Slobodan Šijan's *Ko to tamo peva* (*Who's Singing Over There?* 1980) and *Maratonci trče počasni krug* (*The Marathon Family* 1982), and *Balkanski špijun* (*Balkan Spy*, Dušan Kovačević & Božidar Nikolić 1984) are films with lasting mass popularity among the audiences of former Yugoslavia. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the comedic aspects of these films always contained a thinly veiled critique of the Socialist regime and its undersides. While there is no doubt that laughter can often be used as a reactionary force whose effect is to placate dissent, this is not the case with the subversive comedic potential of this particular strain of Yugoslav

comedies. One of the key figures that connect these comedies is Dušan Kovačević, who wrote or co-wrote screenplays for both of Šijan's films, and wrote and co-directed *Balkan Spy*. Kovačević's accomplished career as a playwright spilled over successfully into cinema, perhaps peaking with the screenplay he wrote for Kusturica's *Underground*, a film I discuss later in this chapter. Kovačević's opus as a playwright and screenwriter has been deeply imbued with the exploration of the workings of laughter as a subversive force with which problematic political and social realities might be at least temporarily called into question.

Three Tickets to Hollywood owes much of its use of humor to the legacy of Kovačević's early comedies (its director, Božidar Nikolić, co-directed Kovačević's *Balkan Spy*, and was the cinematographer on virtually all of Kovačević's early comedies), and it pays homage to that legacy, among other things, in the form of a cameo appearance of the cult Yugoslav actor Danilo Bata Stojković, who appeared in all the comedies mentioned above, most memorably playing the paranoid lead in *Balkan Spy*. With this intertextual nod to its provocative comedic predecessors, *Three Tickets* positions itself quite overtly as a continuation of the use of laughter toward nonreactionary goals. But the use of comedy within the heritage film genre does not guarantee that a film would necessarily aim to cultivate a more critical look at the political and social contexts that inform its making. For instance, Zdravko Šotra's popular comedies *Lajanje na zvezde* (*Barking at the Stars* 1998, Serbia) and *Zona Zamfirova* (2002, Serbia), which are both set in different, nostalgically veiled past times, represent forms of uncritical reactionary filmmaking devoid of any social commentary, present or past. If viewed from the aspect of screen memory, comedies such as Šotra's seem to actively work toward masking present-day struggles by presenting an idyllic past as a means to ameliorate—or even obliterate awareness of—social upheaval such as unrest and war by screening them off through romanticized vision of an idyllic past. But to dismiss such exercises in "mere" escapism as irrelevant might miss some important aspects of spectatorship as an enactment of cultural memory. The seeming escapism that the audiences embrace by accepting apolitical comedies en masse could be a political performance after all, if only as an indication that for once, both publics and counterpublics might be oversaturated with reminders of their collectively grim reality. Achieving happiness seems to be the goal here, and to use a metaphor pertinently introduced by Ahmed in "Happy Objects" (2010), we orient ourselves toward objects that make us happy, objects that are sticky, so to speak. As Ahmed states, "happy objects could be described simply as those objects that affect us in the best way" (22). Because of that, there is an implication that objects themselves are happy, and by orienting ourselves toward them, they "make" us

happy too. But in the case of the comedies I discuss here, it is not necessarily and solely film-as-object that is assigned happiness; more likely, it is a dreamed up community depicted in such comedies—an imagined nation of the past—that is seen as happy: a sticky object toward which a traumatized collective body of present-day audiences orients itself, as if it were soothing to collectively invest in a dream of possible happiness. In that sense, the seemingly apolitical nostalgia is revealed as quite political in its restorative effects, a jointly dreamed up utopia of a past in which people were envisioned as nobler and happier. These films offer a version of history that sees the Serbs as a great nation that the films imply they still could be. It is no wonder, then, that these two comedies were most watched precisely at times where the nation was going through dramatic (and traumatic) upheavals such as the Kosovo war, the NATO bombing, and the fall of Milošević's regime.

The Drama of National Feelings

In "What is a Nation?" Ernest Renan (1990) notes that nations are relatively new occurrences in the history of humankind, but that the narratives that surround—and construct—a nation rest on the premise of a long, transhistorical feeling of collective belonging. Renan states that "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle", and that two things constitute it: "One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form" (19). According to Renan, a nation does not come to be because of geographies, past conquests, dynasties, or other material things, but out of a collective *feeling* of solidarity about a shared past, present, and future. "A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (19). Feelings are thus *constitutive*, rather than merely characteristic of a nation. Sara Ahmed has similarly argued that emotions are entities whose political dimensions in the national context cannot be overlooked. Ahmed shows how the common feeling circulated within a national space is a disguised feeling of hate for the Other who might threaten, or invade, change, or deny the sovereignty—if not purity—of the national body. Indeed, most nationalist discourses are framed by a rhetorical construction of a menacing foreign body that threatens to pollute the health—and happiness—of the collective national body envisioned this way. It is the use of feelings that I am particularly interested in here, with respect to both the constitution of a common understanding that one belongs to a nation, as well as in the constitution of

the feeling of threat by a foreign body that might end the collective happiness of an imagined sovereign national body. As Renan claims, the feeling that constitutes a nation is projected both toward the past (a shared heritage) and toward the future (attempting to secure the well-being of future generations). Nostalgia ties the past and the future together in one complex assemblage of affective responses to what it means to belong collectively, and nationally in particular. While it is always a look back at some different time, nostalgia is inevitably informed by a present time and its anxieties for the future (thus acting as screen memory of sorts). Moreover, nostalgia marks a nod toward futurity (or, prospects of the future), since it is positioned as a resolution of anxieties that a nation might become interrupted by some future enemy threat. As long as there are reminders that the heritage of a nation is forceful, resilient, and far-reaching, there are assurances that future troubles would be met with force and unity. A nostalgic (re)construction of a past threat that has been overcome assures the national body that it would be able to deal with any future enemy force that comes its way.

Films that belong to the domain of heritage drama in the post-Yugoslav context have often invested their efforts in (re)creating exactly this kind of unity through a trans-historical threat of a foreign body that persistently denies the nation its uninterrupted happiness. This use of past enemies who threatened to invade a national body serves to mitigate a perceived threat in the present, but it is also always turned toward future self-preservation, aiming to warn generations to come that the struggle is never over. To these dynamics, in the regional context of the former Eastern Bloc, another wrinkle was added: in opposition to films that engage in Yugo-nostalgia (or more widely, *Ostalgia*), another strain of films appeared, one that sought to re-cast communism as equal to, if not worse than fascism itself. Slavoj Žižek notes, with respect to the right-wing revisionism of communist histories, that "The point of these arguments is to assert that a moderate fascism was a justified response to the communist threat."[5] Such tendencies of nationalist revisionism that engage in restorative nostalgias for nationally pure (and always threatened) existence are evident in Jakov Sedlar's film *Četverored* (1999, Croatia), which displays one such construction of links between past and future threats via a reconsideration of communist legacy. The film was made during the decade in which Croatia became an independent nation-state, and a nationalist narrative that cast Croatia as "freed" from the shackles of Yugoslavia was the dominant version of interpreting history. It reflects, through its screen memory of WWII, a present-day collective euphoria about that newfound national freedom, articulated, among other things, in active attempts to re-write history through a strictly ethno-national lens. Referring to this film as a

"mix of cinematic semi-literacy, grotesque historiographic simplification and philo-fascist revisionism" (39), Jurica Pavičić similarly places the film's anxieties firmly in the context of democratic changes that threatened the rule of nationalist parties. Be that as it may, films such as these—with WWII as a recurring motif for national trauma—point to the lasting cultural importance of that war in the cultural memorialization of the more recent violent events (which I discussed in Chapter 1). Unsurprisingly, WWII represents, in cinema, the return of the repressed, an event that recurs and is being re/interpreted in many different ways, but never entirely in the past, always informing present-day anxieties. The particular part of the WWII history that *Četverored* purports to revise—the establishment of the Nazi State of Croatia (NDH) and the subsequent partisan retaliation against the collaborators—has often been suppressed in the official narratives about the foundation of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia in brotherhood and unity. After Croatia gained its independence in the 1990s, films like *Četverored*, as well as Antun Vrdoljak's *Duga mračna noć* (*A Long Dark Night* 2004), returned to this highly contested time in history to re-envision the roles of anti-fascist and anti-communist fight through the lens of suppressed national heritage. By engaging in a narrative that positions the very emergence of the Yugoslav Socialist state on the foundations that suppress Croatia's affirmative national self-identity, *Četverored* revises history for the sake of the present, drawing a direct link between communism and the denial of Croatia's national self-realization. In that framework, Croatian nationhood is rendered impossible as long as a communist and multi-ethnic Yugoslavia exists, since the latter's very existence is premised on the suppression of its independent ethno-national parts. But even more importantly, the existence of Croatia's collective national pride is depicted here as always threatened as long as ethnic Others are allowed to co-exist within the same boundaries of a legal state. In that sense, *Četverored* represents a form of screen memory that uses the past to resolve a present-day dilemma—any project of ethnic cleansing is justified in this setup, since it assures the uninterrupted future of a trans-historical ethno-national purity.

Functioning somewhat similarly, Serbian film *The Knife* (*Nož*, Miroslav Lekić 1999) came out in the same year as *Četverored*, representing another cinematic instance of the collapse between the violent histories of WWII and the last Yugoslav war. Based on the infamous novel by Vuk Drašković, the film looks at the difficult history of the WWII ethnic infighting in the former Yugoslavia as a way to explain present-day animosities. While the novel ends before the wars of Yugoslavia's breakup take place (it was published in the 1980s, the time of nationalist reawakening), the film adds an additional chapter to the story, one that draws a straight line

between previous ethnic tensions and the more recent history of violence, albeit in a way that focuses of the inevitability of "ancient hatreds" rather than on a consideration of traumatic recurrence. The central protagonist is a young Bosniak Alija, who decides to look into his family history because there are some unanswered questions that haunt him. He discovers that he had been born to a Serbian family and that this whole family, along with the rest of the Serbian village, was burned alive in their church by the Ustashas during WWII. Alija, whose birth name, as he discovers, was Ilija Jugović, was the sole surviving Serb in that massacre, and he was subsequently taken by a Muslim family to be raised as their own. The discovery of this truth triggers in Alija/Ilija an identity crisis that he cannot easily resolve, since he was raised in an orthodox Muslim environment and does not hold favorable views of the Serbs. Now that he discovers that his background is Serbian, Alija asks "Whose shoes will I now wear?" He decides that he cannot reconcile his biological background with his adopted one, and therefore has to choose only one. In the film's addendum to the book, the wars that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia now pose a literal challenge for Alija/Ilija, who becomes a paramedic in the Bosnian Serb army. It appears that he chooses his "true" ethnic identity, but to the film's end, he remains ambivalent about his ethnic belonging nevertheless.

Milja Radovic argues that the portrayal of Serbs as victims in WWII serves here as a justification of more recent war crimes, since Serbs "were portrayed as defenders or avengers for the crime that remained unpunished in Tito's Yugoslavia" (2014: 46). The film is additionally problematic as a piece of heritage cinema because it plays into the commonly held nationalist Serbian trope that Bosniak Muslims are, in actuality, Serbs whose Christian ancestors converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule. Bosniaks are thus typically deemed traitors because of the conversion, seen as weak in betraying their inherently Christian "nature." In the story of Alija/Ilija, that motif is honed into a moral struggle within the main character, who cannot reconcile his two identities. In this setup, ethnic and religious belonging is naturalized, treated as part of a person's DNA, and therefore inescapable, unalienable from their "true" identity. The fact of Alija/Ilija being raised in his adoptive religion of Islam is treated as a falsely imposed identity and as a fraud, since one of the film's main premises is that a person cannot be raised into an identity, but is rather born into it. In the final scenes of the film, Alija/Ilija meets his literal counterpart—a violent Serbian unit leader who turns out to be of Muslim heritage. The two men sit in front of the war devastation and ponder over the impossibility of their in-betweennes, as Alija/Ilija says to Miloš/Selim: "We are all what we are not, and no one is what they are." In the film's final moments, then, naturalized ethnic identity is called into question, and this finale, in

a way, poses a challenge to its own source text, by pointing to the incommensurable aspects of ethnic "purity" as such. Yet, while it challenges the incessant fetishizing of ethnic purity, the film remains problematic in its depiction of ethnic hatreds as inevitable and inescapable. Like many other post-Yugoslav films, it draws a direct line from the traumas of WWII to the more recent ones—a plausible, if more complicated, continuity that needs to be further explored, particularly in the domain of how the cultural memories of WWII trauma have been used as one of the main interpretive frameworks for the recent ethnic wars. The film's final panning shot brings back various characters from different times of Yugoslav history into the same frame, thus implying that all of them exist simultaneously, that past is always a part of the present, and that these conflicts inevitably stem from one another. Yet, by drawing a clear line between WWII and the Yugoslav wars without a deeper insight into the period in between them, the film posits that peaceful coexistence among Yugoslav peoples was always merely a pretense that masked the harsh realities of inevitable, deeply rooted, inescapable, and naturalized divisions. This view, just as is the case with Croatia's *Četverored*, works to justify, even rationalize violence by converting it into what might be called the heritage of inevitability. In the example of these films, then, we see a cinematic articulation of some of the most stubbornly utilized tools of historical revisionism: we fight because "we" are inherently and inescapably different from "them." Naturalized ethno-national belonging is therefore premised on a feeling of omnipresent threat that, in such films, proves to be a justified entity since the violence materializes quite brutally (Figure 4.2).

It is no surprise that such forms of problematic screen memory arise during the times of instability that accompany any creation of a nation-state. But even more generally, since the centrality of nation-states is becoming increasingly displaced by transnational global flows of ideas, capital, and people, national purity is considered to be under threat even when there is no visible upheaval in sight. Lauren Berlant states that "indeed, it is precisely under transnational conditions that the nation becomes a more intense object of concern and struggle" (1997: 13). We could add to this that the nation, therefore, also becomes a more intense object of restorative nostalgia, where such nostalgia "does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition" (Boym: xviii). Restorative nostalgia serves as screen memory, while its reflective counterpart may act as a dislocation of that screen memory. Since film trades in a discursive circulation of affect that binds spectators into collectivities, an important question here is how such dramatic and visually explicit depictions of threats reintroduce into cultural circulation further justification for the machinery that produces exclusionary nationalist discourses in the first

Figure 4.2 Ancient hatreds or the return of the repressed? (*The Knife*, screen grab)

place. It is safe to say that there is an ethical responsibility that is being neglected altogether within the frames of these films, as re/creating an external threat, past and present, is posited as the primary organizing principle of belonging collectively. In the section that follows, I discuss in detail another example of a heritage film, but one whose political implications are not as involved with the feeling of a threat from an ethnic/external Other as much as they are invested in the feeling of an internal threat to the nostalgically envisioned traditional ways of life.

The War at Home: On Domesticity and Masculinity

One of the highest profile heritage films to come out of the region, Srđan Dragojević's *Sveti Georgije ubiva aždahu* (*St. George Shoots the Dragon*, Serbia 2009), harkens back to WWI for its enactment of restorative screen memory. Based on a play by Dušan Kovačević (who also wrote the screenplay), the film is a story about the lives of the residents of a small village on the border of Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian empire just before the start of the War. While the political situation is an important backdrop to the story (and the film's climactic sequence is the famous Cer Battle—the first battle the Serbs fought in that war), the central conflict depicted in the film is a love triangle in the village, where a young, disabled war veteran (from the recently ended Serbian-Turkish war), Gavrilo, loses the girl he loves, Katarina, to his former commander and now a village police officer Đorđe (his name a reference to the titular St. George). But Katarina

does not love Đorđe, and her extramarital affair with her old flame Gavrilo triggers a conflict that stands at the film's center seemingly more so than the imminent world war. Since the village is on the border with the enemy empire, it is always in the fragile liminal position where it is exposed to atrocities first. But in a more general sense, the village quite overtly stands in for Serbia itself, here conceived as a liminal borderland between the East and the West, the way that the Balkans are more generally. In the opening scene, a grandfather is teaching his young grandson about the ways of the world in the darkness of the night, explaining to the boy that there is a place called Paris, which is always so bright with lights that its residents cannot tell night from day. The description of that brightness is in stark contrast with the darkness that surrounds the grandfather and his grandson. The grandfather explains that the darkness that surrounds them has always been there and that "we deserve nothing better." With this, Serbia and the Balkans at large, are immediately positioned as a land of grim and inescapable suffering, in stark contrast with the brightness of the civilized Europe envisioned through Paris, a place that seems to know no darkness. That positioning of Serbia as a place of inevitable darkness is reinforced at the very end of the film, by a scene in which Katarina and the same young boy wheel the bodies of both Gavrilo and Đorđe (who die in the Cer Battle) into the night, with the boy knowingly asserting: "My grandpa taught me how to walk in the dark." With this, the boy echoes the film's attitude about masculine heritage in which Serbian men are taught that life is inevitably grim, until they eventually die a brutal death.

Indeed, the film seems deeply invested in reiterating the fatalistic notion that Serbian and Balkan heritage is that of inevitable, self-imposed suffering in which wars recur on a regular cycle. The epigraph at the end of the film thus reads: "And so it goes through the entire 20th century," hinting at the future devastating conflicts that would follow—WWII and the breakup of Yugoslavia. By positioning these conflicts as inherent to the way of life as local ethnic groups know it, the film glosses over the complicated sociopolitical factors that bring those wars and conflicts about. Instead, it views them as simply inevitable. The history-repeats-itself mantra is yet again deployed as a mechanism by which collective heritage becomes a flat surface of inevitability, devoid of any complexities that might contribute to the many historical upheavals taking place in the region. It becomes simply a fatalistic story of "the way we are," with an added emphasis in *St. George* that "we" do not deserve any better. This "we" of the collective belonging is embodied by the people and pitted in *St. George* against the omnipresent power and influence of the state. Somewhat reminiscent of the chasm between the state interests and the well-being of its people in *Three Tickets to Hollywood*, the characters in *St. George* voice a disillusionment with the

state of things that binds them into a collectivity. The state is positioned as a source of more suffering than well-being because it pushes the common man into wars that are outside of his control, yet he perpetually falls victim to them.

The extra-cinematic circumstances surrounding the film's production have proven controversial in their own right. Namely, the film's Cer Battle was filmed on location in Republika Srpska, a majority Serbian part of Bosnia. The site chosen for filming the battle was Omarska, an infamous location in the Bosnian war in which Bosnian Serb army maintained a camp for Bosniak prisoners (where many of those prisoners were tortured and killed). Moreover, these war crimes remain largely unacknowledged by the Serbian majority, with any efforts of memorialization quickly suppressed by the local Serb leaders. Since the film is about an entirely different time, references to the more recent atrocities that took place at the exact location where the battle scene was filmed do not permeate its narrative. But if screen memory is applied here as a framework through which a heritage film is always inevitably more about the anxieties of the time of its making than about the past time it purports to represent, then the fact that *St. George* might be screening off the Omarska camp war crimes cannot be easily overlooked. Indeed, Pavle Levi (2009) argues that the Omarska filming location is so problematic that the film needs to be boycotted altogether, where the act of not-watching performs resistance against the erasure of history in which the film is, according to Levi, deeply invested.[6] Levi claims that the refusal to watch the film is not merely an ethical, but moreover a political act, because it is important to "think and write about the fact that the location which was the site of mass crimes against humanity in recent history, all committed in the name of Serbian national interests, is now simply being used as an appropriate location for the filming of a historical ethno-spectacle." And since the film itself does not make any room for a self-reflexive exploration of the nature of historical accountability, or for a dislocation of its own screen memory, Levi deems it important to simply circumvent viewing of this ethno-spectacle altogether.

Levi's call for a political action of not-viewing is not a mere dismissal of the film on the grounds of its problematic choice of location as an extra-cinematic context otherwise unrelated to the film's own story. If screen memories are taken into consideration, then that choice of location becomes an unalienable part of the film's texture to such an extent that it cannot *not* inform its cultural memories altogether. In a very important sense of the workings of screen memory, *St. George* engages in a complicated layering of suppression, whereby its primary narrative of WWI acts as a screen through which the more current accountability

is being suppressed. If, on the surface of things, *St. George* explores the plight of Serbian masculinity in the early twentieth century, its deeper subtext is informed by anxieties about a more current plight of defeated masculinities, one closely related to perpetrator trauma. It appears that, by focusing on Serbian men on the eve of WWI, the film proposes an excuse for their failings, by depicting them as tragic victims of historical circumstances, of the state, and of the inherently violent ways of the territory that they inhabit. Hence, violence gets problematically relativized, and men that commit it get acquitted of accountability through the narrative of "higher powers" that control those actions. This absolution of personal accountability is demonstrated by one character, a disabled war veteran, who claims that "Serbia always wins its wars, and the people lose them." Here, the state is put in direct juxtaposition to "the people" who inhabit it, and when the state wins (presumably at the expense of the dead bodies of many), it is the people who always lose regardless. In this sense, the state is the doer, the people merely subjects who are the mechanical extensions of its apparatus, but not personally accountable by any means. By positioning things this way, *St. Georges* comes close to relativizing crimes and absolving individuals of accountability—a motif that becomes pivotal when the location of its filming is taken into consideration. This is precisely why Levi's position that the location cannot be dismissed as an irrelevant aspect of the film's texture becomes undeniable, since a great amount of its investment is spent on relativizing individual accountability at a time of war, transferring its moral burden to the higher powers of the state instead.

Moreover, another dimension of the film's exploration of the heritage of defeated masculinities proves problematic: if there is someone human to blame for the plight of the men, the film suggests that it is the women that are to be held responsible. Namely, more than concerning itself with the prospects of war and death at the front, what becomes strikingly obvious is that the film's entire narrative is invested much more in a meandering meditation on the crisis within Serbian domestic life, a crisis which seems to be taking place not because of an external threat, but because domesticity is falling apart from inside its own boundaries, self-destructing, as it were. And the main reason for that self-destruction are the women, whose sexuality—depicted as threatening and uncontainable—seems to be what Serbian men are mainly concerned about. Even when they are all at the front, preparing to fight in the Cer Battle, their minds are back home, as they worry whether the "cripples" who have stayed behind (disabled war veterans who are deemed unable to perform military duties) will take advantage of the situation and sleep with their women. When the able-bodied men at the front hear a rumor that it indeed appears that their worst fears have come true, the soldiers threaten to leave the front altogether and

return home in order to reign in the women's rampant sexual drives. The soldiers are so distracted by these concerns that someone eventually goes back to the village and forcibly mobilizes all the "cripples" and brings them to the front lines, but more importantly, removes them from the village to take away the threat of women having sex while their men are away. Only after the threat of uncontained female sexuality is removed from their minds can the men engage in fighting war, and they do, all dying in the battle at the end of the film. The tension between the state that the soldiers eventually die for and the home that they are looking to protect is here embodied in striking form: it is not their fighting in the war that is protecting their domestic life, it is the control over female sexuality that does so. Before dying, one soldier pointedly states: "I always believed there was a country and that it was worth dying for, but all I ever saw of that country is my own home. Fuck this country. Fuck this country." Clearly then, the collective and the individual, as well as the public and private, seem to here be divorced from one another. The state/nation furthers its interests over the dead bodies of men, while men preserve patriarchally heteronormative domesticity by making sure no other men are left behind to "usurp" their women. This is perhaps one of the film's most problematic theses—an active attempt to separate domesticity from a more collective involvement in external preservations of an ethno-nation. The men's incessant obsession with the threat of female sexuality, uncontained in the domestic space, is as important an aspect of being Serbian as is the warfare, and these two create a complex assemblage by which women's sexual drives are interpellated into ideology that excuses the men's anxieties and paints them as victims. Furthermore, if this aspect of the film is viewed through the framework of screen memory, it is quite possible to read it as suppressing an anxiety rooted at an entirely different time—that of the more recent wars in which women's bodies became, quite literally, the sites of battle and masculinist control, most tragically through mass rape.

In a somewhat different yet related vein, Darko Mitrevski's *Treto poluvreme* (*The Third Half* 2012, Macedonia)—another ethno-spectacle, about the persecution of Jews in Macedonia during WWII, that centers on a love story between a Jewish woman and a Macedonian man—eschews a female point of view at the expense of focusing on male-oriented moral dilemmas. Reportedly based on a true story, it depicts the rising tensions in Macedonia during the war, and Rebecca and Kosta's eventual escape to safety. Rebecca, who survived the Holocaust, is named as the film's inspiration. But even though the film is constructed as her own flashback—or as a story she is telling her granddaughter—the narrative is decidedly about men, as Rebecca's own subjectivity remains fairly superficial, her story reduced to a sketch. Many of the events she supposedly narrates are scenes among

men, as they seem to be the ones who have to make all the crucial moral decisions—from the football team owner, to the German-Jewish coach, to the players themselves. The woman, then, is defined solely by who she loves and otherwise does not add much else to the film's narrative of this heritage film.

Similarly to how women are framed in *The Third Half*, *St.* the female characters in *St. George* are mainly defined by who they love, or who they want to have sex with, and otherwise delegated to the sidelines of the frame. The film positions itself as an anti-war text, perpetually reminding the spectator how absurd it is to sacrifice one's life for vague common goals that unite one ethno-national side against another. But what is offered as an additional layer of that criticism is the suggestion that, instead of fighting wars, the men would be better off rescuing domesticity, returning it onto stable foundations of tradition. *St. George* implies that the plight of domesticity is what is really ailing the society, and that this plight might be resolved by the containment of female sexuality. Those stable traditional foundations of domesticity are distinctly patriarchal and heteronormative, and so the film reiterates several problematic tropes within which a contained female sexuality is the key to ethno-national stability (since it is the key to the male peace of mind). This nod to traditional, more fulfilling ways of being points to the tendencies of restorative nostalgia, which harkens back to an imagined time of past happiness.

The symbolism of the titular dragon that George shoots functions on several different levels. To some extent, the figure of St. George represents tradition, and as the film's reminder that there is a "higher purpose" in play when it comes to the events depicted. But in a larger sense, St. George figuratively acts as a moral compass by which external threats must be overcome for the preservation of one's faith. In the film, the "dragon" that haunts George seems to, at first, be his love rival, the young Gavrilo (who is one of the "cripples," since he lost an arm in the previous war). But in the film's final scene of the Cer Battle, George and Gavrilo come face-to-face, and as George raises his gun to finally fulfill the film's titular prophecy of "shooting the dragon," he does not kill Gavrilo, but instead kills an enemy soldier that had snuck up to Gavrilo behind his back. Thus, George seems to have realized at the very end of his life (both he and Gavrilo die in the battle) that fighting an external threat needs to take primacy over killing a domestic love rival.

Interweaving the narratives of historical events around the start of WWI (Gavrilo Princip makes a cameo) with the more intimate concerns about the breaking down of traditional domesticity, *St. George Shoots the Dragon* engages in distinctly restorative nostalgia in which the main goal seems to be a solemn reminder that history repeats itself and that it will do

so until Serbian men realize that fixing things at home—or, finding a way to control female sexuality—is sometimes more important than fighting an external threat. The characters in the film are themselves nostalgic toward a time—if there ever was such time—when things (especially women) seemed simpler, and when the state did not dictate the outcome of their lives. With this, a heritage film is created in which a nostalgic look is simultaneously a warning of the perpetuation of the threat. As Boym claims: "What drives restorative nostalgia is not the sentiment of distance and longing but rather the anxiety about those who draw attention to historical incongruities between past and present and thus question the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition" (44–5). *St. George* occupies a curious space with respect to such anxieties. While it takes a rather disillusioned look at the notion of a "homeland," it also centers on an anxiety that permeates the present as much as it might have permeated the past: an anxiety around the destruction of familial traditions (which, in turn, form that very private sense of a homeland). The destruction of domestic (and distinctly patriarchal) traditions threatens the "wholeness and continuity" more so than any wars and atrocities that the film uses as a backdrop (both within its cinematic frame, with WWI, and with its extra-cinematic context, the controversial filming location) to its main conflict, which takes place inside the home.

The Return of the Witch: Voodoo Magic and Women's Heritage Film

Where the story of *St. George* ends—with the men dying on the battlefield and the women collecting their dead bodies—another Serbian heritage film begins. *Charleston for Ognjenka* (*Čarlston za Ognenjku*, Uroš Stojanović 2008, sometimes translated as *Tears for Sale*) might be *St. George*'s polar opposite, as a rare instance of female-centric heritage cinema. Its story takes place in an isolated Serbian village in which only women reside, since all the men have died in the recently ended WWI. The film mixes realism and magic rooted in the traditional rural beliefs in the spirits that live on after death and can be summoned to haunt the living. The film's official tagline describes it as telling a story about Serbia "between the East and the West, between magic and civilization," where the East is, stereotypically, associated with the more traditional ways—which include voodoo and other forms of mystic spirituality—and the West is associated with rational modernization, depicted in the film through the titular Charleston, cars, different beauty standards for women (no traditional garbs and no hairy legs), and the emergence of cinema itself. This binary perpetuates stereotypical assumptions about backwardness (as always rooted in the East) and modernity (as inevitably Western), yet

Charleston offers an abundance of visual and narrative excesses that undermine, or self-reflexively make fun of such strict polarities. Moreover, with its particular use of fantastical elements, the film leans on the tradition of Eastern and Central European, post-Communist magic realist cinema that Aga Skrodzka connects to "a long tradition of the region's subversive art, which gave expression to the worlds and realities hidden from the official discourses of those in control" (2012: 4). Moreover, frequent recurrence of magic realism in regional cinema (exemplified in many films discussed in this book, from *Snow* and *Someone Else's America*, to *Charleston* and *Underground*, discussed later in this chapter) might also be articulating the sense of Eastern Europe's and the Balkan's always already implicit otherness as described in the works of Wolff and Todorova. Indeed, Skrodzka notes that "the status of East Central Europe as the 'difference within' has persisted even after the region's integration into the European Union" (9) (it should be noted, however, that most Yugoslav successor states currently remain outside of the EU borders).

Magic realism in *Charleston* indeed serves toward depicting a different world, one removed from logic and reason and imbued with passionate impulsivity and excess. The film's two main characters, Ognjenka and Small Goddess, are sisters who carry on the family trade of *naricaljka*—a traditional and nowadays near-extinct skill in which women are paid to mourn at funerals, but their performance is not simply of mere crying. Rather, *naricaljka* takes a very specific cry-and-song routine that narrates the life of the deceased and vocalizes the grief of the surviving. This traditional profession of Ognjenka and Small Goddess, typically associated with the more rural areas, is in direct juxtaposition with the profession of the two men they meet on their quest to bring back a man to the village in order to satisfy the women (who are deprived of sexual encounters with men). One man is a Charleston dancer and the other a strongman and an acrobat. But there is also a parallel between what the two pairs do for a living—they all require certain levels of showmanship, albeit rooted in different temporalities with respect to modernity. While *naricaljka* is a traditional profession that is slowly dying off, modern dance, song, and acrobatics are on the rise in the new world of the early twentieth century.

After a series of adventures, and troubles that the two sisters fall into with the spirit of their great grandmother, Great Goddess, the girls return to the village with the two men, but once there, a conflict ensues over whom the men belong to. Women in the village become extremely possessive of them, each eager to sleep with them as soon as possible. In the end, Ognjenka and the strongman manage to leave the village and set off for Belgrade, while Small Goddess and her Charleston dancer die in a minefield left over by the last surviving man of the village. It is unclear whether

Ognjenka will stay in Belgrade and embrace the modern age, where "the 20th century has already started and there are supposed to be no wars in it," or whether she will return to her village and continue with the old way of life.

Charleston for Ognjenka does not resolve the tensions caused by the implied positionality of the region on the crossroads between modernity and tradition, but rather uses magic and hallucinations (induced by a special kind of plum brandy called *paukovača*) to bridge the divides between different worlds: the dead and the living, the old and the new, the rural and the urban, the premodern and modern. In that sense, Serbia is positioned in a stereotypical way that sees the Balkans locked in a dialectic pull between two different civilizational trajectories typically associated with the concepts of East and West (Bjelić 2002). The question of heritage is here positioned as a struggle within that dialectic—between the impulse to maintain traditions and the urge to embrace newness and modernity. Just as it is not clear whether Ognjenka will stay in Belgrade or return to her village, it is also not clear whether the society in general is choosing modernization or sticking to its old ways and traditions, the oscillation between which is aligned along the urban/rural split. The nostalgic slanting here is attached to this particular dialectic tension, more than any one pole that comes to define its limits. In more ways than one, the film comfortably resides at this paradox of impossibility to either leave the old ways entirely behind or avoid modernization altogether, and does not attempt to resolve it. It is, nevertheless, one of the rare instances of a women's heritage film, where matriarchy and unfiltered female sexuality drive the narrative rather than represent its backdrop for an exploration of men.

While it seems to be voyeuristically invested in the magic and the surreal beliefs of the women in the village, the film also looks favorably on the symbols of modernity that the men bring (the gendered implications, however, are quite overt—men are innovators, women are traditional). This is particularly evident in the figure of the strongman, who is an overt reference to a real historical figure: a famous acrobat and strongman Dragoljub Aleksić, who made the first Yugoslav sound film *Innocence Unprotected* in 1943. That film was not preserved in its entirety, but fragments that were saved were later used in Dušan Makavejev's film-collage of the same title, *Innocence Unprotected* (1968), in which Aleksić himself appears to talk about his original film. Makavejev weaves an intertextual narrative about cinema that restores Aleksić's lost film to its rightful status in the history of Yugoslav cinema, while his own film further explores the limits and extents of film as a medium. That intertextual connection is extended in *Charleston*, where a young Dragoljub Aleksić, a legendary figure of the Yugoslav screen, calls overt attention to the historical moment of the emergence of cinema as

one of the defining transitions from premodern to modern times. While *Charleston* not only pays homage to the traditional ways—village wisdom, voodoo, and other supernatural beliefs, as well as to the dying trades like *naricanje*—it also nods to what it sees as positive aspects of modernization, such as the emergence of its own medium.

The nostalgic dialectic between modernity and tradition is central here and serves to somewhat displace the implicit gendered considerations of the historical hardships in the region. Men die in the war and women are left to fend for themselves, but apart from the more practical concerns that this brings to their lives, the women do not seem to be particularly dispossessed. Instead, they take such events as wars and mass demise of men for granted, and with a level of practical resignation. This is why they need to hire someone to do the crying for them at funerals, as they themselves are too busy figuring out the more practical aspects of life, such as where to find new men to have children with, so that they can secure the continuation of the same cycle of life and death. But the heritage of female loss is the film's central preoccupation, even if the women take loss for granted. Where *St. George* was about male concerns, *Charleston* is about the female side of such gender-polarized experience: how to secure and procure reproduction, but sheer libidinal pleasure too. In fact, female sexuality in *Charleston* is uncontained and aggressive so much so that the women are willing to have sex with an old man on his deathbed, if it proves to be their only chance of having sex. But that sexuality is not fetishized here as much as positioned as a driving force of survival, whereby it serves as a practical counterpoint to the tradition of traumatic loss that the women otherwise inevitably inherit. They counter that tradition of loss and trauma by celebrating carnal desires and bodily pleasure, quite unapologetically so. Open carnal desire seems more associated with tradition here, whereby in modernity, a body is less carnivalesque and more disciplined and moreover, fetishized in a different way—either through sartorial excessiveness or through the detached voyeuristic gazing at bodies such as the strongman's.[7] It is difficult to pinpoint *Charleston*'s use of nostalgia as either restorative or reflective, as it rests on the nexus of both. For it to be restorative, it would have had to entail strong overtones of nation-centric belonging, which it does not. It concerns itself more with modernization and its effects on gender roles. In that sense, the film may be more reflective because its longing is not for one specific time frozen in history, but rather for the small historical shifts and the overlaps of traditions that influence our present and future alike. Nevertheless, it is important as a rare instance of a women's heritage film that makes a spectacle of excessive female sexuality, but through a decidedly female-driven point of view.

The next film I discuss in this chapter, Kusturica's *Underground*, merges many of the themes brought up by the films discussed so far, from the uses of comedy and excess, to the crisis of masculinity, to the fact and fiction of history, to the carnal desires that lie beneath the surface of them all (in an underground, as it were). I now turn to this infamous and perhaps defining post-Yugoslav film in order to explore the ways in which it might be the ultimate heritage film coming out of the region since the breakup of Yugoslavia, precisely because it contains all these and many other challenging aspects, yet refuses to be contained by any of them, always expanding the frames of representation into unexpected meanings.

What Lies Beneath: The Heritage of Grotesque Fiction in *Underground*

Examining Emir Kusturica's body of work, Goran Gocić calls his cinema "the cinema of nostalgia" (2001: 133), not only because his protagonists often use relics from the past, but also because his films often are about an imagined past. It is safe to say that Kusturica is in equal measure one of the most celebrated and most controversial filmmakers to come out of Yugoslavia. While his first two films—*Do You Remember Dolly Bell?* (*Sjećaš li se Dolly Bell?* 1981) and *When Father Was Away on Business* (*Otac na službenom putu* 1985)—earned him domestic and international praise (the former won the Golden Lion in Venice, the latter won the Palme d'Or in Cannes and earned an Oscar nomination for best foreign language film), with each subsequent film, Kusturica's reputation seems to have fallen deeper into the domain of controversy. The events around his personal choices and outspoken public persona seem to be the dominant factors in the decline of his standing as a filmmaker, at times more so than the quality of the films themselves.[8]

This is particularly true of his film *Underground* (1995), perhaps because it is one that gained most international prominence, as it earned Kusturica his second Palme d'Or in Cannes. Just as the war in Bosnia was drawing to a painful close in 1995, Kusturica was not only making film history in Cannes, but also bringing to the fore the stark discord between the criticism in his native Bosnia that he betrayed his own people by siding with the Serbian aggression, and the glamour of the Cannes Film Festival, coupled with the acolytes that were bestowed upon him there. What often stays neglected in this extra-cinematic controversy is the fact that *Underground* itself addresses some of the discords that Kusturica-the-public-figure did not address himself. Here, I wish to set aside Kusturica's personal choices and controversial statements in order to examine the film as a cultural text whose meaning is not bound solely by its director (even when that director is a proven *auteur*, perhaps particularly then),

but is rather a "machine with many gears" that trades in the questions of heritage, history, and the impossibility of collective memory, and whose cinematic frame often pushes against even the most stubborn impositions of ideological interpretation.

Underground, perhaps scholarly most scrutinized post-Yugoslav film, is a visually rich and dark work whose story spans over 50 years, from the beginnings of WWII to the wars that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia. As Dina Iordanova notes, in more ways than one, *Underground* intertextually "refers to Francois Rabelais, Hieronymus Bosch, Terry Gilliam and Federico Fellini" (1999: 69). And indeed, the film's formal, stylistic, and narrative aspects are all about various forms of excess—be it visual and auditory oversaturation, abundance of affect, or the absurdist refashioning or exaggeration of certain aspects of history.[9] From the onset, the film is punctuated by long scenes of elaborate weddings and rancorous parties, all accentuated by an incessant use of folk music (the popular "trube" [wind instruments]), which became one of the most iconic stamps of the film). Later in my discussion, I examine how the film's usage of hedonistic excess proves to be one of its most important discursive tools for framing a tilted version of history.

Formally, the film is divided into three chapters, titled "War," "Cold War," and again "War." These correspond to the chronological developments during the 50 years that the film covers (WWII, the Cold War, and the breakup of Yugoslavia), moreover punctuating the suggestion that I have discussed in Chapter 1, that Yugoslavia's history is a history of war(s).[10] The film's central characters, criminals Marko and Crni, are not only best friends, but also love rivals, as they are both infatuated with a young actress, Natalija. The film's first chapter starts with the Nazi bombing of Belgrade and the resulting occupation of Yugoslavia. Marko and Crni use this as an opportunity to start profiteering by smuggling weapons to the resistance, but Marko soon decides to get rid of his love rival Crni by closing him and many others (including his own family members) in an underground cellar under the pretense of safety. In the film's second chapter, the war is over, but Marko, who married Natalija in the meantime, continues the pretense of an ongoing war for those who are hidden in the cellar, so that he can keep deceiving Crni and keep Natalija to himself. Marko has also reinvented himself into a powerful communist official and embellished his war record so that he is now celebrated as a war hero about whom a film is being made. When Crni escapes from the cellar 20 years after the war, Marko's lies are exposed, and he and Natalija blow the underground cellar up and escape. In the film's final chapter, Yugoslavia's breakup is under way, and Crni, Marko, and Natalija all reemerge at the front somewhere in Bosnia, where Crni is commanding an army, and

Marko and Natalija are arms dealers. When Crni inadvertently orders the execution of Marko and Natalija, he returns to the underground, as he finds the outside world too chaotic to function in.

Even though it won one of the most prestigious film awards in the world, the film received its share of critical controversy and criticism, with some hailing it as one of the best films made about the troubled history of Yugoslavia, and others dismissing it as a piece of Serbian propaganda. Krstić thus groups it with another controversial Serbian film that I discussed in Chapter 2, *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, and calls them "explicitly politically incorrect" (2002), while Levi claims that the film's usage of documentary footage that depicts Croatians welcoming Nazi troops into Zagreb is a strategic act "whose primary function is to cinematically empower the discourse of 'Serb victimhood' " (2007: 97). Slavoj Žižek chimed in on the debate, stating that

> *Underground* [together with Milcho Manchevski's *Before the Rain*] is thus the ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism: what these two films offer to the Western liberal gaze is precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war—the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anemic Western life. (1997: 38)

Several other critics have argued that *Underground* engages in problematic self-Balkanization (Iordanova 1999; Elsaesser 2005), thus treating the film's insistence on excess as an exclusively self-objectifying device by which the Balkan is yet again depicted as wild and uncontrollable for the sake of pleasuring the Western gaze. What this criticism finds most problematic about the acts of self-Balkanization is the implication that Balkan people are inherently savage and controlled only by passion, never by reason. Iordanova goes even further in indicting the film, accusing its filmmaker of something she calls the "Riefenstahl syndrome" (76), whereby Kusturica, according to Iordanova, caters to Serbian nationalism, and thus mimes the cinematic propaganda of the kind that Leni Riefenstahl delivered for Nazi Germany. She asserts that "making films in Belgrade when you have the choice of making them anywhere else is taking a side. Kusturica had chosen to take the side of the aggressor" (76). This accusation has been challenged by other scholars (Gocić 2001; Keene 2001), who argue that such dismissals downplay *Underground*'s overt anti-ideological, as well as anti-nationalist stances. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, for instance, notes that

> Rather than analyzing the rather tenuous (and I would argue critical) position in which the film places Yugoslavia and the then-emerging nation-states

> vis-à-vis Europe or the way the film carnivalizes (parodies) the stock images of Balkan stereotypes, critics seemed to demand the same simple condemnations that were already abundant in Western media depictions of the region.
> (2012: 80)

Moreover, Judith Keene argues that the film simply cannot contain valences of nationalist propaganda because its main driving force is the fact that it "is more appropriately located within the cluster of discourses about the structure and formation of national memory" (242). In that sense, she concludes that the film does not side with any national group, but rather inspects the elusive processes by which collective memory often runs in discord with the more private, individual memories. In Keene's own words:

> I argue that the criticism was misplaced which dismissed the film as Serbian propaganda or as "Balkanism" writ large. Instead the film is more usefully critiqued as part of Kusturica's concern with the narratives of national existence and how they in turn resonate within the private lives of ordinary people (233).

And while Keene dismisses the nationalist propaganda/self-Balkanization frames of critique of the film, she concludes that *Underground* is about private lives under difficult historical circumstances, and that its pivotal tension is one between collective and private memories. According to Keene, family, and not a nation or ethnic group, is the key unit that Kusturica concerns himself with (and this is true of virtually his entire oeuvre), and thus the stories he tells are intimate and devastating narratives of private failings rather than of grandiose disasters. Yet such an assertion draws too clear a line of separation between individual and collective memories, when such memories are rarely separated or separable from one another. As Halbwachs has shown in his work on collective memory, private or family memories are construed and maintained within the framework of their interaction with the more public and collective memories, without whom they would have no contextual meaning important for their understanding.

Yet Keene's critique of Iordanova and Žižek is pointed, as it seems that their dismissal of the film is connected to the insistence that the director's own personal choices cannot but guarantee that his work would be an extension of the Serbian nationalism nested where he chose to reside. What Keene shows, on the contrary, is that a careful look at the film itself reveals a text intricately complicated in its approaches to memory-work and its interaction with ideology. But Keene's conclusion that *Underground* is about families, and the rich and passionate lives that Yugoslav people lived, seems to not take into account the political dimension of the film's

uses of excess, ambiguity, absurdity, farce, and pastiche. Instead of being merely tools for self-objectification, or for the celebration of a stereotypically passionate "mentality," perhaps these devices can be viewed as much more complicated mechanisms by which Yugoslav histories of violence are pushed into a representative mode in which any imposition of linear cause-effect explanations fails under the burden of excess incongruities and the unreliability of memories. Galt notes as much with respect to *Underground*, claiming that "the structural articulation of abjection, rather than the affective sight of ruins and bodies, prevents the position of the Western spectator from becoming that of the privileged onlooker who has history explained to him by classical or televisual realism" (147). Thus, instead of being understood through the prism of the current trends in politically correct worldviews premised on protecting the Eastern object from the imposing Western gaze, excess in *Underground* could be read through a Rabelaisian prism—indeed Keene herself states that "*Underground* is more a carnival than a movie" (233)—whereby the carnivalesque exposes the attempts of imposing one-sided meanings to a complicated history of violence as utterly inadequate and insufficient. In other words, perhaps these conflicts *were* incomprehensible to a large extent, due to their excessively traumatic nature. It would follow that such incomprehensibility does not need to be understood solely as a self-Balkanizing pleasurable device designed for Western voyeuristic gaze, as Žižek posits, nor does it have to serve as a unilateral celebration of a passionate mentality of the common folk. It might have more to do with trauma and latency, which sometimes imply that making no rational sense, distorting history, manipulating facts, and puncturing the limits of logical storytelling with an overabundance of excess (so as to wink at the audience), is the only way to approach representing the events in question altogether. This might be the biggest and most misunderstood contribution of *Underground*: while many critics took it at face value, searching for proof that Kusturica indeed became a spokesperson of Serbian nationalist propaganda (which he very well may be), they failed to notice that the film's formal, stylistic, and narrative excesses point to self-mocking of a kind, and represent a ridicule of those very viewers who would expect a single film to contain a linear and all-encompassing, moreover *accurate*, narrative of a history of violence as complicated as that of Yugoslavia and its demise. What the excess of *Underground* paradoxically shows is that a film frame, or any frame for that matter, is inadequate for capturing the many truths about a conflict (those "truths" contained in the tensions between the private and the collective), and that a story does not make logical sense unless some of its aspects are suppressed (or sent underground) so as to achieve a neater narrative through screen memory. Sanjin Pejković notes that the film engages in "fabricating history through the very critique of fabricating history"

(2009: 60). This circular loop renders Truth and History as slippery concepts within which the very fabric of this film, too, is to be perpetually called into question. Thus, *Underground* exposes film itself as merely a temporary vessel which can contain only some, never all, aspects of a complicated history, perhaps because finiteness is an impossible utopian dream, and all that can be put in its place (as a masking device of sorts) is absurdism and pastiche, irrationality, parody, and farce. With such uses of excess, *Underground* refuses to be a part of simple divisions along political, historical, ethnic, and national lines, precisely because it cannot be contained within any such singular modes of screen memory. Goran Gocić claims that

> *Underground* does not offer instantly recognizable good guys and bad guys – and that was the most harrowing experience for everybody who grew up with a constant imposition of a Hollywood worldview. There are culprits and victims, but they are not nationally identified through a racist theory of "good" and "bad" nations.
>
> (2001: 33)

Instead, Gocić argues, *Underground* is "the last in a string of great Eastern European absurdist pastiches" (3), and it works toward reinventing nostalgia by positioning it as a more complicated affective state than a mere reiteration of ideologically-slanted positionalities. Gocić goes on to claim that "since [*Underground*] is an explicit pastiche, one should not jump at the opportunity to read any of its historical 'propositions' literally" (29). Indeed, there is no doubt that in many instances, *Underground* bluntly rewrites history, but it does so quite overtly and deliberately, as a wink to the spectator, suggesting that it is not intended to be read as Real. Rather, it is there to puncture through the veneer of the very notion of the Real, by way of dislocated screen memory. This puncture exposes history as suddenly dangerous in its newness and unexpected riskiness, surprising and prone to rewrites and manipulations.

The excessive hedonism that functions as the driving force behind much of *Underground* is far from being a device of detached escapism. It can be read as a political intervention in and of itself, particularly if viewed through the prism of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, as several critics have done (Keene 2001; Yovanovich 2011; Ravetto-Biagioli 2012; Skrodzka 2012; Kosmidou 2013). Michael Holquist's observation that "the folk" about which Bakhtin writes in *Rabelais and His World* "are blasphemous rather than adoring, cunning rather than intelligent; they are coarse, dirty, and rampantly physical, reveling in oceans of strong drink, pools of sausage, and endless coupling of bodies" (1984: xix) easily fits any character in *Underground*, as they quite literally live a carnivalesque excess

throughout the film. If, as Bakhtin claims, "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order, it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions," then this "temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank, created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life" (1984: 10). These carnivalesque spaces often find their flickers in postmodernity, as sites of the undoing of grand narratives, logic, linearity, Truth, and closure. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli has highlighted the film's carnivalesque aesthetics and structure, arguing that films such as *Underground*:

> [D]o not reflect what [Bakhtin] calls a "temporary suspension" of time, laws, social hierarchies, morals, and so on—that is, a suspension that promises a return to a rejuvenated order. Instead, these films suspend the closure produced by politically motivated moral judgments. To subvert easy resolutions, they point to an indefinite frenzy of violence that leaves little space for renewal or regeneration.
>
> (2012: 90)

Placing *Underground* within the tradition of Yugoslav Black Wave, Ravetto-Biagioli stipulates that the film's approach to forging history (through, for instance, overtly manipulating archival footage) is akin to the way that *Plastic Jesus* (Lazar Stojanović 1971) and *Innocence Unprotected* (Dušan Makavejev 1968) broached the "unresolved genocide" of WWII (92–3) by subverting the official frames of acceptable representation. While Rosalind Galt claims that "*Underground* is not a heritage film" (148) because it is not nationally rooted, what if we consider it as a heritage film that speaks to the possibility of impossible communities? Noting that *Underground* depicts "impossible spaces," Galt argues that

> In laying bare the structure of Balkanism, in reading of the past through the ruins of the present, and in spectacularizing the historical image, *Underground* short-circuits the conventional Western narrative of Yugoslav history, forcing a confrontation with why the space of Yugoslavia should be so impossible and why its history so painful. (171)

Moreover, Galt notes that *Underground* is centered on a melancholic object, and "thus retains a nostalgic desire for the lost national past, while being unable to buy into any of its historical images" (169). I suggest that the prism of the carnivalesque positions *Underground* as a distinctly self-reflexive carrier of reflective nostalgia by way of dislocated screen memory in which an overabundance of excess is not meant to be taken as a literal indication that Yugoslav people are drunks, crooks, fools, and jesters,

but rather as a self-conscious signal that the medium of film functions as one of the few remaining spaces where a temporary suspension (also known as the carnival) of real-life hierarchies of the modes of interpretation (either of history or collective screen memory) can still take place. Kosmidou argues that "Kusturica extends this idea of the carnivalesque excess beyond the characters themselves to encompass Yugoslav culture as a whole" (2013: 105). Kosmidou notes that *Underground* is an expression of reflective nostalgia and, what is more, that its self-reflexive film language indicates the film's "postmemorial position" (101). The film's insistence on excess—of bodies, discourses, and meanings alike—denies impositions of any normative frame of interpretation, precisely because none of those frames can contain that excess in its entirety. In that sense, carnival is a means by which a refusal of received truths and rationalizations of reliable linear history is taking place, and in its place, the film offers not only debauchery and absurdity, but also numerous intertwined transcripts hiding underground. The film's hedonism is offered as a political act by which the prevalent ranks, norms, and prohibitions that frame the reality around it (and extend to every aspect of acceptable representation) are suspended, even negated by the staging of a three-hour extravaganza in which "kitsch" music is virtually non-stopping, and protagonists are morally corrupt are unsympathetic. Likewise, alcohol is abundant, emotions are excessive, and events border on the absurd, if not downright grotesque. Even the division between the ground and the underground in the film can be understood through the prism of the carnivalesque, in which an obsession with the lower strata in every sense of the word—be it bodily, societal, cultural, geographical—is a predominant trait (Bakhtin: 368). The underground/aboveground dynamics function not only as a metaphor for the unconscious/conscious binary (as Keene and Krstić asserted), but also as a reminder that visibility is a deceptive category, as it is often that which remains hidden from view that is a more formative category of the collective unconscious.

More than imposing its own Truth (or screen memory) about the history of Yugoslavia and its breakup (as it has been accused of doing), the film is actively invested in mocking and dislocating truths altogether, and turning them into the sites of their own, as well as the film's undoing time and again. For instance, one of the film's many hints at mocking its own "truths" is expressed by Marko, who says to Natalija: "Art is a lie. We are all liars a little bit." In that sense, the film circulates a dislocated screen memory through reflective nostalgia, a structure of feelings which "dwells on the ambivalence of human longing and belonging, and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity" (Boym: xviii). In the film's second chapter, "Cold War," a socialist propaganda film is being produced, based on Marko's (highly fictionalized) memoirs about the war, in which

he portrays himself as a hero and not the conniving arms dealer that he actually was. This propaganda film becomes a form of *mise-en-abyme* in its obvious absurdity of twisting the events that *Underground* depicted in its first chapter. With that, *Underground* calls attention to its own artifice, by winking at the spectator and inviting him/her to understand that this propaganda film-within-a-film is but a version of *Underground* itself, as both trade in manufacturing fictive truths more than supporting historical facts. One striking element of this complicated film-within-a-film structure is the fact that the actors who are now playing fictional versions of Marko, Crni, and Natalija in the propaganda film are played by the same actors who play the actual Marko, Crni, and Natalija. When Marko and Natalija (who is an actress herself, further complicating the layers of artifice) come face-to-face with these actors who play them in the propaganda movie, they are actually coming face-to-face with themselves, as they are both always already enacting invented identities. This doubling exposes the film's attitude toward identity as such: it can be as manufactured and as manipulated a notion as history and Truth itself. Fictional Marko and Natalija are no different than the actual Marko and Natalija, because the latter two fictionalized their own identities to begin with. Marko has the following exchange with the actor who plays a version of himself on film (both played by Predrag "Miki" Manojlović):

> *Marko*: "You are me."
> *The actor playing Marko*: "Marko, yes. I am you."

This exchange simply reiterates the film's attitude that there is no authentic Self, only fictionalized versions that we produce through the stories we tell (or rather, invent). For instance, Marko and Natalija already play several different roles themselves: above the ground, they perform war heroes based on a fictive version of their actions in the war, and for those who are still underground (and who still believe the war is going on), Marko and Natalija pretend to be the victims of Gestapo torture. Similarly, when Crni finally escapes from the underground cellar, he stumbles upon the propaganda movie set, where he mistakes the actors playing Nazis for real Nazis and kills them. Crni comes across the set while they are filming a scene of the fictional, heroic Crni's execution by the Nazis (above the ground, Crni has been commemorated as a deceased people's hero). But instead of the fictional Crni being executed, the actual Crni kills the actor playing a Nazi who was about to carry out the execution. The actual Crni thus inserts himself into a reenactment of a falsified history of his own life, saving the fictional Crni from his fake death (both Crni's are played by Lazar Ristovski). With this layering of competing "truths," and the doubling, or rather multiplying of (in)authentic identity and, above all, with the questioning of the representational frame altogether, *Underground* performs an

undoing of its own cinematic frame, self-reflexively signaling that it, too, trades in a manipulation of reality that has already been manipulated to begin with. It is another example of how the film channels the tendencies of reflective rather than restorative nostalgia, since, as Boym argues, "restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt" (xviii).

Even the film's use of documentary footage is tampered with—for instance, when Marko is added into it to appear to be standing next to Tito himself, or when the footage of the procession of Tito's coffin through different Yugoslav cities is accompanied by the song "Lili Marlene" (and thus the death of a man who lead Yugoslavia to defeat Nazis is musically accentuated by this unofficial Nazi anthem). This overt forging of history, and incessant dislocation of all levels of truth (Crni to his son: "Never trust a woman who is lying," or Natalija to Marko: "God, you lie so beautifully."), leaves things in a murky relativism, but this relativism need not be a device that dissolves all accountability into nothingness. Rather, it seems that *Underground* is an indictment, its key premise being that everyone plays a role in the machinery that comes to frame our understanding of the artifices of reality, subjectivity, history, and Truth. Galt notes that *Underground* summons "a kaleidoscopic array of views in which the film's historical coordinates are excessively imagined and multiplied, but history as such is never clearly visible" (154). To that end, the film's cellar is not an allegory of Yugoslavia per se (as many critics have asserted), but rather of the more widespread processes of Truth- and History-making through the dynamics of screen memory as such. Moreover, the underground does not represent an underbelly of Yugoslavia only, but appears to be a much more elaborate transnational network. Its maze of hallways and tunnels seems to create an underground highway of sorts (with road signs pointing to Berlin, Athens, and so on) in which unofficial flows of hidden truths, histories, and people take place (both illegal arms trade and undocumented immigration take place within the maze of these transnational underground flows that represent hidden, messy transcripts of history). Thus, Ivan, Marko's brother, wanders through these halls and ends up in Germany (where, in the mental institution that he is placed in, a doctor reacts to Ivan's story about the existence of such an underground maze with: "The whole world is an underground."). Later, Ivan uses the same underground tunnels to return to Yugoslavia as it is being torn apart by the latest war.

The underground in the film thus stands for the hidden transcripts and pathways of truths, histories, memories, and of people, and for the suppressed abject uncanny that has not made it into the official narratives that create our views of a neat world constructed through a linear sense of history. The film's dislocated depiction (both physically and symbolically) of

the last Yugoslav conflict further complicates such views of a neat world in which divisions are simple. We find Marko, back to being an arms dealer, at the site of a battle presumably somewhere in Bosnia, as he is negotiating a sale with someone who seems to be from a different ethnic side than Marko—since Marko's sales pitch consists of stating the "irrelevance of ethnic and religious differences between us." This deal (an example of a hidden transcript of history, whereby such transactions took place but cannot be incorporated into official histories) is being brokered by the UN peace forces, and moreover, the buyer is played by Kusturica himself. With this cameo, Kusturica's controversial persona is inserted into the texture of the film. The fact that Kusturica appears in a scene in which the film is pointing out the irony of a cross-ethnic arms trade of guns and ammunition with which those same ethnic sides would then be killing each other serves here to point out the absurdity of simplistic divisions that drive the war itself. Aligned with this are Marko's final words, which are offered both as a grotesquely cynical absurdity and as the film's commentary on the war that tore Yugoslavia apart: "There is no war until a brother turns against brother." Similarly, it is not clear—nor does it seem to matter—whose army Crni belongs to in this war, as his soldier reports that the unit captured "Chetniks, Ustashas, UN forces, and arms trade dealers" alike. When a UN officer asks him who his army belongs to, Crni answers: "To me." He seems to be fighting in a fictive war for Yugoslavia's liberation still. When he realizes that the fight is futile, Crni leads a small contingent of civilians and animals back to the underground, and there, following his dead son, he falls into an even deeper underbelly of reality in a stretch to recreate the fictive country that no longer is (if it ever truly was).

Although for most of its running time, it is a hallucination-like revisionist look back at the country that no longer exists, *Underground* resists the ideologically slanted restorative nostalgia driven by the ambition of uncovering the Truth. Rather, it chooses to deconstruct the notion of Truth altogether, as well as to make fun of well-known historical facts, and also to linger, as Boym would claim, "on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time" (41). The very last scene of the film illustrates this most overtly, when all major characters, young again, are reunited for a rancorous wedding celebration on a shore, and as they, yet again, engage in carnivalesque debauchery, the piece of land on which they are partying detaches itself from the rest of the land and starts floating away in an unknown direction. While Daniel Goulding observes that "at the heart of the film is the fateful Rabelasian journey through imagined time and history," he also notes that, "as the film progresses, elements of absurdist farce and wild carnivalesque humor mutate into something much darker and more somber, with the climactic war scene in the burning

village more nearly resembling Jacobean tragedy than savage farce" (2002: 199). Be that as it may, the film nevertheless returns to the framework of Rabelasian excess one last time in its final scene, perhaps reiterating the point that this is the space where it chooses to finally reside. The use of magic realism is a reminder that an imposition of a strictly realist reading of the film would be a futile task. Noting Latin American filmmakers and their use of magic realism as Kusturica's stated influences, Aga Skrodzka argues that "Kusturica's *Underground*, more than a realm of self-exoticizing spectacle, is a screen space where temporalities coexist and their recurrent clashing leads to a certain creative exaltation of affect and perception" (2012: 55).

Moreover, in the film's final sequence, Yugoslavia is, through the magic realist detachment of the land, exposed for what it seems to have been for the entirety of the film: a dreamed-up space and time, and an unreal, imagined, fictional object of dislocated screen memory marked by the hidden transcripts of history as much as the official Truths. Before the characters float away on this detached island, Ivan breaks the fourth wall and addresses the camera directly, delivering a soliloquy about the future in which the remaining inhabitants of this dreamed-up country (that no longer exists, if it ever did) would rebuild the *illusion* of that country and carry on some of the familiar rituals that have made them into a collective body in the first place. He finishes with: "We will remember our country with pain, sadness and happiness, when we tell our children stories that begin like a fairytale: 'Once upon a time, there was a country . . .' " As their island slowly floats away, the final inscription over it reads: "This story has no ending." These poetic final frames point to the film's deep investment in the reflective nostalgia of dislocated screen memory, as a state that does not seek to be resolved by realistic satisfactions of its longing (thus, no ending in sight). Instead, it is invested in the melancholic longing for an incommensurable impossibility, as a goal in and of itself. To that end, *Underground* is not politically aligned, but it does perform a politics of resistance to dominant frames of interpretation (be they national, ethnic, religious, and so on). It acts as a dislocated object of counter-memory, where "counter-memory embodies aspects of myth and aspects of history, but it retains an enduring suspicion of both categories" (Lipsitz 1990: 213). Instead of being aligned along ideologically delineated lines, *Underground* is aligned *affectively*, with those whose yearning for a time and place that no longer exists is not a means to an ideological end, but rather a means toward denying primacy to Truth, realism, and singular frames of representation, as well as to the hierarchies, moral norms, and divisions that brought that dreamed-up, possibly fictive country to its knees in the first place (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 This story has no end (*Underground*, screen grab)

Film as a Ghost

Charity Scribner notes that "authentic memory does not reconstitute a homogeneous image of the past. It reawakens antagonisms that thwart the resolution of—and in—any narrative" (165). With this in mind, in this chapter, I have looked at a number of films that address the question of ethno-national collective heritage, memory, traumatic loss, and importantly, nostalgia that often permeates the search for historically rooted resolutions and explanations of present-day anxieties by way of screen memories. The films I discussed here are by no means an exhaustive archive of regional cinema that deals with such themes (indeed, one could argue that any film is inevitably about remembering, and always about the anxieties that burden its present, be they overt or hidden underneath the surface). But instead of attempting to survey a more exhaustive list of

such films, I focused on those that neatly demarcate, but at times also blur the two distinct poles of nostalgia—the restorative and the reflective—and expose the affective ambiguities that such blurring puts forth. What the dislocation of nostalgia signals is the futility of attempting to smooth over the messiness of the discursive proliferations of meaning within both the past and the present alike. Some films turn to comedy to find a channel for articulating the absurdities of the projects of remembering (and forgetting), others turn to historical drama and tragedy to inspect (or sometimes conceal) the underlying plights of the present. Sometimes fantasy takes primacy over what is "real" as a means to negotiate the traumas of the present and past alike. But throughout all these approaches, what becomes starkly clear is that film itself serves as a mirage of sorts, a temporary illusory vision that can have the appearance, and thus the affective impact of the "real," however implausible that imaginary real of the film might ultimately seem. This affective impact is not to be neglected when dislocated screen memory, and the modes of spectatorial alignment are taken into consideration, especially as that alignment relates to the quite real processes of consensus-building in relation to how the past is written into a factual history. I argue that the affective impact of dislocated, reflective nostalgic sentiments has the potential to move spectatorial bodies in ways that might displace a sense of static history devoid of our emotional investments in its creation. In other words, some films discussed here—especially those with unresolvable takes on Truth—have the potential to call attention to the narrative artifice of history, by painting it as a product of ideological emplotment as much as it is a product of fact.

Those films that treat the Real as a product of historical emplotment—and thus refuse to settle for neat closures that would delegate nostalgia into a tool of ideology—have an important function to perform beyond the boundaries of film as a medium. They can remain memory-objects that haunt nationalist projects, exemplifying the way cultural memory can undermine the imposition of reductive discourses about history and collective memory alike. In that sense, some of the films I discuss above act as cultural ghosts (much as they themselves are haunted by ghosts), inasmuch as they are appearances that materialize to those who are willing to recognize them as reminders that looking back often means looking within, to see what lies beneath the present veneer of reality. Such films-as-ghosts act as repositories of dislocated screen memories that do not make up a coherent historical narrative, as ghosts are immaterial and elusive, impossible to pin down. This is why, I argue, *Underground* acts as the greatest ghost of them all, offering dislocated screen memories in post-Yugoslav cultural spaces. It is a film that, by its sheer cultural prominence, appears in clear view, yet any imposition of a neat interpretation is undermined by

its refusal to conform to the expectations of logic and reason (and thus, because it refuses to be pinned down as one thing, one can read into it myriad incomplete interpretations, including those that dismiss the film as "merely" nationalist). It is as if the film allows everyone to write in their own memories and histories into the overabundance that it insists on evoking, and thus it performs an act of absorption: it becomes a containment vessel for the sum of all its individual parts, as its collective memory stores feelings impossible to take apart, but feelings that make the collective body what it is—a messy unity with an abject past and an uncertain, but certainly nostalgic future.[11] The film dwells in our collective underground, confusing, but as real as are all the separate ideologies of logic that have suppressed it to begin with.

If, as Boym claims, "nostalgia remains an intermediary between collective and individual memory" (54), then film is one of its most prominent vehicles: a public text that is experienced intimately, as it weaves a link between collective experiences and individual lives, and thus attaches the viewer to a shared past (real or imagined). The work of reflective nostalgia is never finished, as it is "a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future" (55). Reflective nostalgia is thus a state of melancholia in the context of post-Yugoslav spaces, often enacted in the form of dislocated screen memories evoked by Yugo-nostalgia, a complicated structure of feelings that has deep political implications and that ultimately desires the impossible. Zala Volčič (2007) argues that Yugo-nostalgia is an utterly paradoxical state because those who experience it seem to be mourning that which they have collectively helped destroy. While Volčič and Juričić critique the increasingly capitalist overtones reflected in the commercialization of Yugo-nostalgia, what interests me more about it are the affective terms of political investment that is centered on insurmountable loss (traumatic in its effect). Moreover, Yugo-nostalgia's anti-capitalist overtones have been explored in film, notably in Andrej Košak's *State of Shock* (*Stanje šoka* 2011, Slovenia), in which the protagonist, a Socialist worker Petar, descends into an unexplained catatonic state in 1986, only to emerge back from amnesia in 1996, after Yugoslavia is gone and Slovenia is an independent nation-state ruled by transitional democracy and corrupt neoliberal capitalism. Without any memory of the past ten years, he is forced to reconstruct the lost decade through the stories others tell him. Hence, he is made to learn, retroactively, about the violent end of Yugoslavia, which his now-teenage daughter narrates to him. He asks her the central question that has been on the mind of many: "Why did Yugoslavia fall apart? How come it does not exist anymore?" to which she says that everyone wanted to live in their separate states. "And how is it now?" Petar asks. "Everyone

has their own state. But it is one big sadness, if you ask me," answers the daughter.

Learning that his old factory job has been replaced by a computer, Petar is unable to adjust to the new social and economic system of neoliberal exploitation. He admits to his psychiatrist that he dreams of Socialism and Yugoslavia, which he describes as "carefree times when one knew what is what." After this conversation, the psychiatrist diagnoses Petar with mental illness and tells his former wife Marica (now married to his best friend, a Serb Jovo) that Petar suffers from hallucinations about "Yugoslavia, pioneers, the blue train . . . " When he is told that he is officially mentally ill, Petar exclaims: "If anyone is mentally ill it is the society itself!" The film's anti-capitalist overtones, reflected in nostalgia for Yugoslav Socialism, are reiterated by Marica, who eventually admits to Petar that she misses their humble life in "the hole" (a basement apartment they used to live in). "I realized how much more important are the small things we have, not the material ones we chase every day," she says. Finally, in the film's climax, layoffs in their factory (formerly known as Udarnik, now Eurokrom) are announced as part of capitalist restructuring. Upon learning that he is being laid off, Jovo exclaims: "Fuck your capitalist mothers! I shit on your Europe!" But, in a twist, Petar manages to stop the impending layoffs by rallying the workers to take charge and resist the corrupt privatization. After the working class do so, Petar delivers a victory speech, televised nationally. He talks about diminishing workers' rights and growing exploitation, and the general societal preoccupation with amassing material wealth at the expense of being truly happy. This anti-capitalist speech is imbued with Yugo-nostalgia, where this structure of feelings is starkly pitted against capitalism itself, rather than co-opted by it. In the end, the non-nuclear family consisting of Marica, Petar, Jovo, and their children walk away defiantly. The film suggests that within the capitalist framework, non-coopted Yugo-nostalgia is deemed mental illness because those who "suffer" from it refuse to become productive capitalists. The film's Yugo-nostalgic, anti-capitalist stance, however, suggests that it is capitalism itself that is an illness, and that the heritage of Socialism needs to be upheld if important touchstones of the social contract—mutual respect and solidarity—are to be maintained. Scribner has noted that "[a]s factories and plants are shut down, the site of culture becomes an important meeting ground for the collective" (158). *The State of Shock* seems to be one such site of culture, where an articulation of anti-capitalist tendencies becomes an opportunity for re-emergence of a lost affective community through Yugo-nostalgia.

While Yugo-nostalgia is certainly not a one-dimensional occurrence, and can have many iterations (Volčič identifies three forms: revisionist,

aesthetic, and escapist/utopian), in film, it often takes the form of a dislocated screen memory of belonging collectively *while* understanding that it is an always already lost imagined community that one strives toward belonging to in the first place. In other words, its cultural articulations often acknowledge the utter paradox on which the structure of feelings known as Yugo-nostalgia is based on, where the traumatic loss of an impossible object is its founding event. Ferreira notes that Yugo-nostalgia is, in *Underground*, staged as an "impossible synthesis between 'utopia' and 'disicanto'—grief, sadness and joy" (2006: 136). In that sense, this nostalgia, when embraced in its paradoxical entirety, as it is in *Underground* perhaps more so than anywhere else, is not simply escapist or utopian, but more a disruption of all forms of collective memory and its relation to history, to the point where both history and memory are revealed as false and true at the same time—but always in mutually informative ways.

In this chapter, I have traced iterations of the nostalgic affect and their relation to memory and history that range from distinctly nationalist to extremely disruptive of national belonging as a stable social position. They are all productive affective states, since they reiterate, and thus further emulate, those political stances that come to inform them in the first place. Regardless of how nostalgia is framed politically (through film, or culture in general), it always plays a concrete role in the present (via the mechanics of screen memory, dislocated and otherwise). Moreover, this is where the futurity of nostalgia comes into play—nostalgia's presence always plays the role of directing us toward envisioning a future of one kind or another, but always a future alleviated from present-day difficulties. Whether it is a future of belonging primarily to a nation or to a collective community that is messier and thus not easily politicized, depends on how we choose to align ourselves with respect to looking back into the shared imagined past.

5

Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Habitus of Postmemory

Youth After Yugoslavia: Subcultures and Phantom Pain

In one of the most memorable post-Yugoslav films about youth, Srđan Dragojević's *The Wounds* (*Rane* 1998, Serbia), the story revolves around two troubled boys growing up in Milošević's Serbia of the 1990s. The teenagers' approach to life—crime, violence, drugs, and the beats of *turbo folk* fused into a hallucinatory daze—is inextricably tied to the context of their growing up: in a culture in which youth is seen as merely a static prop for the ideological mechanisms that position a violent nation as the primary object of collective identification. But the film's starkest critique of Milošević's Serbia does not lie in the fact that the youth are neglected to such an extent that they turn to extreme violence and detached nihilism. Rather, the harshest indictment comes from the fact that the boys' transformation into underage criminals is not an abomination in any way, but rather *conforms* to the ideals of normative masculinity in Serbia at the time, when tough-guy criminals and their turbo folk girlfriends were celebrated as exemplary performances of the ideal national coupling (a reiteration of ethno-nationalist ideology in the form of what here might be appropriately called "turbo-patriarchy"). As Bjelić has argued, the parallels between the youth's violence in *The Wounds* and Milošević's killing machine are multifold: "both operate on the homoerotic economy of pleasure" (2005: 115), and moreover, while the troubled adolescents emulate the glamorized Hollywood gangster aesthetic of Cagney and Bogart, they also reenact "the 'sovereign' violence of Milošević's government" (113).

The representation of youth-in-trouble in *The Wounds* is but the tip of the iceberg in a growing body of regional cinematic work that takes the plight of urban youth as its main device of social critique,[1] with particular emphasis on what might be deemed "a subcultural turn": a number

of recent films that attempt to address questions of postwar reality, violence, and traumatic memory through the depiction of distinctly urban (and typically male-dominated) subcultural activity under precarious circumstances that precipitate its emergence. This chapter looks at several such films and explores how their very different approaches to urban subcultural belonging bring up important aspects of coming of age in a post-conflict reality. Although differently oriented vis-à-vis its relationship to the parent culture, subcultural belonging in these films is positioned as a reaction to the traumas produced by the dominant parent culture in the past two decades and possibly beyond. I examine how subcultural attachments attempt to resolve some of the more painful aspects of the recent history of the region, and I approach this question from the standpoint of what Marianne Hirsch (2008) has called *postmemory*: a memory of traumatic events not experienced firsthand but rather transferred from the first generation of survivors—"of victims as well as perpetrators" (105)—to the second generation, who experiences it vicariously. Since today's post-Yugoslav youth either would not have been born yet or would have been too young to fully understand the devastating extent of the wars and atrocities of the 1990s as they were happening, postmemory seems an appropriate framework to apply in exploring the clandestine and often unarticulated circulation of posttraumatic remembering that permeates post-conflict cultures in which such youth is coming of age.[2]

The films discussed here exemplify a range of cinematic representations of the youth-in-trouble motif that has prominently figured in recent regional film. Subcultural activity is positioned in these films as a means by which group attachments among youth attempt to ameliorate, if not resolve, some of the more troubling aspects of what might be called their traumatized (and traumatizing) parent culture. In the term "parent culture," I refer to a set of complicated assemblages that entail the specificity of the historical moment within which youth subcultures are operating, and their ideological, political, and material domains. I draw particular attention to the complicated points of convergence between the cinematic frame, collective trauma, ethno-nation, class belonging, parent and youth cultures, violence, gender normativity, and postmemory. In virtually all post-Yugoslav films about youth subcultures, one aspect of the dominant parent culture—the material and economic devastation that marked the end of Yugoslavia—is at the same time invisible and omnipresent, inescapable as much as it is unspoken of. Seemingly disinterested in the youth, the parent culture fails to hail them as subjects in a meaningful way, and this provides an ignition to turn to subcultural activity that recasts social structures and hierarchies into a differently organized system, typically understood as resistance. I explore how class belonging becomes one

of the channels through which a subcultural attachment is grounded by material conditions, and moreover, rationalized by the films.

My treatment of youth subcultures and their relationship to parent cultures is greatly influenced by the work of Stuart Hall and the "Birmingham School" (1976, 1979), Pierre Bourdieu's work in *Distinction* (1984) and Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" (1990). In particular, the Birmingham School's *Resistance to Rituals* postulated some of the key premises in the study of subcultures[3]: namely, that the material conditions which precipitate subcultural activity play a crucial role in the orientation—as well as meaning—that such activity takes. Highly influential as they have been, the Birmingham School's studies of youth subcultures have also been scrutinized for the limits of the empirical research conducted, the favoring of white, male, heterosexual subcultural groups as normative forms of youth culture, and for what has been called "fetishism of resistance" (Kellner 1995: 38).[4] While concepts such as material conditions and socioeconomic factors are nowadays often jettisoned in favor of embracing the fluidity of social interactions when it comes to studies of subcultures, I wish to retain a connection between youth (sub)cultures and the materiality within which they emerge, especially in a post-conflict context, for the sake of exploring how the socioeconomic factors play a role in the way that the fluidity of class performativity, for instance, is coded as in/authentic. Therefore, while I consider Butler's "performativity" and Bourdieu's "disposition" as important for youth's constitution of subcultural and class-consciousness, I also retain the importance of the material contradictions that subcultures try—and ultimately fail—to resolve. One of the key critiques of the studies of subculture is that they often seem to privilege male, urban and heterosexual subcultural spaces and groups. While such normative subcultures certainly provide opportunities to explore how homosocial or homoerotic elements figure into affective attachments that are at the core of subcultural belonging, girls do seem to still be a group less frequently associated with the term "subculture" than boys. While there are female protagonists in films about male subcultures (*Skinning*, *Tilva Ros*, *Southern Scum Go Home!*)—and moreover, they are active, if supporting participants in subcultural action—it should be noted that they remain far outnumbered and sidelined by the predominantly male members of their groups.

In what follows, I examine cinematic instances where the postmemory of collective ethno-national trauma is the pivotal element in the formation of subcultural activity. Postmemory is the intricate web of clandestine memories that attach to meanings, practices, and affective stances exchanged between the first and second generation after a catastrophe. The

second generation does not have a firsthand memory of the catastrophe, but nevertheless inherits an intimate remembering of it not only through stories and images, but more often through the silences, gaps, and through what is left unsaid. One of the tasks of looking at this generational transference of memory is to explore the "ethics and the aesthetics of remembrance in the aftermath of catastrophe" (Hirsch 2008: 104). My analysis examines the workings of vicarious remembering as they are articulated both through the ethics of the youth who inherit the postmemory, and also through the subcultural aesthetics of this clandestine process in its classed implications. Exploring how postmemory permeates, influences, changes, and shifts social belonging is extremely important because "at stake is precisely 'the guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection' and that past's passing into history" (104). If Hebdige saw in the complicated dynamics of assimilation and rejection between white working class and black immigrant youth cultures "a phantom history of race relations" (1979: 45) in postwar Britain being played out via subcultural belonging, then perhaps a parallel could be drawn here in the linkages between a phantom history—or postmemory—of brutal ethnic violence and recent cinematic representations of youth's subcultural lives. I am particularly interested in the question of what such cinematic representations do with respect to the contexts marked—implicitly or overtly—by postmemory as a hidden transcript that informs the films' constructions of subcultural activity as either disruptive or reiterative of the status quo.

I first discuss masculinist violence and skinhead subculture, as they relate to the postmemory of recent wars in the Serbian film *Skinning* (Stevan Filipović 2010, Serbia). I then turn to a different kind of male subculture—that of skateboarders—represented in *Tilva Ros*, as I discuss the ways in which the skaters' enjoyment of self-inflicted bodily harm works as a performance of a phantom injury formed through postmemory. In the sections that follow, I examine youth delinquency, as evoked in several notable post-Yugoslav films about youth. Since girls are rarely considered to be active subcultural participants, my analysis of *Clip* (Maja Miloš 2012, Serbia) positions this absence as a result of the patriarchal controlling of channels of vision when it comes to the framing of the girl-produced culture. Throughout the chapter, I explore cinematic representations of coming of age and the youth-in-trouble trope, particularly in relation to the (post)memory of violence that permeates the youth's habitus. I use the concept "habitus" here in line with Pierre Bourdieu's influential theorizing about the term, as it links to the structures of social class, material conditions, and taste dispositions:

> The structures characteristic of a determinate type of conditions of existence, through the economic and social necessity which they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous universe of family relationships, or more precisely, through the mediation of the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (sexual division of labor, domestic morality, cares, strife, tastes, etc.), produce the structures of the habitus which become in turn the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience.
> (1977: 78)

In the final section of the chapter, I look at a recent Bosnian film about orphans of war, *Children of Sarajevo* (Aida Begić 2012, Bosnia-Herzegovina), to argue that a form of habitus is formed for children raised through the war experience and that this war experience is not only dependent on class positioning, but that it also produces new class formations in its aftermath. This becomes particularly important when post-Yugoslav postwar youth is considered, as their rebellion against the parent culture exposes the dominant culture's variously hierarchized, volatile inequalities in explicit ways.

Skinheads, Ideology, Disposition, and Accountability

Just like *The Wounds* situated its examination of troubled adolescence within the distinctly urban setting of the streets of Belgrade, so does Filipović's *Šišanje* (*Skinning*), a film that addresses, albeit in a highly detached observational tone, the most burning of topics when it comes to youth cultures in the region, and Serbia in particular: the emergence—or at least greater visibility—of extreme right-wing subcultures in the aftermath of wars. Yet, while *The Wounds* depicts Belgrade through a cosmopolitan framework, mirroring the chaotic and fragmented narratives typical of the "global city" genre (Bjelić 2005), *Skinning*'s vision of Belgrade appears to put forth the more parochial aspects of city dwelling, as its claustrophobic atmosphere of stuckness becomes one of the key ignitions for the central character's makeover from a mild-mannered geek into a neo-Nazi.[5] The mise-en-scène is depicted through a filtered soft focus with warm lighting that is at odds with the starkness of the grim reality and violence that permeates the film, and that gives Belgrade the feel of a disconnected, isolated, even imaginary place far removed from the notion of a global city dispersed into an unstoppable flow of people, information, ideas, and (organized) chaos. In *Skinning*, the chaos exists, but its articulations are provincial, narrow-minded, and distinctly closed into their own localities, even when their consequences are farther-reaching. Moreover, the inherent

grit of hooligan violence is curiously cushioned by both the use of soft focus and by camera's frequent panning movements that act as a device of smooth distancing rather than bringing the viewer in for a closer inspection. This dissonance creates a mismatch in tone that arguably affects the immediacy of the subject matter, as it makes violence seem like a thing that exists in an unreal dreamscape, not on the streets of an actual city.

Extreme right-wing ideologies in the region of former Yugoslavia received their most blunt utilization in the ethnic wars of the 1990s, but have continued to receive cultural prominence since the democratic changes post-2000. The reasons for their popularity are multifold and too complicated to parse here. Certainly, economic hardships play a role in the disillusionment with democratic plurality and a turn to extreme right-wing ideology, but as Vedran Obućina (2011) notes, there is no guaranteed corellation between economic depravity and the popularity of right-wing ideology.[6] Examining extreme right-wing subcultural activity within post-conflict societies (particularly Croatia), Perasović argues that

> Such xenophobic practices are only the tip of the iceberg, beneath which lie deeper social processes of socialization, retraditionalization and the maintenance of patriarchal relations that sustain not only practices of ethnic hatred and violence, but also the conventional, unquestioned, moderate nationalism of the silent majority.
>
> (2008: 98)

Moreover, as Gordy has claimed in the case of Serbia's legacy of the 1990s, "the combined impact of dictatorial strategies, national homogenization, international isolation, and war made the destruction of alternatives easier by heightening and intensifying social divisions" (1999: 6–7).

Skinning takes up these themes of Serbia's post-conflict/post-Socialist reality of social divisions and depicts a group of skinhead soccer fans: a violent, extreme right-wing subculture whose representation is approached through the initiation of a naive new member who goes on to become one of the movement's most extreme participants (and thus, the film follows the trajectory of a coming-of-age motif that representations of neo-Nazi subcultures frequently enact[7]). The story follows a young, bright Novica (whose name literally evokes a novice) as he becomes increasingly involved with a local skinhead group led by his schoolmate Relja. Novica and Relja are self-proclaimed "working class kids," and even though that self-identification is seemingly not rooted in the material conditions of their background, their performance of class-conscious identity is depicted as a determining factor for the directionality of their subcultural activity. Even though Novica quickly becomes one of the most active, extreme and violent members of the skinhead group, there is no one triggering event that

pushes him into this particular subculture. Instead, he seems to become a part of it out of mere convenience that borders with passivity. Prior to his initiation, Novica appears to be a mild-mannered nerd who has a crush on Mina, a girl who is one of the skinhead group's few female members. Novica is also a math whiz who shares a close bond with his math teacher. When this math teacher later turns out to be gay, the now-skinhead Novica brutally assaults him and, through that assault, also performs a violent disassociation with his more moderate self, who saw the math teacher as a role model and as a friend. But Novica's first violent act—shocking in its unexpectedness—is killing a Roma teenager that the group comes across one evening. This act appears extreme even to his fellow skinheads. Novica's act of killing quickly propels him into the leadership position and earns him Mina's admiration, at the same time as it distances Relja from the group altogether. Initially haunted by nightmares and flashbacks of the murder, Novica sheds his guilty conscience by fully embracing the skinhead subculture and becoming its official member—an initiation that is sealed by his sexual intercourse with Mina, whereby an admission of guilt, or acceptance of accountability, is abandoned for the sake of reactionary politics of suppression that promises bodily pleasure.

The central character's transformation into a violent skinhead leader is, perhaps paradoxically, depicted as an almost passive process of resignation, whereby Novica becomes hailed into an active subject position of a significant social actor via a passive and uncritical acceptance of right-wing chauvinism that he subsequently perpetuates. Seen by some critics as a weak element of the film, since it fails to articulate Novica's transition in more convincing terms, this passive makeover into an active puppet of the ideological (state) apparatus nevertheless marks a significant cinematic conundrum: in the process of examining the clerico-intellectual genealogy of Serbia's extreme right-wing ideology premised on the nation's exceptionalism, the film risks placing sole responsibility for Novica's transition onto these higher powers, stripping individual actors of accountability for their actions, and thus absolving an entire "lost generation"[8] off their violent sins on the basis of ignorance, or at least the inability to know better after growing up in a society replete with "removed values" (from popular local expression "pomerene vrednosti"). In the film's opening scenes, documentary footage of hooligan violence is coupled with a talk show in which Professor Hadži-Tankosić—a nationalist ideologue—offers an explanation for its occurrence: he reminds the host that these "children" grew up during times of upheaval, wars, violence, Milošević and "anti-Serbian madness." In this interpretation, then, "the children" who commit hooligan violence are not active agents of troubling behavior but mere conduits of traumatized postmemory. This interpretation by the Professor speaks to

the passive reaction to the right-wing youth violence by the ruling elites, both intellectual and political, precisely because looking into the problem beyond the cliché of they-simply-don't-know-better would require inspecting how those very ruling elites of the parent culture offered scripts by which subcultural violence now not only mimics and perpetuates, but also justifies ethno-nationalist exceptionalism. The film attempts to disrupt the logic of passive inheritance: as Novica becomes more extreme, he also grows disillusioned with the elites because of their seeming emphasis on rhetoric as opposed to concrete action. Moreover, a counterpoint to "higher powers" is also offered in the voice of Lidija, a former detective turned NGO activist. She responds to Professor's remarks about "the children" by articulating what seems to be the film's final stance: that there is a line which, when crossed, cannot take out personal accountability from violent actions of individuals, no matter how young. However, the main problem with this indictment seems to be that the links between ideology and the subjects that guarantee its continuation is never fully explored by the film. In *Skinning*, ideological interpellation represents a starkly conscious—and calculated—process by which only those that choose so become subsumed under it. In other words, Althusser's statement that "ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects" (1971: 175), and moreover, that there are no subjects without ideology, is done away with, as the more subtle ways in which hegemony (of aforementioned silent majority) works to perpetuate troubling hierarchies are not addressed here.

As Althusser has argued, ideology is not something that resides outside individual bodies, nor is it simply imposed in a linear top-down style of assimilation (as this film would have it). Moreover, it cannot be adopted or shed in the blink of an eye. Rather, it is an omnipresent assemblage whose extensions are internalized to the point of seamlessness, further disseminated as dispositions—understood as "homogeneous systems [. . .] capable of generating similar practices; and who possess a set of common properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed" (Bourdieu 1984: 101). As much as it invests time into exploring the role of the ideological (intellectuals, family, church) and repressive (police) state apparatuses in subcultural right-wing violence, *Skinning* does it in generalized rather than intimate terms, failing to depict a crucial connection: namely, how the postmemory of state-sanctioned violence becomes internalized into youth's habitual disposition by which social orientation is limited, if not entirely predetermined, and the role of a powerful social actor possible only if in accordance with the interests of the ethno-nation that the actor in turn helps re/produce. Perhaps it is its overt ambition to tackle the regimented totality of the issue that prevents the film from

exploring the fact that "between conditions of existence and practices or representations there intervenes the structuring activity of the agents, who, far from reacting mechanically to mechanical stimulations, respond to the invitations or threats of a world whose meaning they have helped produce" (Bourdieu, 467).

In *Skinning*, the extreme right-wing violence is treated as a product of the parent culture's violent transgressions and the disregard of the effect it would have on the nation's youth, who are now left not to rebel, but rather to mirror, on a subcultural level, and in a top-down model of political agency, the formative violence the state performed, and then suppressed, on a larger scale. When the state attempts to reign in the violence performed subculturally (here through the representatives of the law), its own complicit status in the cycle that produces violence is put into focus as a key element of the equation. Namely, the police who pursue the skinhead group are more interested in cutting deals with them than putting them in jail because those deals would guarantee that any future violence committed by the group would be geared toward state interests, not against them. Indeed, at the end of the film, Novica makes a deal with the police: the evidence against him stays locked away if he remains the leader of the group and reports directly to the detective—and by extension, to the state. With this turn, the obvious is only made official: hooligan violence is brought into the fold of ethno-national(ist) state interests, the fold which, in many ways, it never truly left.

However, the epicenter of the connection between the skinheads and the nationalist state ideology does not lie with the police—they are but a mediator between the skinhead group and the key ideologues of such nationally sanctioned violence: Serbia's public intellectual elite, here embodied in the aforementioned figure of Professor Hadži-Tankosić, whose quasi-intellectual, extreme nationalist, and anti-Semitic ideas disguised as anti-globalizing views directly inspire the skinheads. The figure of Hadži-Tankosić is a not-so-veiled allusion to the role of Serbia's intellectual elites in the rise of nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the infamous SANU (Serbian Academy of Science and Arts) Memorandum of 1986 virtually sanctioned ethno-nationalist ideology and Serbian exceptionalism. The parent culture is here embodied in the set of quasi-intellectual and quasi-religious ideas about the exceptionalism of the Serbian nation, an ideology which serves as a mechanism by which the problem of accountability for violence and warmongering is rendered not only inadequate, but also irrelevant altogether. And here we come to the key motif of the film: the subcultural activity of the skinhead group is never an anti-establishment activity, never really geared against the dominant parent culture, never really a rebellion, even when it fashions itself

as such. Instead, extreme right-wing violence is directed precisely toward aiding ethno-nationalist state interests so carefully cultivated by the ruling elites. This violence has perpetual postmemory echoes of the wars that Serbia led during the 1990s—wars that seem to act as both the origin and justification of the youth's destructive attitudes: from animosity toward ethnic others, to chants that glorify genocide, to graffiti that proclaim that "Kosovo is Serbia."

The skinhead youth's dissatisfaction is channeled into violence against some of society's most disenfranchised groups: the Roma and sexual minorities. The paradox of misdirecting blame in this way is precisely why the group cannot resolve the conditions that have precipitated its discontent. These marginalized groups against whom the skinheads rally are numerous. In an early exchange, Novica's initiator Relja claims: "You'll see, our crew are all real Serbs. They would never harm someone weaker than them . . . Except if it was a faggot or a Jew," to which Novica replies: "Or a shiptar [derogatory for a Kosovo Albanian]," and Relja adds: "Or a Croat," and the list keeps growing to include anyone who does not fall under the category of a "real Serb," that realness here measured by the level of intolerance against variously constructed "Others." In a later scene with the detective who has evidence that Novica killed the Roma teenager, Novica learns that the teenager was briefly visiting Belgrade from Vienna, where his "college-educated parents" live. This reveal that the victim comes from a respectable family is positioned as a moment in which Novica might realize the gravity of his actions, the implication being that he did not kill an uneducated, poor, homeless Gypsy, but a boy from a rather well-educated, well-off family—a boy whose life, it is implied, actually *matters*. Social class thus figures into the measuring of how heavy the hate crime is, as it is implied that it would somehow be a lesser offense if the victim was indeed poor, homeless, orphaned, or uneducated. Race is then also inflected by class and vice versa, and a "Gypsy" is defined not necessarily only by skin color, but also as inevitably poor and uneducated, "filthy." This attitude is furthered when Novica's group engages in what they call the "Operation Hygiene"—an attack on a Belgrade's Roma slum, during which they burn down the settlement and beat up many of its residents, including children. This aggressive approach to displacing the Roma settlements mimics a systematic, state-sanctioned policy of clearing out the Roma communities from urban centers and busing them away from public view under the excuse that such settlements are non-sanitary, and unsuitable for modern urban landscapes.[9] The skinheads' "Operation Hygiene" then mirrors the already existing state violence toward the marginalized, reaffirming ideas about social class and respectability as measures of what is considered violence in the first place.

The skinheads' violent attitudes toward other ethnic groups are particularly apparent during a soccer game at which the skinhead group chants the infamous Serbian extreme right-wing slogan: "Nož, žica, Srebrenica" [Knife, wire, Srebrenica], alluding to the genocide that occurred in eastern Bosnia in 1995. The manipulation of postmemory that this appropriation of genocide performs completely negates Hirsch' questions about ethical responsibility:

> What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the crimes? Can the memory of genocide be transformed into action and resistance?
>
> (Hirsch 2008: 104)

The appropriated postmemory now creates a phantom presence of violence, which is in turn reenacted by the youth through aggressive forms of subcultural activity: the blatant embracing of mass crimes committed against ethnic others. With this, the skinheads, almost paradoxically, go against the dominant nationalist Serbian stance about Srebrenica—namely, that it simply did not happen—and openly accept the fact that not only *did* it happen, but also that they are proud of its taking place. For this second generation of a nation who made such a crime possible and then attempted to suppress its taking place, it is precisely the official Serbian silence around Srebrenica that makes room for a re-appropriation of the genocide, around which the skinhead subculture now produces articulations of extreme nationalism, further perpetuating the cycle of violence. As postmemory, Srebrenica becomes rearticulated by the second generation of perpetrators as an object of extreme ethno-national(ist) pride, a direct result of the failure on the part of the parent culture to meaningfully work through the question of accountability (collective and individual). It is a reminder that Serbia's refusal to instigate a public process of coming to terms with accountability has made possible this scenario in which the extremist youth now have a virtual monopoly over the public usage of the genocide. Therefore, even though at times it borders on caricature and oversimplification that do not leave much room for loose ends, *Skinning* nevertheless addresses this important aspect of the problem: the fact that the parent culture and the skinhead subculture are locked in a dynamic by which the latter overtly plays out some of the most suppressed aspects of the former. In the most extreme version of this interplay, genocide is turned into an object of youth's extreme ethnonationalist pride through the appropriation of postmemory enshrouded in silence.

The Bodies in Empty Pain

I now turn to a film stylistically and thematically starkly different from *Skinning*, which nevertheless evokes similar questions about subcultural activity, social class, coming-of-age, and postmemory of precarious times, albeit in an entirely different register and to an entirely different effect. The subcultural activity here starkly diverges from that of skinhead hooligans, as we look at a group of small-town skaters that seem to be primarily interested in harming themselves, not others. A representation of such a subculture poses a significant counterpoint to the pessimism of *Skinning*: the same generation can inherit similar circumstances and be brought up in a similar habitus of postmemory, but its appropriation of it need not take the form of extremist intolerance turned into violent destruction.

Tilva Roš (*Tilva Ros*) came about when its director, Nikola Ležaić, saw an amateur movie called *Crap—Pain is Empty*, made by two skaters from Bor, a small industrial town in eastern Serbia. This amateur film is a collection of MTV's *Jackass*-like stunts designed to inflict physical pain on its creators and amuse the audience. Ležaić, who also comes from Bor, was so affected by this film that he contacted its protagonists—teenagers Stefan Đorđević and Marko Todorović—and decided to make a movie centered around having the two essentially play versions of themselves on screen. *Tilva Ros* is often filmed through the youth's amateur camera, also interspersed with original footage from *Crap—Pain is Empty*. Because of that, it has a documentary/collage, *cinéma vérité* texture to it, augmented by the fact that most of the actors in the film are amateurs playing versions of their real-life selves. This collage-like style has the film frequently switching into a form of alternative vision—from the youth's as opposed to Ležaić's camera—and this approach represents a deliberate undoing of the primacy of a detached cinematic storytelling of the kind seen in *Skinning*. While there are plenty of scenes in *Tilva Ros* that are shot with a film camera, there are also a number of those that are filmed by the youth themselves, with their amateur camera(s). The latter represent a grounded view from the body, as opposed to the view from an all-knowing above, to use Donna Haraway's distinction, which she proposes when she discusses the concept of "situated knowledges," and about which she claims: "I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (1988: 589). In its perpetual switching between the views from the body and from above, *Tilva Ros* always seems to prefer the view from the youth's body—the world experienced through the means that they themselves control and navigate—and thus prefers the situated knowledge that the youth embody and express, rather than any imposed meanings that a cinematic camera

Figure 5.1 Multiplying visions (*Tilva Ros*, screen grab)

would tack onto their experiences. This stylistic approach makes the viewing of *Tilva Ros* into an experience of embodied immediacy as opposed to a performance of detached observation (Figure 5.1).[10]

The film's switching to alternative vision through youth's cameras as a means of performing embodied intimacy might be a somewhat ironic turn because the excessive use of cameras and other technology is assumed to be a device of alienation, an indication of detachment from one's "real" surroundings, a lament especially reserved for (post)modern youth. *Tilva Ros* challenges that premise by multiplying the usage of vision into various directions, as technology becomes a key element of the performance of profound intimacy. These proliferating visions all contribute to a sense that there is no one normative avenue through which our gaze must be directed but, instead, that there are many partial points of view that create an assemblage of unfixed, multiplying but insightful meanings.

While the story of *Tilva Ros* is partially fictional, the setting that inspired it is certainly not: Bor is one of the most economically deprived towns in Serbia. Previously, the town and its mining industry presented a memorable backdrop in notable Yugoslav films such as *Čovek nije tica* (*Man Is Not a Bird*, Dušan Makavejev 1965), *Na putu za Katangu* (*On the Road to Katanga*, Živojin Pavlović 1987), and more recently, in *Beli, beli svet* (*White, White World*, Oleg Novković 2010, Serbia). In *Tilva Ros*, a workers' union strike against the privatization of the copper mine that is the center of the town's economy represents a key backdrop to the story of skater youth. Deemed by some critics as an "unnecessary" element of the film,[11] the socioeconomic backdrop is anything but: it represents one of the crucial devices by which the film is positioned as an exploration of the consequences of the youth's growing up with postmemory and phantom pain whose articulations are found in their subcultural activity. The connections to the mine are personal: it employs many parents, but those jobs

are now under threat due to the mine's impending privatization. The economic setting of a depressed industrial town is reflected in the very title: as it is explained by Stefan in the first few minutes of the film (in a scene that is shot in a "from the body" mode), the term "Tilva Roš" means "red hill" in the old local dialect ("Vlaški"), and it is what the area around Bor used to be called when a hill was indeed there. The reference to this phantom landscape sets the tone for the entire film, as it also provides a commentary on the nature of industrial exploitation. The phantom red hill of the film's title is no longer a part of the landscape because of the heavy mining that diminished it but that mining also provides livelihood for the families who live in the area. In a more encompassing sense, the phantom hill stands for postmemory: a series of absences that are nevertheless central for the youth's attitudes toward the parent culture and toward subcultural activity, which are both framed precisely through what is missing. Now that the privatization of the mine is a reality, the story of the phantom landscape might extend to the communities whose existence the mine supported, as they might be forced to leave and find work elsewhere, themselves and the town further reduced to historical phantoms.

The film's major characters are skaters Stefan, Marko ("Toda"), and Dunja, a girl who lives in France and is visiting Bor for the summer. Both Stefan's and Marko's fathers work for the mine, but Stefan's father is a manager, while Marko's performs manual work underground. Thus, Stefan and Dunja are better off compared to Marko's working-class family, but this class distinction initially does not play a big role in their mutual friendships and participation in the skater subculture. That subculture is at the center of their existence, and some of its key markers are the spaces that the youth occupy—mainly a skating rink re-appropriated from a mining plateau—and the style with which they associate themselves: baggy clothes, Western hip-hop music and graffiti art, freestyle rap, body piercing and tattoos, marijuana and occasional cross-dressing. All of these stylistic markers work to differentiate the skater subculture from their gloomy surroundings, as they find genuine pleasures in exploring the limits of acceptable appearances and behaviors. The skater group, which goes by the name "Kolos," spends most of its time acting against the engrained performances of normativity, be it in their appearance, behavior, or the use of space. With respect to space, the re-appropriated mining plateau that is turned into their skating rink becomes the group's invention of "an elsewhere" that Hebdige discusses with respect to subcultures, "which was defined *against* the familiar locales of the home, the pub, the working man's club, the neighborhood" (1979: 79, emphasis in the text). This appropriation or de-familiarization of space illustrates the skater subculture's relation to its parent culture—a relationship that is very different from the one the

skinheads in *Skinning* harbor and is more akin to how Hebdige describes the effects of the punk subculture in the postwar Britain. Hebdige compares the punks to a "noise" as opposed to "sound" (90), arguing that they are virtually unreadable to the mainstream culture, displaced from normative history. So are the skaters in *Tilva Ros*, whose aesthetics and hedonism seem completely disassociated from the depressing surroundings of the parent culture, in opposition to which they emerge. Except that the subculture reattaches to those surroundings in an illuminating way when the re-appropriation of space—particularly of the mining plateau—is considered as an indirect but poignant acknowledgment of the postmemory of what the place used to be and how it used to function. In other words, by dislocating their cultural activity from the expected and easily readable codes of acceptability, the skaters rupture the veneer of seamlessness that conceals the traumatic passage from past economic prosperity to present precarity to uncertain future.

The exploration of the limits of cultural dislocation in *Tilva Ros* is particularly connected to Marko and Stefan's ongoing performances of the stunts that inflict bodily self-harm. The two frequently film themselves jumping from great heights, pulling needles and hooks through their skin, setting hair on fire, riding on the roof of a fast moving car, and so on. These stunts usually end with their bodies bleeding or writhing in pain, as the various modalities of vision that the film deploys linger on their injuries, bruises, and cuts. Indeed, at times it seems that the stunts are just an opening act for the main event: a fetishizing of bodies in pain, as cameras linger on them at great lengths. These performances of inflicting self-harm permeate the film in a steady rhythm that serves to stabilize the relationship between Marko and Stefan even when that relationship becomes tense otherwise. One source of tension stems from their competing affections toward Dunja. When it becomes clear that Dunja is more interested in Stefan, Marko distances himself from the two. It appears that Stefan and Dunja are brought closer not only by romantic affection, but also by similar class backgrounds that allow them to envision their futures in a mobile way, at times quite literally: traveling to Belgrade, as Stefan does, or to France, where Dunja returns in the end—whereas Marko remains indefinitely "stuck" in Bor. Marko's lack of options is depicted as directly stemming from his class position—his working-class family simply cannot afford to send him to college, whereas Stefan and Dunja are actively engaged in enrolling at universities and preparing to leave Bor. This mobility, or lack thereof, that is firmly attached to social class poses a central conflict in the film more so than any romantic rivalry. While Stefan and Dunja envision their futures away from Bor, Marko attends a workshop designed to teach job applicants how to build a CV and "present

themselves" to future employers. During a mock job interview, Marko shows up with a bruised face, submits a blank piece of paper as his CV, and answers questions about himself by getting up on the desk and pulling his pants down, exposing his private parts. This act is Marko's rebellion against a performance of normativity embedded within the workshop, as he refuses to conform to a practice of presenting himself in some readable way that might guarantee a more "productive" professional future. And with that, his fate seems to be sealed within the mine into which his father disappears every day—a mine whose future is similarly uncertain. Marko's subcultural activity cannot resolve his class-limited future, as it is only a temporary form of adolescent belonging that rarely extends into adulthood.

In this complicated assemblage by which attachments to others are formed and framed in increasingly limited ways as adolescents become adults—and in which class differences become increasingly difficult to ignore as Stefan's and Dunja's departure looms closer, making Marko's immobility all the more visible—one great equalizer in Stefan and Marko's relationship is the physical pain that their coordinated stunts cause. This self-inflicted pain serves not only to separate Marko and Stefan from their surroundings, to make them into "noise" as opposed to "sound," but also to erase their class differences, at least during the time the pain lasts because pain is experienced outside of class structures: an equalizing force that brings forward sheer physicality and suspends the markers of identity that become factors of confining divisions. In their physical pain, Marko and Stefan are temporarily free of social categories and ideologies that frame them as different. Thus, we could extend Elaine Scarry's argument that "physical pain does not simply resist language, it actively destroys it" (1985: 4) to argue that physical pain has the potential to destroy ideological markers of difference by stripping bodies, however temporarily, off of their embeddedness—as subjects—inside various hierarchical structures. Thus, the subtitle of Marko and Stefan's amateur film—*Pain is Empty*—becomes a very meaningful qualification of this particular physical state and the meaning it has for their relationship: pain is empty of structures that separate. And indeed, Scarry argues that before the infliction of pain is coded into the discourses of power and control, the actual physical injury has the effect of "emptying the body of cultural content" as "the wound is empty of reference" (118). In *Tilva Ros*, the key to the pain is that it is self-inflicted, voluntary, a performance of an escape (that is only seemingly apolitical). If pain unmakes the world and makes it into a different image, as Scarry argues, then the self-harm in *Tilva Ros* serves to unmake the hierarchical differences that are increasingly driving Marko and Stefan apart. But that unmaking can be only temporary, as they acknowledge by the end of the

film that their summer of subcultural, class-free attachment is coming to an end.

There is another dimension to the self-inflicted pain in the film, one that harkens back to the motif of a phantom landscape that the film's title reflects, and is connected to the postmemory of what is not being addressed openly. Hebdige's "phantom history" could be evoked here again: just as the phantom red hill stands in for a phantom history of the depressed industrial region of Bor, Marko and Stefan's infliction of self-harm exposes a floating phantom pain of sorts, one related to the postmemory of a tumultuous period that saw the violent end to a Socialist regime bring with it the imposition of exploitative neoliberal capitalism that now threatens to impoverish the region further. The violence of that transition—both the literal violence of the wars and the figurative violence of the recalibration of social hierarchies that capitalism brings about—is captured in an embrace of deliberate injury by which the youth attempt to recast, or enact differently, some of society's most troubling divisions. While recent wars are never overtly mentioned in the film, the boys' everyday lives cannot not be read against a reality that still actively circulates the cultural memory and the lingering effects of precarity brought about by those seismic events that shifted the categories not only of ethno-national identity, but also of social class and mobility. As the boys attempt to take themselves outside of the literal time and space that frames their subjectivities into fixed class-based social positions, they inadvertently embed themselves back into it sideways, at a slant. For instance, instead of performing expressions of nostalgia—the more normative affective approach to the formerly Yugoslav parent culture—the youth adopt ridicule, parody, and irreverence as their main stance toward it. This complete disregard of nostalgic affect toward the past is perhaps most strikingly apparent in a scene in which the skaters spontaneously wreck an old car (which is difficult to identify but is quite possibly a Zastava 101, or "Stojadin," a popular Yugoslav vehicle) with rocks, hammers, and axes, in a performance of youthful *jouissance* stripped off of the confines imposed by the parent culture, temporarily shattering its hierarchies.[12] As the car is turned on its roof and painted with "sk8 and destroy," so is the youth's relationship to the postmemory, or a phantom history of an abrupt and violent shift, turned on its head and re-imagined into an alternative script by which the present need not be held hostage by a single, paralyzing approach to the past. In an important way, this scene is later mirrored by another wrecking of a car, but this time, it is Marko and Stefan's conflict culminating in Marko smashing Stefan's father's Mercedes—an entirely different status symbol. These two scenes of car destruction stand as each other's counterpoints: while the smashing of Mercedes crystalizes class differences between the two friends—and the

impossibility of effacing them—the destruction of Stojadin (admittedly, a lesser object of material value but perhaps of greater cultural signification) presents an instance of possibility to break free of past and present hierarchies, albeit only temporarily. For a brief amount of time, then, subcultural activity is made into a structure of possibility for imagining differently, even though that possibility can neither resolve nor ameliorate the confines that await outside of subcultural belonging, which limit the youth's futurities otherwise.

So far in this chapter, I have highlighted the ways in which two very different cinematic works offer provocative insight into how the postmemory of catastrophe (and the questions about accountability) links to social class and the emergence of youth subcultures. I have argued that the dynamics within subcultural activity in the films point to two starkly different reactions to the inheritance of violence, particularly in its ties to masculinity. While *Skinning* represents a detached vision of what happens when the parent culture's passive condoning of normatively aggressive masculinity becomes internalized by its youth and directed outward, *Tilva Ros* reflects a different directionality: a deeply involved bodily view of how an infliction of self-harm becomes a performance of resistance against accepting normative masculinity rooted in firmly predisposed, seemingly unchangeable class trajectories and futurities brought about by volatile times. The postmemory of those volatile times is re-appropriated in *Skinning* into a device of ethno-nationalist pride, while in *Tilva Ros*, it has a more subtle role: it is a source of cross-class camaraderie enacted through self-harm. Neither of these two approaches—orienting violence outwardly or inwardly, relatively speaking—ultimately resolves the contradictions of the parent culture brought on by the primacy of ethno-national ideology that divides. In *Skinning*, the state continues to sanction violence committed by the skinhead group when it serves to advance its own goals, while in *Tilva Ros*, the great equalizer that is self-inflicted bodily pain cannot erase class-based divisions that drive the subcultural group apart. But regardless of how different the uses of pain are in the two films, their very existence is circulated within youth subcultures from a familiar source: the postmemory of violence inflicted by, and inherited from the parent culture in the name of collective belonging, now a phantom that haunts its youth.

Arrested Development, Delinquency, and Gender Outlaws

Social depravity and economic instability—legacies of the tumultuous breakup of Yugoslavia, end of Socialism, and the onset of neoliberal capitalism—are persistent markers of post-conflict and post-Socialist

reality, overtly explored in other post-Yugoslav films with youth as central protagonists. For instance, in Macedonia's *Mirage* (*Iluzija*, Svetozar Ristovski 2004), a schoolboy, Marko, living in the town of Veles, struggles with his place in society, while the social struggle of the working class acts as one of the main backdrops that frames this coming-of-age story. Left to his own devices, ignored by his family, and bullied in school, the boy finds daily refuge in an abandoned train car. Since he is a promising writer, his supportive teacher encourages him to enter a competition to win a trip to Paris by writing a patriotic poem about Macedonia. While Marko struggles to write celebratory verse about his country, he is also taken by the idea of Paris, where, as his teacher puts it, artists go to live. Echoing the boys in *Three Tickets to Hollywood*, Marko goes to the train station to request a ticket "to Paris." While he is not able to buy such a ticket, he runs into a mysterious stranger whose name, it so happens, is Paris. The stranger introduces Marko to the world of petty crime, and as the boy increasingly turns to delinquency, he discovers that it gives him social agency of a kind he had not known before. In the film's tragic end, Marko takes the teacher's life, telling him "I'm sorry you didn't help me." The dreams of escape that Marko harbors in the beginning are crushed by the overwhelming feeling of stuckness that encapsulates him and, in the end, turns him into a murderer. Like *Skinning*, *Mirage* suggests that, for Marko, there was no other option but to turn into a violent delinquent, since the social structures and material conditions around him ultimately reflected an utter negligence toward youth and their future. Such films are an indictment of the harsh times of post-conflict, transitional social systems that offer very limited options to youth as social agents.

The same town is the setting for another Macedonian film that explores the theme of youth and stuckness, Teona Strugar Mitevska's *I Am from Titov Veles* (*Jas sum od Titov Veles* 2007). Evoking Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1994, New Zealand), the film's voice-over narrator is its otherwise mute protagonist, a 27-year old virgin Afrodita, who describes herself as a person who "lives in a community that is slowly dying." If Marko in *Mirage* grew up too soon, Afrodita's maturity is delayed, and she seems to live a prolonged adolescence marked by arrested development. She lives in a household with two older sisters, Slavica, who works in the steel factory, and Sapho, a basketball player. The remnants of the formerly socialist and industrial economic structure are emphasized by the backdrop of a steel factory ("poisoning us all") at the center of the town. Social protests, like in *Mirage* and *Tilva Ros*, are the backdrop of the story, but this time, the town's residents are protesting the toxicity that the steel factory is releasing into the environment. Environmentalist concerns are countered by a critique of neoliberalism, when one character suggests that the pollution

narrative is a propaganda ploy designed to allow the World Bank to buy the factory "for cheap."

The film is imbued with melancholia and postmemory—the sisters' parents, both gone, were Aegean Macedonians, exiled from their hometown of Lerin (today's Greece) after WWII and sent to camps in Eastern Europe. Afrodita tells the story of how the only thing left from her mother's home in Lerin is an armoire, which the mother rediscovered at a flea market in Skopje years after her exile, and identified it by finding her own signature on the inside. She bought it, and it now belongs to one of her daughters. Postmemory of the mother's exile is thus inscribed in a physical memento of a lost home, as a marker of a void more than of fulfillment. The return to such a home is an impossibility that the sisters strive for. Afrodita imagines herself to be pregnant and envisions a surreal scene of being physically constrained in a hut, giving perpetual birth through mouth, with naked pale men carry the newborns into water one by one. Later, in another dreamlike vision, she escapes her confines with one baby and drifts away on a boat. These dreamscapes temporarily take Afrodita outside of the frameworks of reality that surround her. She loses virginity to a hospital worker, Aco, but does not manage to conceive a child. Her desire to become pregnant seems to be closely connected to her yearning to relieve the loss of her parents. Mothering, as the physical act of reproduction—on which the film puts visual emphasis—is suggested as a way to resolve the melancholia of permanent loss. Afrodita's muteness seems to be a choice—as Sapho explains, "she is quite normal, she just decided not to speak." Afrodita notes, in voice-over, that she stopped speaking after her mother went to visit her sister back at her place of origin and never came back, and her father died some time after that. Loss of speech is thus closely connected to the loss of her parents, a trauma reflected through the inability of expression.

Exilic homes are multifold in the film. One is the parental hometown in Greece, another is Yugoslavia, the place that their town used to be. The ghost of Yugoslavia haunts the film, as a site of childhood memory and as postmemory. Afrodita recalls a childhood memory of traveling to the seaside with her family by train and meeting a beautiful lady who asks her what she wants most in life. Afrodita tells the lady that she wants, more than anything, to be Tito's pioneer, and for Tito to visit Veles—which happens the following year. These memories of a seemingly happy childhood in Yugoslavia position the country that no longer exists, yet again, as an object of reflective nostalgia, unattainable yet longed for. The film's title reflects this structure of feelings: while the town's name is nowadays only Veles, during Yugoslavia, it was known as Titov Veles (Tito's Veles), and this is where the sisters are from—an impossible town that no longer exists, a

repository of happy memories of fulfillment. The titular statement, "I am from Titov Veles," is something that Sapho yells out happily at one point, reaffirming the girl's origin in an impossible place.

Because their life is economically unsustainable, the two older sisters leave—Slavica gets married to a man who also happens to be the new owner of the steel factory, which he acquired through privatization. Sapho gets a long-awaited visa to go to Greece and leaves. Toward the film's end, Afrodita pulls her mother's armoire—the physical embodiment of postmemory—up a hill above Veles, kisses it, and then pushes it down the cliff, ostensibly as a way to resolve her longing for what is lost by finally leaving it behind. Then she falls asleep in the grass, and in her dream, speaks for the first time, talking to Aco about other dreams she has had. It is a dream about dreams. When she returns home, she finds Slavica, who has relapsed, in the house that is on fire. The sisters lie next to each other and converse in the voice-over. Slavica asks Afrodita not to cry, to which Afrodita responds with the film's final words: "Mine are not tears of pain. They are part of something that can never be. We will go where magic still exists." The two sisters thus return to an impossible place, presumably by dying a physical death in the fire. As an elegiac work about longing and loss, *I Am from Titov Veles* explores the confines of memory and postmemory through the lens of interrupted scenarios and arrested development. Afrodita is arrested in adolescence, and when she tries to escape it by becoming pregnant, and thereby resolving the loss of her parents by becoming a parent herself, she is unable to do so, seemingly stuck in the cycle of unfulfilled longing which has no resolution in reality, but only in magic and dreamscapes.

A grittier vision of post-Yugoslav girlhood is reflected in Aldo Tardozzi's *Spots* (*Fleke* 2011, Croatia), a film that follows two young women's chance encounter on a night that sees them join forces in seeking vigilante justice for the date rape that one of them—Lana—was subjected to earlier in the evening. Armed with a gun that Irena was supposedly given by her war veteran uncle, the girls embark on a quest to find the rapist so that Lana can confront him. The gun, as a promise of violence that materializes at the end of the film, is a reminder of the aftereffects of war and the reverberations of violence that is perpetuated in its wake. Irena hints at her own war trauma when she talks about seeing "a lot of dead people," and a cab driver casually notes that "a cab driver who did not fight in the war is not a real cab driver." These brief references to the recent history of violent conflict contextualize the girls' struggle for justice in the framework of a wounded collectivity still reeling from the effects of trauma. At the same time, the film is filled with moments of genuine, pointed humor. For instance, when Lana asks the bartender in a seedy bar where the women's restroom is, he

responds with: "Same place where the men's is. We are not sexist here." In another such instance of dark humor, Irena asks Lana where her rapist lives, and when she learns that the answer is Sesvete (a suburb of Zagreb), she quips: "Jesus, next time, can you be raped by someone from the city center?" The humor only temporarily relieves the grim reality that makes the girls turn to vigilante justice. When Lana finally confronts her rapist, she takes him, at gunpoint, to the site of a former outdoor movie theater and makes him face the screen. Then she narrates the scene of her rape for him as if he were watching a movie, revisiting the trauma of rape through an imaginary act of spectatorship—her trauma is here imagined as screen trauma through which her rapist is made to face his actions. When she gets to the imaginary film's end, she tells Igor: "I think she will kill him at the end of the film, what do you think?" But she does not kill her rapist. Rather, the final act of lethal violence takes place between the two girls, after Lana discovers that Irena killed a cab driver. A physical struggle ensues between them, and Lana kills Irena with the war veteran's gun. Thus, both girls end up as murderers in a set of circumstances that sees their quest for justice end tragically. With its gritty and dark aesthetics (the entire story takes place overnight), the film calls overt attention to dispossessed post-conflict girlhood and seemingly futile attempts to become meaningful social agents outside of the framework of perpetuating violence.

A similar theme of dispossession and alternative pathways for girls toward becoming recognized as social agents is present in Maja Miloš's *Clip* (*Klip* 2012, Serbia), one of the most prominent examples of what some have called New Serbian Film.[13] *Clip* tells the story of Jasna, a teenager who lives in the poverty-stricken outskirts of Belgrade and whose family is struggling to make ends meet, as her father is bedridden with terminal cancer. Jasna appears emotionally entirely detached from her family and spends her days dressing up and taking graphic pictures of herself with her phone camera, while at night, she parties in turbo folk clubs and consumes vast amounts of drugs and alcohol. The youth in *Clip* are entirely pleasure-oriented and seemingly unconcerned with any form of ethical responsibility that might arise from their acts. Jasna's mother seems unaware of her daughter's exhibitionism, as she is consumed with making a living and taking care of her sick husband. Jasna's world, on the other hand, revolves around a boy, Đorđe, whose affections she is trying to win. When she manages to do so, they develop a complicated relationship centered on BDSM sex in which Jasna is willing and eager to submit herself to many forms of domination.

Jasna and her female friends perform an exaggerated version of femininity, greatly inspired by the turbo folk aesthetics of revealing clothes and excessive makeup, while the boys play rough guys in baggy tack suits,

reminiscent of the iconic look of Serbia's criminal underground of the 1990s. Indeed, even though the youth are growing up in the late 2000s, their stylistic disposition is heavily informed by the decade of the 1990s, when tough-guy criminals roamed the streets of Belgrade, and popular turbo folk singers married them. The most famous of these couplings was that of Arkan, a gangster and paramilitary commander accused of many war crimes, and the most popular turbo folk performer Ceca (their high-profile marriage ended when Arkan was assassinated by a rival criminal group, but Ceca remains one of the most popular and controversial figures in Serbia and the region). This prototypical 1990s coupling not only informs the youth aesthetics in *Clip*, but also shapes the interpersonal attachments that they recognize or affectively respond to. Ceca's music haunts the nightclubs in which the youth party, as a habitus of sorts is implied: the structures of power that ruled at a time of national upheaval and war become informative of the youth's taste dispositions to such an extent that a perpetuation of those structures becomes constructed as the only option for dispossessed working-class youth to enact social agency.

To that end, *Clip* depicts a post-Socialist and post-conflict version of a youth subculture—and in particular, of a girls' clique (McRobbie and Garber 1976)—heavily invested in enacting the fetishized aesthetics of the 1990s, thus reflecting a postmemory of sorts, rooted in the fetishism of glorified violence prevalent during Serbia's tumultuous 1990s. Incidentally, just as *Tilva Ros* came to be after its director saw an amateur video that the film's eventual protagonists made, so did Maja Miloš reportedly get the idea for *Clip* when she watched graphic YouTube videos of Belgrade youth's wild partying and unabashed drug use. Moreover, both filmmakers report creating their films with the young protagonists actively involved in the script and the course their films would eventually take. In that sense, these two films could be considered examples of post-Yugoslav *grassroots cinema*, or cinema from below, since they resist casting a moralistic gaze over millennial youth. Rather, both films situate their stories within struggling material realities that the youth face and, moreover, place the spectator's gaze inside the world of a youth culture being depicted, rather than above it. Both films reflect a form of disavowal from the parent culture. Scribner notes that "the cultural remains of the second world register the dialectics of collective memory that wend from nostalgia to mourning to disavowal" (165). As one of the dominant modes of remembering in post-Socialism, disavowal reflects a split not only between knowledge and belief, but also reality and social practices. *Tilva Ros* and *Clip*, as well as other films discussed in this chapter, reflect the pathways of disavowal that instigate youth's disidentification with the material and social realities around them. But *Tilva Ros* and *Clip* reveal different fields of possibility for

Figure 5.2 Club cultures and the habitus of postmemory (*Clip*, screen grab)

boys and girls. While the boys in *Tilva Ros* work within the limited set of dispositions inherited from their working-class belonging, they reimagine the space around them and rearticulate the existence of both the controlling gaze and of the postmemory of pain and injury into a legitimate self-expression of subcultural agency. For the girls in *Clip*, however, that re-envisioning seems to be firmly locked within the framework of patriarchal vision that objectifies them, effectively confirming that a gendered imbalance of power still feeds the discourses of class, sub/cultural belonging, injury, and even postmemory. For what the girls inherited through the habitus of postmemory, if we can call it that, is an understanding that a performance of exaggerated femininity is a means (perhaps their only means available to them) to perform the ascendance of the class ladder (Figure 5.2).

The girls' enactment of turbo folk aesthetics reveals the inherent ambiguity (as well as high appeal) of the aesthetics that accompanied a deeply troubling time in Serbia's history, when power was worn on the outside. With their performance of class passing, the girls immerse themselves in a cultural script that might be more appealing than the traditional love plots that girls are expected to adhere to (Jelača 2015). While their working-class families barely make a living, the girls dress in showy and glamorous attires and consume cocaine and alcohol on a daily basis. This incommensurability reveals the social contradictions most heavily placed on girls: while their material existence is precarious, they enact carefree hedonism as a way to cast themselves as social actors who can be legitimized sometimes only by appearing desirable. Rather than merely delegating girls to such a position by way of portraying them as passive victims, *Clip* implicitly criticizes the

larger structures that often leave excessive femininity and sexualization as the girls' only option on the path toward social recognition.

Class belonging—and the performativity of that belonging—gets closely linked to the discourses around power in a society that is reeling from the aftereffects of wars, violence, and trauma. It appears that the postmemory of such times—and the fetishizing of heightened normativity when it comes to gender roles that they impose—creates a habitus invested in perpetuating the dynamics of power that dominate wartime realities. In *Clip*, the "youth in crisis" perform affluence as an act of resistance toward the depravity of their lives, but that resistance, as it is often the case with subcultural belonging, cannot resolve the contradictions of the parent culture, but merely expose and at times reiterate them. Somewhat paradoxically, the girls gain social power only when they are excessively sexualized and feminine, and this speaks volumes about gender normativity and its performative power as a means of becoming visible and moving upward in life.

If *Clip* puts a magnifying glass on a dispossessed youth subculture in their national setting, Slovenian *Southern Scum Go Home!* (*Čefurji raus!* Goran Vojnović 2013) depicts an immigrant subculture of adolescents whose parents emigrated to Slovenia from other former Yugoslav republics (an immigrant group for which the derogatory Slovenian term is "čefurji"). They live in a suburban "ghetto," Fužine, and spend their days drinking and getting into trouble with the police and their own parents. The film starts with a voice-over description of Fužine as a neighborhood where Communism is alive and well, where Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, and others still happily co-exist, and where the core unit of community is a neighborhood. This neighborhood is a microcosmic remnant of Yugoslavia, where non-Slovenes (as less Westernized former Yugoslavs) nevertheless often face discrimination and are treated as second-class citizens. The identity of the immigrant youth is a curious hybrid—they are not entirely Slovenian, but also not fully of their parents' own national origin. Their disavowal of either polarity is reflected through the very local solidarities that they create and sustain through subcultural belonging. Marko, a child of Bosnian Serb parents, plays basketball for the local Fužine team and dreams of becoming an NBA star. But when his father suggests that he think of playing for a bigger local team Olimpija, Marko scoffs at the idea of playing for the team that is comprised mainly of Slovenes. In the context of the seemingly more developed and more "Western" Slovenia, immigrants from other former Yugoslav republics are seen as carriers of low cultural capital. The teenagers embrace that stereotype when they, for instance, ride around the town while blasting turbo folk as a way to provoke the Slovenes. In another scene, the Fužine immigrants drunkenly look on from a bar as their Slovenian

Figure 5.3 An immigrant youth subculture and disavowal (*Southern Scum Go Home!* screen grab)

neighbor goes jogging, and someone comments: “These Slovenes sure are aliens.” While the film resists romanticizing sarcastic immigrant outlooks on their host nation, there is nevertheless a critique of capitalist productivity implied in the way that the story lingers on vagrancy and lack of ambition, and pits it against the oppressively calculated and structured capitalist time. One of Marko’s friends describes Slovenes thusly: “They are plain old wimps. They hide behind the police, the law, the state and shit.” The group of adolescent immigrants is driven to such stereotypically generalized conclusions at least in part because they are regularly stereotyped themselves (as reflected by the regular police scrutiny they receive, which sometimes escalates into brutality). When Marko quits his basketball team and delves deeper into delinquency, his father decides to send him to Bosnia to help his grandparents on their farm. “These are not Tito’s times,” the father angrily says, “when you were able to mess around and also live well.” There is a hint of nostalgia in that statement—nostalgia about a time that did not impose sheer productivity and upward mobility as the only measures of human worth. Marko’s arrival in Bosnia marks the film’s uncertain end—what future is he facing? A more hopeful one, by being taken outside of the rigidly capitalist cycle of social relations, or rather, a gloomier one, where Marko now returns to a society still reeling from the aftereffects of wars and devastation in palpable ways? (Figure 5.3)

In post-Yugoslav cinema, youth’s postmemorial inheritance of violent history makes them oftentimes turn to various forms of delinquency: petty crimes, drugs, violence, promiscuity, self-harm, and so on. The youth act

out against the inheritance of a violent legacy often by perpetuating further violence in a different, subcultural context (*Skinning*, *Mirage*), or by turning to self-harm as a way of making the invisible pain exterior (*Tilva Ros*), as well as by perpetuating an exaggerated version of a society's normative encoding of gender identity (*Clip*) or ethnic stereotyping (*Southern Scum Go Home!*). Throughout this acting out, central is the presence of the postmemory of traumatic violence by which the post-conflict youth's dispositions are formed and oriented in the world: the youth might not be entirely aware of all the ways an inheritance of violence is informing their habitus, but it plays a key role in the culture that they produce as a result, as it offers predetermined scripts towards social agency.

But the structures of habitus are not immovable or eternally fixed. Rather, they shift and, according to Bourdieu, "this is why generation conflicts oppose not age-classes separated by natural properties, but habitus which have been produced by different *modes of generation*," and furthermore, "practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted" (78, emphasis in the text). This shifting of habitus with respect to the modes of generation that support or disrupt it can, in the post-Yugoslav context, be tied to the shifts in collective allegiances from one collectivity and political/economic system to another. While the older generation witnessed the "before," "during," and "after" the violent breakup of their country—subsequently emplotting it into a seemingly linear, inevitable process—post-Yugoslav, millennial, transitional youth inherits the postmemory of Yugoslavia (and sometimes of the war itself), but lives only in the "after," as their habitus is imbued with a reductive acceptance that violence was a necessary outcome of the end of one formative era in the lives of their parent culture. This violence remains an invisible yet powerful factor in the habitus thus inherited so much so that we can speak about an excess of violence because it cannot be "objectively fitted" into the youth's experiences in the way it was for the older generation who witnessed war firsthand. Such an excess of violence inherited within a post-conflict habitus sometimes becomes externalized through violent subcultural activity, among other things, or remains enshrouded in further silences (as a form of phantom pain in *Tilva Ros*). These various forms of subcultural enactments of violence in youth-themed post-Yugoslav cinema could be viewed as manifestations of dislocated screen memory: a grappling with the legacies of trauma that becomes manifested in clandestine ways in the lives of the generations that follow.

In the films I have discussed in this chapter so far, violence and youth struggle are overtly tied to social class, as it becomes obvious that

socioeconomic status critically influences a group's relation to the collective experience of trauma. If it was a collective experience, to a greater or lesser degree, for an entire nation, wartime trauma was also a nonuniform experience, affecting some groups more than others, often precisely because of the material conditions that guaranteed varying levels of protection from precarity for different social classes. It would be all too easy to assume that in war, class differences get erased because violence, death, and displacement impact everyone equally. This is true only to a certain degree. The fact remains that, in many instances, the extent of wartime exposure was heavily dependent on one's material means and socioeconomic status.[14] Perhaps we could reverse the popular term "class war" to call those groups whose socioeconomic position directly precipitated their greater precarity in the war as members of a *war class*. With respect to war experiences and precarity, there are often overlooked yet important material conditions to consider: who fought, whose life was considered less grievable, and who was unable to remove their body out of harm's way often depended not only on a person's ethnic identity, but also on their socioeconomic background.

Subsequently, access to the collectively emplotted trauma of a national body in the post-conflict period is also heavily dependent on social class. Precarious lives of groups in lower socioeconomic positions, as these films about post-conflict youth cultures suggest, are more vulnerable to prolonged aftereffects of trauma because of their social stuckness in the structures of cruel optimism. Moreover, social class does not necessarily present the same hierarchy before and after war—just as it influences the nature of classed wartime experience, war also produces a new set of social divisions and class distinctions in its aftermath. Or rather, war and its subsequent social and economic shifts recalibrate class structures in ways that are often unaccounted for, but nevertheless informative of new social relations that arise in its wake. While so far in this chapter, I have examined films that explore youth (sub)cultures and social class through the framework of postmemory—where postmemory becomes a carrier of habitus which informs youth dispositions—I now turn to a film that centers on war class through the context of childhood, trauma as bodily memory, and their classed extensions into the present.

Children of Sarajevo, Bodily Memory, Trauma, and Social Class

If an adolescent in many recent post-Yugoslav films is a figure who remembers indirectly through postmemory, often by not consciously knowing how that postmemory frames their present-day struggle, the child in post-Yugoslav film is often positioned as a direct witness of war. This is true,

for instance, in Bosnia's first postwar film *Perfect Circle* (*Savršeni krug*, Ademir Kenović 1997)) and Serbia's *So Hot Was the Cannon* (*Top je bio vreo*, Slobodan Skerlić 2014). In both films, children are central protagonists in the setting of war-torn Sarajevo under siege. One such child survives her formative childhood trauma and remembers it in her young adult years in Aida Begić's second feature film *Djeca* (*Children of Sarajevo* 2012). *Children of Sarajevo* is a film about two war orphans, the 23-year-old Rahima ("Mima") and her brother Nedim, who is 14. Rahima works as a cook to support her brother and herself, but runs into a series of problems when her brother is accused of attacking an affluent schoolmate and breaking his expensive iPhone. This incident triggers a chain of events that see Rahima and Nedim's relationship deteriorate, as Rahima discovers that Nedim leads a double life of sorts, and that he secretly has ties to local criminal circles for which he possibly deals drugs. Rahima attempts to resolve this situation not only by confronting the criminals that influence Nedim, but also by confronting Melić, the influential father of Nedim's schoolmate whose phone he broke. The latter confrontation does not end well for Rahima, as she is threatened by Melić, a man who embodies many structural postwar privileges: he is a politician and a wealthy entrepreneur (not an unusual combination in postwar transitional economies in the former Yugoslavia). The assumption is that Melić is also a "ratni profiter"—a common term used for those who amassed wealth during the war and postwar period by exploiting the corrupt process of privatization. Now Melić is also a politician deeply engrained within institutional power structures, and Rahima's confrontation with him, in which she states that she will not buy his son a new iPhone (the cost of which is three of Mima's monthly salaries), is also a confrontation with the institutionalized structures of power that reproduce economic inequality of which Rahima and her brother are on the receiving end. With this conflict, the film addresses the new class structures that arise in the wake of war: Melić is at the top of the new social ladder, as a figure who amassed both economic and political power during conflict and transitional times, while Rahima and Nedim are at the lower end of the hierarchy as war orphans who struggle to make ends meet.

At one point in the film, a news report is heard in the background, about Bosnia's flailing economy, the state of which is explained by three factors: the war's devastating effects on local production, the world economic crisis, and the corrupt privatization. And just as Melić's privileged class status is literally produced by the war, so is Mima and Nedim's underprivileged, precarious life. These differences in class positionalities that war produces are frequently evoked in the film. For instance, when the restaurant owner's wife is unhappy with how the workers decorated the Christmas tree, she

rudely asks them: "Where did you grow up, in caves?" to which Rahima angrily responds with: "What is wrong with you?! We didn't grow up in a cave, but we did grow up in a war! Unlike some." This indictment of different forms of war experiences is directly linked to social class, which precipitates the absence or presence of the privilege to maintain some kind of pretense of everydayness. And moreover, "we grew up in a war" might be the key utterance that answers the question of who the children of the film's title are: those whose habitus was formed through violent devastation.

The film does not directly address how Rahima and Nedim became orphans and what exactly happened to their parents (one flashback implies that they were killed in the shelling of Sarajevo, as many civilians were), but it is suggested that the siblings spent several years after the war in an orphanage, and that they got out only when Rahima was old enough to start working. Now her days are spent between the spaces of work and home, often in a rhythm that reflects a well-rehearsed choreography of routine. When they are visited by a stern social worker who comes to check on whether Rahima is appropriately taking care of her teenage brother, Rahima gifts her with a perfume—a small and necessary gesture of bribery that nevertheless does not soften the visitor. The social worker points out the bad shape of their apartment as one of the ways in which Mima is failing in her caretaking (she complains that Nedim's room is too cold, that the door handle fell off, that there is too much noise coming from neighboring apartments, that the sofa is too uncomfortable, and so on). Here then, indicators of economic struggle are misread as the failure to perform acceptable caretaking—as Rahima struggles to make a living, she is reproached by a representative of institutionalized state power for not doing a good enough job of taking care of her brother because of the external signs of their economic dispossession. Rahima and Nedim are stuck in their precarious position without many prospects for class mobility, just as is the case with another friend from the orphanage who Rahima runs into, and who asks her for cigarettes and ten convertible marks (local Bosnian currency). There is an implication here that the children of Sarajevo of the film's title are the orphaned children forgotten by society in the aftermath of the war, as they are forced to scrape by in a life marked by precarity. They form a social class—the war class—constituted through loss (not only of their parents, but also of the existential security that the presence of parents at least symbolically guarantees). Quite possibly, they comprise a subculture of a different, unwitting kind. Their loss is virtually unacknowledged and deemed increasingly unremarkable as war becomes a more distant past. The orphans are left to turn to each other for recognition of the mutual experience of loss and injury. They also turn to delinquency, as is the case with Nedim, and it is implied that

Rahima herself also went through a troubled period before she turned her life around.

Although the loss of Rahima and Nedim's parents is not directly addressed, the film is interspersed with a series of flashback memories in the form of homemade VHS videos of war-torn Sarajevo under siege, in which people run for cover as grenades fall around them, or we see footage of a bus hit by one such grenade and hear someone observe that "a woman died here" (perhaps Rahima and Nedim's mother). In one such VHS flashback, civilians are lining up to get into a trench dug up behind apartment buildings for protection, and then the camera turns to a little girl (most likely Rahima, since this footage is framed as her flashback) standing inside the trench. Another time, a chorus of children is standing in front of a devastated city landscape singing a lullaby for the camera, while a few other children sit in front of them as members of the audience. In this haunting scene, a habitus is yet again evoked: these are the children of Sarajevo, their childhood and understanding of the world created through their life under siege and the traumatic loss they endured. Moreover, these video-flashbacks—as dislocated screen memories of young adults dispossessed as social actors in postwar times—represent an unmistakable intertextual reference to a series of wartime documentary shorts produced by the filmmakers gathered around SaGA, films whose VHS quality, as well as tender attention to children's stories during wartime, represents an invaluable, iconic archive of dislocated screen memories about the Bosnian war, and particularly, the events in Sarajevo (Figure 5.4).

Throughout *Children of Sarajevo*, the film's soundtrack is filled with diegetic sounds that can easily be mistaken for explosions and gunfire but, in fact, turn out to be celebratory firecrackers that mark the Christmas and New Year's holidays. This audio device aligns the spectator with Rahima's traumatized reactions, as she is often startled by such sounds, or they trigger her flashbacks. The flashback of children singing, for instance, is triggered by a beeping sound Rahima hears outside her apartment—a sound that, in the flashback, transforms into the beeping of a bulldozer that passes behind the children as they sing. In a scene toward the end of the film, Mima and Nedim have a gentle reconciliation on the street, and as they embrace, a group of teenagers with firecrackers suddenly runs by them, prompting Rahima and Nedim, still hugging each other, to instinctively crouch down as if they were trying to shield each other from harm. This is a physical reaction of bodies whose muscle memory is created through proximity to violent injury. As Elaine Scarry poignantly states in *Bodies in Pain*: "What is remembered in the body is well remembered" (109). In *Children of Sarajevo*, we witness one such example of bodily memory, or rather, an instance of pain and injury remaking the body in

Figure 5.4 Video-flashbacks of trauma (*Children of Sarajevo*, screen grabs)

a different shape that reflects the ways trauma lodges itself within physical existence.

In terms of its formal approach, *Children of Sarajevo* represents a sustained and often quite literal view from the body throughout its duration. Most scenes are shot as single takes with minimal editing, and the handheld camera always follows Rahima, which results in numerous long takes and tracking shots of Rahima from the back, or shots in which the spectator is aligned with her field of vision and her point of view (Vidan 2013b). Besides giving the film a sense of intimate visual immediacy and cinema vérité form in its sparse editing, the cinematography, as Vidan notes, reflects "a cold and unforgiving world in which anything goes and rules are made up on the spot by those in the position of power" (136). The aesthetics of Rahima's flashbacks being framed as grainy VHS home videos give another significant instance of the visual field as a pivotal channel for accessing traumatic memories, otherwise repressed from narration. These memories, rather than being seamless, interrupt the narrative flow

and are, moreover, self-consciously cinematic in their video quality, overtly represented as a visual counterpoint to the film's present-day scenes. Paradoxically, it almost appears as if Rahima's own memories of the war are replaced by archival video footage made by someone else, as if her childhood self is to Rahima not necessarily an intimately knowable subject. Rather, it is a figure seen through the lens of a camera—a literal screen memory—remembered through an external recording device more than by her intimate memory itself. The camera is then a device of bearing witness and remembering, and of substituting one's own painful memories with an externalized gaze through which one can become witness to one's own traumatic past in a dislocated way, only through the eyes of another (person or film camera). It appears that Rahima does not have any other witness to her trauma, so when grainy video flashbacks occur, Rahima seems to be experiencing several levels of witnessing. Dori Laub (1995) has argued that certain types of unimaginable, extreme trauma strip those onto whom trauma is inflicted of a sense of subjectivity to such an extreme extent that they lose the sense of "I"—a sense which is integral to the process of bearing witness to any kind of experience. If one loses the sense of "I," one loses the ability to name oneself as a subject whose experience can be observed as such. In the case of the concentration camps that Laub writes about, the experience of the victims was so extreme in its unthinkable character that they lost any ability to be the witnesses of each other's, or their own suffering. Far from being a problematic claim that denies the importance of testimonials, Laub's work here should be seen more as a nod toward the limits of testimonials to ever fully account for trauma.

Evoking Laub's observations about the complicated layers of witnessing (or the impossibility thereof), in *Children of Sarajevo*, traumatic video flashbacks puncture the veneer of the present everydayness, and in them, Rahima witnesses her own suffering simultaneously as she witnesses the act of witnessing. Her trauma is never overtly narrativized, explained away, or exposed in linear, all seeing view. Instead, it remains a fragmented, ghostly, phantom presence that shapes everyday life in subtle but powerful ways that are not articulated through language but rather through bodily movements, sound, and vision. Rahima's flashbacks are often triggered by physical events—from finding an object that serves as Nedim's memento of the war, to hearing the sound of firecrackers, to touching a blue scarf. In that way, traumatic memory becomes a memory of the senses, a distinctly bodily, pre-cognitive affective experience rather than a consciously articulated one. The effect of traumatic injury shapes the subject in its wake, a subject that might have not existed in this form beforehand. Seeing herself, and thus becoming a witness to her own trauma, might be a way to interpret a surreal dream sequence that is triggered when Rahima

kneels down for a prayer while holding a blue scarf (this scarf appears to have great sentimental value to her and is, most likely, associated with her absent mother). In the dream, Rahima, dressed in red and without her usual headscarf, is following a figure in a wavy blue dress of the same shade as the blue scarf, thus reiterating the point that the figure might be the elusive mother. The camera follows Rahima as she follows the blue figure through a tunnel covered with graffiti. When the blue figure arrives at an empty room, Rahima and the camera do not follow her there but rather look inside through an opening in the wall. Then the blue figure turns to face Rahima (and the camera), as we see that in place of her face, there is a mirror. Where Rahima expected to finally see her mother's face, she was faced with a reflection of herself, as a symbolic enactment of the postulation that bearing witness to the trauma of another means bearing witness to one's own trauma and vice versa. The dream re-enacts Rahima's performance of witnessing, and the instance in which the blue figure looks back at her (and at the camera) becomes an instance in which the absent face of the mother is turned into a symbol for introspection and looking at oneself. As her mother's face is unattainable to her memory, in its place, Rahima finds a mirror held to her own presence instead.

These intimate struggles with witnessing (or, in turn, with the simultaneous imperative and inability to remember) mark Rahima's present everyday as much as her economic struggle does. In fact, they overlap in very important places, where Rahima's precarious social position simultaneously marks the social invisibility of her trauma. There seem to be no social structures where her trauma could be acknowledged (the way that they exist, for instance, in *Grbavica*, in the form of Esma's support group). In fact, Rahima and Nedim's social position of depravity is often a cause for shaming (of Rahima in particular, by various authority figures, from the social worker, to the politician, to the police), or bullying (for Nedim, whose bullies call him "orphan"). When Rahima is asked why she works so much, she answers with "Work frees you from life," indicating that it helps her cope. Furthermore, numerous times in the film, Rahima is asked why she "covered herself" (and her aggressive boss at the restaurant even exclaims: "Put some makeup on, please. If you covered yourself, it doesn't mean you died."). Rahima's reply to the inquires about the hijab is similar to the one about work: they both remove her, in some ways, from being directly faced with hardships—they provide buffers by which she feels somewhat protected from life's direct impact. Like in Begić's previous film, *Snow*, wearing a headscarf is not treated here as an indication of women's position under patriarchy (a framework through which hijab is most frequently examined in feminist critique). Contrary to the re-patriarchalization that Mima Simić (2012) reads into the headscarf in

both *Snow* and *Children*, and thus assumes it to be an object whose presence cannot but reflect the patriarchal oppression of women, the hijab is here an intimate choice that signals attempts at Rahima shielding herself from life's hardships by removing her body from physical scrutiny. Moreover, as an object of memory—since Rahima associates the blue scarf with her mother, similarly to the way that Alma in *Snow* associates her scarf with the memory of her dead husband—she might also be wearing it as a physical memento of what is lost, a way to make the unknowable about trauma more intimate by physical means and by way of the senses.

The Dis/location and War Class

We could extend Elaine Scarry's argument—"What is remembered in the body is well remembered"—to argue that what is remembered in the collective body is well remembered and perpetually passed down to future generations through clandestine processes of transference. When the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, inherent to trauma, is passed on to the second generation, they inherit not only evasive memories, but also a habitus comprised of assemblages whose numerous extensions perpetually recalibrate what it means to embody ethnic, gender, sexual, and class identity. It is an equation rearticulated by the presence of injury, since each of these categories makes a person differently predisposed to vulnerability. One aspect of those assemblages that I was particularly interested in unpacking here were the links between trauma, remembering (firsthand, and vicarious), and social class. To that end, in my readings of films about youth, I positioned social class, next to ethnicity and gender identity, as one of the key factors that predisposes the nature of traumatic injury and the forms of its remembering. I also stipulated that in its wake, war recalibrates the hierarchies of social class, creating new articulations of privilege and of marginalization alike. Post-Yugoslav films about youth cultures increasingly articulate those links, as generations born out of, in, or immediately after the immense war trauma of Yugoslavia's violent breakup come of age. I have argued here that a trans-generational transference of traumatic memory becomes a structuring structure (to use Bourdieu's phrasing)—a structure which might be called the habitus of postmemory, one that involves the aftereffects of trauma and injury as the building blocks of its affective, material assemblages. Furthermore, I have argued that this shifting habitus is closely linked to the material conditions that inform the youth's postwar realities. The assemblage of postwar material and affective realities thusly inherited creates a war class, here most visible in the dispossession of youth: a social strata whose deprived material conditions inform their coping with postmemory through subcultural

belonging that attempts, but never fully succeeds in, alleviating some of the most painful—and contradictory—aspects of the (formerly) violent parent culture.

Here, we can again talk about the mechanisms of dislocated screen memory: memory is here, at times, dislocated from the bodies that experienced it firsthand, and lodges itself as a formative structure for the second generation, forming further dislocations in its wake, as the youth struggle to create meaningful attachments through which these various layers of dislocation would be articulated or resolved. For dispossessed youth, those attachments are shown to be most meaningful when they take shape through subcultural activity, and in these subcultural groups, pain and injury of the dislocated collective memories become articulated through different performances of invading the body: by injuring Others who are thusly defined by the parent culture (like the skinheads do in *Skinning*), by injuring themselves (as the skaters in *Tilva Ros* do), or by performing sadomasochistic acts as a key path to affection (as Jasna and her clique of girls do in *Clip*). In *Children of Sarajevo*, the memory of bodily injury and of loss is accessed only through grainy home videos that stand in for literal memories—as this particular form of dislocation takes a cinematic shape, representing a poignant metaphor for the ways in which cinema plays a crucial part in making sense of the memories thus dislocated, and of witnessing the act of bearing witness. The results are always uncertain: sometimes cinema organizes dislocation into temporarily coherent utterances, but sometimes traumatic memory is dislocated further through film, as a reminder that its meaning can be fixated only as a contingent performance of coping that is never complete and always only partially finished.

Conclusion: The Child, the Quiet War Film, and the Power of Alternative Scenarios

If, as Freud argues, "there is in general no guarantee of the data produced in our memory" (1976: 496), and also, as van der Kolk and van der Hart note, "memory is everything" (1995: 178), then these two seemingly paradoxical truths are perpetually negotiated in the process of arriving at meaning—often through incongruities more than seamless logic. In his analysis of terror and trauma in German cinema post-1945, Thomas Elsaesser finds that the films' lack of direct address of the Holocaust reflects absence *as* presence, and moreover, an indication of *parapraxis*, where the concept is understood not only in traditional psychoanalytic terms (i.e., "Freudian slip"), but also implies "effort, a voluntary or involuntary persistence, usually one with unexpected or unintended results, including reversals of cause and effect, or displacements in time and space" (2014: 102). If film is an object of (traumatic) memory, but also creates memory as such, such displacements, unintended or voluntary, reveal memory as always already replete with gaps, errors, and inconsistencies as much as it is with knowable facts. If *parapraxis* in postwar German cinema reflects "the right thing at the wrong place, the wrong thing at the right time" (Elsaesser: 102), dislocated screen memories in post-Yugoslav cinema stage trans-ethnic memory-work as both an imperative and an impossible task. Yet while failure (of mastering the past or coming to terms with it) is integral and, moreover, necessary in *parapraxis*, dislocated screen memory of post-Yugoslav cinema frequently reflects a refusal to admit failure, and instead seeks out spaces of hopeful, if not healing affect in the aftermath of grave injury. In other words, mourning (as opposed to melancholia) in post-Yugoslav cinema is not constituted as a "performance of failure" (which Elaesser sees in the "counterstrategies of German cinema" (103)), but rather as a *performance of possibility* for moving through loss in ways that prevent it from becoming a structural absence.

Since individual memories are never entirely separated (or separable) from their connections to the more collective, structuring social memories (or rather, without the context of the social milieu of collective memories, individual memories would be rendered meaningless), so does each individual encounter with cinema as cultural memory always already rest on the premises of pre-existing social collectivity within which they are made meaningful. Yet dislocated screen memory often threatens the stable premises of social milieus within which it may be constituted as strictly ethnic rather than trans-ethnic. Indeed, in this book, I have speculated about the ways in which post-conflict cinema of the former Yugoslavia constitutes a cultural archive of trauma that is not irrevocably ethnocentric or addressed to singular ethnic collectivities (sometimes despite its own efforts to do so). Rather, screen trauma in these films is often decidedly trans-ethnic, where "trans" does not refer only to "cross," but also to "beyond." To that end, post-Yugoslav dislocated screen memories can offer new insight into trauma, as well as its circulation as cultural memory: that trauma's ethnic premises persistently fail under the excess of memory and perhaps suggest that trauma may be constitutive of ethnicity (or of the collective understanding of ethnicity as such), but never entirely reduced to its imagined boundaries. While my presumptions about trauma and memory have, in this book, largely been influenced by what might be provisionally deemed "Western theories" of these concepts (reflecting the dominance of such theories in our scholarly forums more generally), I also remained mindful of treating such insights as contingent rather than unquestionably applicable to any historical time or geographical space. Indeed, many of my analyses reflect the incommensurability of "trauma" and "memory" as they have been theorized in other social contexts and with different sets of historical burdens. Yet I insisted on the terms both as a way to nod to the rich body of work about them that precedes and informs this book, and also as a way of inscribing different inflections of trauma and memory into the dominant understandings of what they mean and how they circulate culturally.

In this conclusion, I wish reflect on a particularly poignant figure of post-Yugoslav dislocated screen memory, heretofore not discussed in detail—the figure of the cinematic Child, who might be screen trauma's most elusive subject more generally. Moreover, I discuss several works that I call "quiet war films", as they call attention to and often undermine the standard expectations placed on the cinematic representations of war. These films about war do not carry the genre's most stereotypical features of sensory overabundance, but are rather subtle and tender, at times almost entirely silent. In the final sections of this conclusion, I discuss the notion of "alternative scenarios" as important stepping-stones in

the cultural processes of coming to terms with painful events. I suggest that quiet war films might be the most reparative forms of alternative scenarios about wars and traumatic memory to be found in post-Yugoslav cinema.

"We Are All Witnesses": Movie-Made Collectivities

Speaking of, about, or around trauma should not be an exercise in foreclosing conversations, limiting them to foregone conclusions. In different chapters of this book, I have attempted to show how positioning traumatic memory as one of the central frameworks for understanding post-Yugoslav cinema can be used as a vehicle for an exploration of many interrelated themes: from war as a traumatically gendered experience, to the ways in which sexuality operates as a device for stabilizing ethno-national identity, to the ways in which history is used as a form of screen memory with which to mask present anxieties, to the ways in which the youth in the region live the felt material experiences of the postmemory of violence. And if tendencies are to be inferred, it appears that a growing number of films coming out of the region concern themselves with attempting to cast a more hopeful gaze toward the future by positioning the gloomy present as an obstacle that can, indeed, be mastered and overcome. But this can only be achieved by coming to terms with the truth about atrocities, and particularly with accountability (both personal and collective), where such accountability might exist. To go back to Caruth's question, "What does it mean to survive?"—it involves thinking about subjectivities as assemblages whose different aspects can and often are selectively used toward ideological purposes of casting one collective (national, ethnic, religious, sexual, classed, and so on) against another. Even though trauma is often experienced pre-cognitively, through affect that cannot be rendered entirely knowable to consciousness, traumatic narratives are nevertheless manipulable to such ideological ends, particularly in post-conflict times still fraught with ethnic divisions. It is therefore critical to examine the links between individual and collective traumas, between trauma's unknowability and the narratives that subsequently attempt to screen off the gaps in knowing. Moreover, it is also important to consider the dialectic and often painful relationship between survivor and perpetrator trauma. Neglecting the latter would mean avoiding consideration of a crucial element instilled in the question of what it means to survive. It is not only about what it means to survive trauma inflicted by others—the question also taps into what it means to survive inflicting trauma *onto* others.

Perpetrator trauma is, indeed, examined in several post-Yugoslav films, notably in *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, *The Blacks*, *Halima's Path* and, for instance, in Croatia's *The Witnesses* (*Svjedoci*, Vinko Brešan, 2003), a film

in which several different points of view frame an exploration of guilt and repression caused by participation in ethnic cleansing. The film stages a reversal of the normative nationalist stance in which the Croats are positioned as the victims of Serbian aggression (Vojković 2008). The central event in *Witnesses* sees a Serbian family fall victim to their Croatian neighbors, thereby revealing the efforts of ethnic cleansing and the cultures of silence that arise around them. After Croatian soldiers kill a Serbian civilian, the ensuing investigation brings out the tensions over whose death matters and whose does not—or rather, whose life is grievable and whose is not. The film shifts time frames, formally embodying the recurrence of traumatic memory through dislocation, and repetition. It repeats the same events of the crime and investigation in a *Rashomon*-like switching to different characters' points of view—from the mother (and enabler) of one of the soldiers who committed the crime, to the police inspector, to the local journalist, to the wounded war veteran whose brother committed the crime. Inscribed in these switches between different points of view is the question of *witnessing*, referenced in the film's title, as a central encounter through which trauma can become knowable. There exists one witness to the crime committed in the film—a very young girl—but she does not appear until the film's very end. Instead, the girl who witnessed the crime is hidden away by the soldiers, tightly guarded, as they contemplate killing her to do away with an eyewitness. But as one of these soldiers points out, "What do you think will happen to us? We are all witnesses." Thus the film's title references the noun in the plural—it is not just the little girl who witnesses, everyone is a part of that process one way or another, whether they are willing to admit to that burden or not. When the girl is saved at the end, so is the idea that witnessing is possible and cannot be entirely suppressed. In the form of a witnessing child then, a hope is retained that bearing witness can be sustained as an activity that prevents further atrocity. The act of witnessing is one of the central ethical concerns in the aftermath of trauma. Mieke Bal notes that

> [T]he need for a second person to act as confirming witness to a painfully elusive past confirms a notion of memory that is not confined to the individual psyche, but is constituted in the culture in which the traumatized subject lives. [. . .]. The acts of memory thus become an exchange between first and second person that sets in motion the emergence of narrative.
>
> (1999: x)

In *Witnesses*, the central figure who bears witness is a child. Indeed, the figure of the child (an innocent subject *par excellence*) represents one of the central frameworks of screen memory in post-Yugoslav cinema. The child is a witness who not only suffers, but also embodies a (more) hopeful

future. In her work on childhood and cinema, Vicky Lebeau notes "the role of the children as increasingly privileged witnesses of war and murder" (2008: 142). In post-Yugoslav cinema, the child has been a persistent witness, often sidelined by the centrality of adult stories (for instance, in *Grbavica* and *Snow*), but nevertheless unmistakably present as a figure who not only embodies the future, but also demands accountability for the tragedies of the past. For instance, in one of Rahima's video flashbacks in *Children of Sarajevo*, she sees children singing a lullaby in front of the devastated city landscape. As the camera angle lowers, we also see that a line of spectators is placed between the singing children and the camera itself. They are also children not only playing the role of the audience, but also actively calling attention to their roles as witnesses through the act of spectatorship. In *Halima's Path* (*Halimin Put*, Croatia), the child is lost before the film's narrative starts—as the story centers on the mother's efforts to find the remains of her adopted son, taken away by the Bosnian Serb army. In flashbacks, we discover the child's ethnic background to be mixed, and in a tragic turn of events, the boy's father turns out to simultaneously (and unknowingly) be his executor. This tragic mistake symbolically enacts the moral outrage of killing a child, inexcusable in any framework, made here most viscerally haunting in the father's killing of his own offspring. Subsequently, the father is overwhelmed with perpetrator trauma so much so that he takes his own life.

Carolyn Steedman has explored the figure of the child through the concept of dislocation, in order to probe the genealogy of "ideas about the self and its history" (1995: 5), which she sees rooted in the construct of the idea of a child in the context of modernity.[1] Yet, the figurative child always eludes fixed identity categories and cannot easily be subsumed under ethno-national frameworks that would see the child as a symbol of collective suffering. Perhaps this is precisely what makes the child such a compelling subject of war cinema, and by extension, trauma cinema—the fact that (s)he always escapes the limits of any one fixed identity.

With the figure of the child comes also an inspection of family as the primary unit of collectivity. In post-Yugoslav cinema, that unit is shown to be perpetually disrupted, torn away from its traditional nuclear structure, often by the blurring of lines that delineate "pure" ethnic identity by which families are positioned as primary units of ethnicity. Aida Vidan has highlighted a series of post-Yugoslav films that center on the relationship between fathers and sons (*No One's Son*, *Letter to My Father*, *Armin*, *Kenjac*), where fathers often fail their male offspring, whereupon an Oedipal struggle eventually reveals the father's failings and the son's traumatic coming to terms with it (2013a: 338). The theme of paternal failings is occasionally explored with respect to daughters as well—for instance, in

Grbavica, or Dalibor Matanić's *Daddy* (*Ćaća*, 2011), in which two daughters return to their paternal home in order to confront their father and unearth the repressed traumatic memory of sexual violence and incest. In *Circles* (*Krugovi*, 2013)—a Serbian film based on a true story from wartime Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a young Bosnian Serb soldier, Srđan Aleksić, was killed by his fellow Serbs for defending a Bosniak friend—the film's fictive future sees Aleksić's elderly father symbolically adopt another child: the son of his own son's killer, no less, a man who was later killed in action himself. Again, a curious reversal takes place, wherein the lines of accountability and innocence are rendered more complicated by the presence of a child who resists being situated within such clear-cut boundaries between "us" and "them," but rather exists *in excess* of them. A surrogate family constituted through informal adoption arises also in *Perfect Circle* (*Savršeni krug*, Ademir Kenović, 1997, Bosnia-Herzegovina), and in *So Hot Was the Cannon* (*Top je bio vreo*, Slobodan Skerlić, 2013, Serbia), two films about children living under precarious conditions during the siege of Sarajevo. In *Perfect Circle*, two orphaned boys escape danger in their home village and arrive in Sarajevo, where they are taken under the wing of a distraught poet, who often hallucinates his own death. In *Cannon*, an unnamed 11-year-old Serbian boy loses both parents in mortar shelling and is taken in by his Bosniak Muslim neighbor Tidža. After Tidža's own son is killed by a sniper, however, she loses the ability to be a surrogate mother to the Serbian boy. These films indicate that the politicization of children's ethnic identities is always already hampered by the fact that the suffering child at the center of the frame is an indictment not only of a single ethnic group, but also of the entire collectivity of adults. The cinematic war child stands in a curious position with respect to screen memory: inevitably a figure of futurity, the child is also a symbol of innocence inevitably lost by the world of adults, and therefore a figure always already of the past as much as the future. The omnipresence of the child in post-Yugoslav cinema seems to then reflect his or her role within dislocated screen memories as having something to do with self-indictment of a collectivity much larger than any one ethno-national group: that of adults who sustain the conditions under which the child suffers. This indictment is made overtly clear at the end of *So Hot Was the Cannon*, when the young protagonist escapes Sarajevo and is subsequently made, by the Bosnian Serb soldiers, to fire the cannon directed toward his native city. Eventually, the boy takes charge of the cannon and redirects it toward the sky—but also toward the camera itself—and the last shot of the film is of the cannon firing to nowhere in particular, but also everywhere, or so it seems, at the whole world that created such circumstances for the child. The ending prompted Vladimir Kecmanović, the author of the eponymous novel on which the film is

based, to denounce the film, since it diverged from the book: in the book, the boy voluntarily aims the cannon toward his native city, thus reflecting a level of deep traumatization that makes him fully desensitized and willing to perpetuate the violence inflicted on him and his loved ones.[2] But what Kecmanović's criticism of the film's ending fails to take into account is the inherent difference in the expressive forms within which the story is being told. I want to suggest that the film's altered ending, where the child voluntarily aims the cannon at the camera itself, does not depoliticize the question of how violence is perpetuated, but rather signals something specifically cinematic: the film's self-reflexivity about the accountability of its own medium. Namely, this ending offers a final recapitulation to the ethical condemnation of the gaze that not only bears witness, but also perpetuates the pain of children—the gaze that closely aligns the screen and the war's technologies of vision. By aiming the cannon at the camera itself, and by shattering its own cinematic frame in the very last shot, the film calls overt attention to the role of the screen in reflecting, archiving, and framing child's trauma, a mechanism that is also implicated in the child's suffering, as well as an object of the child's final act of aggression. To return to Virilio's meditation on the links between wars and technologies of vision, this final frame advances a provocative challenge: screen is here *both* a mechanism of witnessing, and the technology that perpetuates violence. Instead of a redemptive conclusion, the eye of the cannon is directed by the child toward the symbolic spectator, whose field of vision is finally destroyed into shattered darkness, as an act of final indictment—of looking and screening, through destruction of the fourth wall that comfortably separates the spectator from the unsettling shadows on the screen (Figure C.1).

In a different but no less poignant way, another film frames collective disintegration into violence through an intimate experience of a child. In Vuk Ršumović's *Ničije dete* (*No One's Child*, 2014, Serbia), a "wild child" is found in eastern Bosnian mountains in 1988 (the film is reportedly based on a true story), and is taken to an orphanage in Belgrade. The film's feverish early scenes place the spectator within the wild child's point of view, with partial, asymmetric frames, worm's-eye view (he moves on all fours and stays close to the ground), and a lack of privileging of the more traditional fields of vision that frame human subjects on the screen in unfragmented, seamlessly holistic ways. The lack of such a field of vision in the film's early scenes dislocates a sense of narrative stability and knowing through vision, and instead positions the boy's confusion as the key framework of understanding the events that transpire. Upon bureaucratic processing, the boy is assigned a random name—Haris Pućurica (later nicknamed Pućke)—which eventually designates him ethnically as Muslim. After being taken to an orphanage in Belgrade, he grows close to

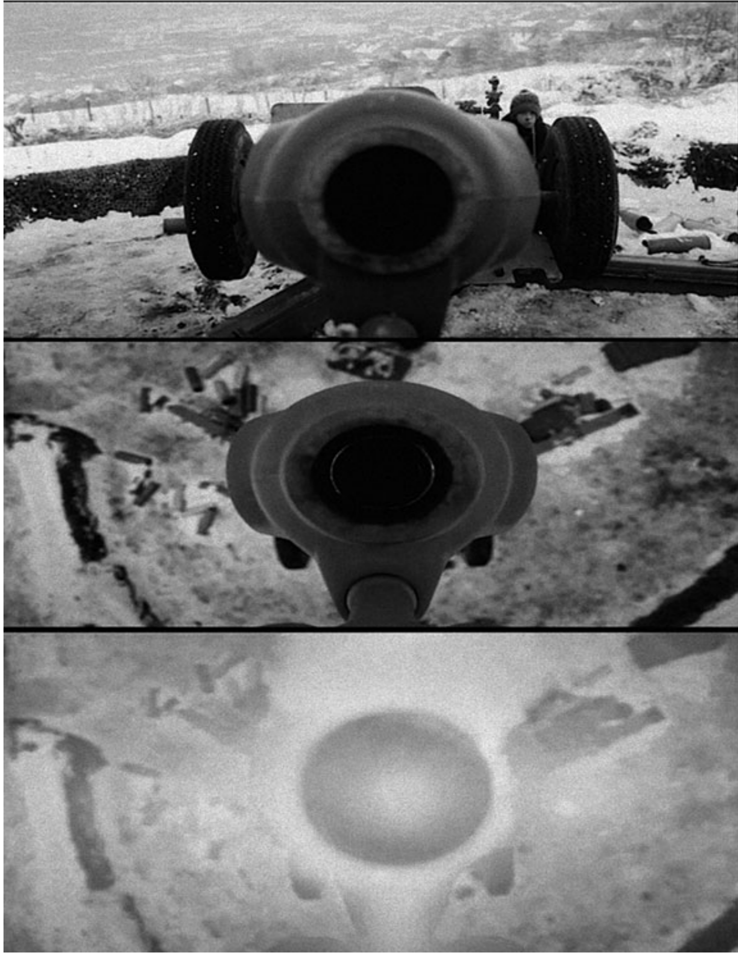

Figure C.1 The child, aligned with the eye of the cannon, which shatters the cinematic frame (*So Hot Was the Cannon*, screen grabs)

another patron, Žika, who teaches him how to walk. Žika later commits suicide, and Haris grieves for him in a way similar to his grief for the wolf killed when the boy was first found in the forest (the animal was, presumably, the boy's companion in the wilderness). Gradually, Haris becomes increasingly cultured, educated, and otherwise socially functional (and even becomes sworn in with other first graders as Tito's pioneer), but at what cost? His crowning achievement is graduating first grade, whereupon his mentor, Ilke, congratulates him, and the institution, on successfully

integrating Haris into "our community." "He learned to read, write and speak," notes Ilke. But instead of becoming more socially accepted, Haris is quickly taunted again by other children, this time for being Muslim. Enculturation thus means an inscription into ethnic identity that positions the boy as the Other inside the conventionally more readable hierarchies of difference than his wilderness allowed for. Soon thereafter, Haris receives a letter for the first time—one requesting that he be returned to Bosnia on the eve of the war as its rightful citizen. A wild child that no one wanted before, he now becomes the subject of inter-ethnic dispute, an innocent caught in the crosshairs of looming violence. When he returns to Bosnia, he is quickly placed in a refugee center, from which he flees. Then he stumbles upon a Bosnian army unit, who take him on, and he gradually becomes a child soldier. After his army mentor is killed in battle, the boy returns to the wilderness, slowly unraveling and shedding any acquired semblance of civilization. The film's last shot embodies the boy's point of view: as he is lying in the snowy forest, he sees a wolf in the distance. The wolf looks at the boy for a while, then turns away and disappears among trees, as the screen fades to black. Is this the moment of the boy's final return to nature, or the moment of his death? Perhaps both, as his civilized self (as the only kind of "self" possible) disappears, and he returns to his pre-civilized origins, disillusioned by the world he has encountered. The child thus retreats back to the state that precedes identity.

Wild child is a well-known, deeply mythologized subject of the cinematic screen, whether as Truffaut's Victor in *L'Enfant sauvage* (*The Wild Child*, 1970, France) or Herzog's Kaspar Hauser in *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (*The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*, 1974, Germany). Through such figures, as Karen Lury notes, cinema explores how children "forge an uneasy alliance with the natural, animal world in a manner that usurps a conventionally anthropocentric position" (2010: 15). Drawing from Adriana Benzaquén's work on the discursive formations of wild children (2006), Vicky Lebeau notes that

> The wild child, as both fact and fiction, has been used to question not only the boundary between "nature" and "culture" but the idea of the child as such: child as object of knowledge and medico-pedagogic intervention; child as origin, and truth, of selfhood; child as image, as spectacle, for the gaze.
> (2008: 58)

What does this challenge of the wild child reflect in the context of post-Yugoslav cinema and its constitutions of dislocated screen memory? I want to suggest that it fundamentally reconfigures normative discourses around Balkanism as a prevalent mode of explaining the investment in violence that typically marks regional being and belonging collectively. Rather than

depicting warring ethno-national collectivities as uncivilized and uncultured (as the trope of Balkanism would have it), *No One's Child* locates violence *within* civilization and culture as their (perhaps inevitable) side effects rather than states of things outside of the civilized, cultured life rooted around the fetishism of identity. On the other hand, "savage" wilderness is a retreat from said violence of war, and from identity as such—a return to a non-anthropocentric mode of being that the child ultimately chooses as his path, in order to escape the violence of the civilized world. War and violence are thus, paradoxically and provocatively, exposed as defining traditions of the civilized and cultured rather than their abominations.

There is another notable aspect to many war children in post-Yugoslav cinema: their inability to speak, at least not in normatively recognizable ways. The deaf and mute Kerim in *Perfect Circle*, the mute unnamed protagonist in *So Hot Was the Cannon*, the inarticulate, language-deprived Haris in *No One's Child*, the silent child witness in *Witnesses*, the mute boy in *Snow*, and the autistic Jovana in *Midwinter's Night Dream* (Goran Paskaljević, 2004, Serbia), who speaks in the excess of (largely incomprehensible) language, to name but a few examples, all embody the breakdown of recognizable language patterns as a means of differently articulating their story, or bearing witness to the story of another. Karen Lury has noted the pattern of inarticulate children as subjects of war cinema in other transnational contexts. Reflecting on Giorgio Agamben's postulation that the only true witness of the trauma of war might be a subject unable to speak (2000), Lury extends his argument to argue that the child's imperfect ability to articulate experience constitutes him or her as precisely one such witness:

> I suggest that the child's apparent inadequacy in relation to language (or deliberate retreat from language) aligns it with this figure. This means that the child's presence creates an opportunity for film-makers to articulate the trauma and experience of war not primarily through speech or a coherent, chronological, historically accurate narrative; instead, in films such as *La Jetee* (*The Pier*), *Mirror* and *El Espiritu de la Colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*), the perspective of the child allows for a confusing, often stuttering temporality and the dislocation of sound from the image. (7)

These dislocations of recognizable speech patterns in favor of differently imagined modes of communication inform a poignantly alternative cinematic gaze that envisions non-traditional formats for narrating trauma—perhaps it can be called narration by visually and verbally dislocated means. We return to my stipulation from the book's introduction—that trauma narratives might be "somehow cinematic" (where our

understandings of what constitutes a "narrative" need to be re-thought), privy to images perhaps more so than to words, but also to a dislocation of the seamless relationship between image and sound, screen and language. Perhaps it is precisely in the incongruities that arise from their dislocation that trauma can reside as a differently articulable and differently knowable experience, perceivable to senses more than fully comprehended.

With respect to dislocated screen memory, the stubbornly inarticulate child poses a deeply intimate challenge to the grand narratives of ethno-national kind, ones that seek to sublimate all intimate memories under their wing and embellish them with a seamless sense of linear and sovereign ethnic history. The child stands as always already in excess of any one ethno-national(ist) framework and, moreover, acts as its counterpoint: the pain and loss of these cinematic children expose various aspects of identity (be they gender, sexuality, or ethnicity) as premises for injury rather than a reprieve from it. Screening children in such a way reflects an impulse toward imagining collectivities differently, in ways that make seemingly familiar, unquestionable things—language, narrative, or ethnicity—strange and therefore not the only possible way of being in the world. The cinematic child—a constructed figure of innocence that nevertheless escapes firm grips on representation—acts as a repository of screen memory of our own lost, figurative (and real) childhoods, where identity categories were more permeable than the ensuing violence and war would subsequently allow them to be. This child is a phantasm of innocence, to be sure, a construct more than a given transhistorical subject. This is precisely how screen memory combs over the more troubling aspects of remembering: it puts in their place a phantasm that is not entirely unreal, but rather comprised of raw elements of true memories pieced together by elements of myth and fantasy. But as an elusive figure, the symbolic child always dislocates a stable framework of interpretation that would have him or her be a repository of a single narrative, or a single conclusion. These cinematic children may, then, be the most poignant embodiments of dislocated screen memory in post-Yugoslav film, as figures that simultaneously reflect the knowing and not-knowing, the past and the future, identity and inadequacy thereof, the remembering and the forgetting.

Narrating Trauma by Visual Means: The Quiet War Film

In the pages of this book, I have frequently collapsed under the category of "war film" a wide variety of cinematic works, from those that fit the categorization seamlessly, to those that, at a glance, do not appear to be about wars in any direct sense of the word. I have done so in order to instigate a

rethinking of what war itself and a war film are—specifically, to instigate a rethinking of an assumption that they are easily identifiable categories and that their borders are easily delineated. Quite the contrary, they often stretch into unfamiliar territories that blur the lines between past, present, and future. One film that resides at such blurry lines that challenge easy categorization of both war and war film as such is Janez Burger's *The Silent Sonata* (*Circus Fantasticus*, 2010, Slovenia), a war film whose narration of trauma is conveyed strictly by visual means. Throughout its duration, there are no words spoken, and the only sounds heard are the non-linguistic ones—cries, sighs, explosions, gunfire, door creaks, coughs, laughter, and music. The opening scene puts the spectator in the middle of a standard scene of war, with explosions, smoke, and gunfire, amid which a man walks through the devastated landscape, looking for something, and then finds a dead woman and sobs. Later, his children—a teenage girl and younger boy—cry over their mother's death. At one point, the dead woman opens her eyes and looks straight at the camera—breaking the fourth wall in a startling way, taking the spectator out of the seamless cinematic experience, returning the gaze, as it were. In the following scene, she is buried. War is here not only a non-contextualized, unexplained occurrence, but also a very intimate, claustrophobic experience, disconnected from the mass scale of other experiences. After their loss, the family gets unexpected visitors in a circus group whose members—a telekinetic child, a fire-eater, a strongman, a clown, and acrobats—quickly start to take care of and entertain the traumatized family.

When a tank appears on the horizon one day, one circus performer—a strongman—comes dangerously close to its pointed barrel and starts entertaining the machine with his performance routine. The machine of war decides to play along, showing off tricks of its own. This surreal interaction—a momentary suspension of imminent violence, dislocated by a playful exchange—yet again points to something important about cinema and war machines. As the encounter between protagonists and war technology is displaced onto the pro-cinematic domain of visual attractions rather than on the more traditional film language of war cinema, visual pleasure becomes a way to suspend the threat of violence. Moreover, as homage to cinema of attractions and its central place in film history, *The Silent Sonata* self-reflexively examines the role of such visual attractions in survival, the suspension of trauma, and the deflection of violence. Even though this is a brief moment—the rogue, fun-loving, anthropomorphized tank is suddenly destroyed by a missile flying from an unknown direction—it is nevertheless central to the film's insight into the relationship between war machines, spectatorship, visual pleasure, violence, and coping with trauma (Figure C.2).

Figure C.2 An encounter between war machines and the cinema of attractions (*The Silent Sonata*, © Staragara Production, photo by Mitja Ličen)

In another scene, the teenage daughter and a circus teenage boy have an idyllic bike ride on the beach, but their ride is interrupted by the discovery of decomposing soldiers' bodies. They perform a burial rite of sorts, by putting flowers and stones in and around the soldiers' decomposing skulls. Memorialization by and with cinema is again something that proves to be of important concern, as in *When Day Breaks* and *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, discussed previously. Moreover, *The Silent Sonata* challenges the realist registers of representation—for instance, the ghost of the wife appears to the spectator, and her husband and children feel her presence but cannot see her. The only person who sees the dead woman is the telekinetic circus child—she gives him her wedding ring to give to her husband and then walks away toward the horizon, a sense of closure achieved. These registers of supernatural, like the uses of magic realism in *Snow*, reflect alternative domains of reality, not as entirely sustainable spaces, but as temporary dislocation of coherence, and visual emplotments of a hope for healing and working through.

In one of the film's central sequences, a performance is staged for the dying circus director and the traumatized family. In the lengthy scene of the spectacle, cinema of attractions is again privileged as a means of visual storytelling. The depiction of performances is frequently intercut by shots of the old man and the family watching with the mixture of amazement and happiness, in order to punctuate the centrality of spectatorship. Carried away by the performances, the old man rises, looking younger and more alert, takes the telekinetic boy by the hand, and walks around the stage. Then he walks out, as the music stops—seemingly depicting the moment of his death. This scene of circus performance calls overt attention to spectatorship and visual pleasure and their role in transgressing the limits of the material reality of war, trauma, and loss. The film's official

synopsis posits the following questions as central for its existence: Is it possible for anything beautiful to happen in a landscape of war and death? Can life go on? Is it possible to realize that death does not exist?[3] These questions of survival and coping are addressed through an elegiac tone of beauty juxtaposed to devastation. The spectacle of a circus performance and the act of spectatorship are here, quite literally, the conditions of survival.

After the end of the circus performance, rain appears in the house, and the female acrobat's open hands, in visual and discursive ways mirroring the open hands of the girl in *Snow*—where the elements of nature play an important role in imagining different, non-realist registers of working through the trauma of war. The final scene of *The Silent Sonata* shows, in an aerial shot, the circus caravan leaving, with the man and his children in tow. They leave the space of war, opting for an un-rooted, peripatetic existence suspended outside the firm frameworks of time and space, as well as outside of the narrative structures rooted in realist registers, and therefore more suitable, as the film suggests, for coping with trauma in a more hopeful way.

I want to suggest, in the concluding parts of this book, that films such as *The Silent Sonata*, *Snow*, or Pjer Žalica's *Days and Hours* represent an important strain in post-Yugoslav trauma cinema, one that might be called the *quiet war film*—because they are films about war, yet ones that circumvent traditional visual registers and language of war cinema, sometimes opting to leave out the word "war" (or any word for that matter) altogether. Yet they are nevertheless films about war experiences and about surviving a war. These subtle films are, first and foremost, about trauma and coping, examined through an intimate lens that is often more about what is missing than what is being overtly shown. As such, they represent an important archive of alternative scenarios, or of dislocated screen memories, that challenge the primacy of traditional approaches to representing the pain of others on the cinematic screen. They elicit an affective response that displaces standard expectations of how a war film should affect the senses: in place of oversaturating the senses with violent gore, they offer silence and calm, effectively calling attention to the expectation that a war film should be any different. By dislocating a sense of genre familiarity, they simultaneously dislocate the sense of emotional safety produced by familiar narrative designs. The unsettlement that ensues opens up new possibilities of attachment to spectatorship as cultural memory, performed against the dominant grain, dislocated from its confines of uncritical recognizability.

A Flower Grows: Imag(in)ing Alternative Scenarios

I approached the films discussed in this book with an assumption that their post-conflict setting implies that they inevitably, sometimes inadvertently,

reflect the process of working through traumatic memories, precisely because of the chronotope within which they are made, and which inevitably informs their meanings. Each film represents an instance of a unique approach toward making sense out of difficult circumstances, and as trauma permeates their textures, they react to it in diverse, sometimes mutually opposing ways. Viewed as an archive of dislocated screen memory, they contribute to an understanding of how trauma circulates in the separate-yet-connected post-Yugoslav ethnic cultures that emerged in the aftermath of violence. They indicate how trauma attaches to such collectivities, as well as how it constitutes them. These films are undoubtedly a product of many intertwined aspects of the material realities within which they come to be. They borrow the always already existing social economy of affective attachments in order to make their own narratives meaningful in their reiteration, or disruption, of social mores. Yet at the same time, because of their function as public archives, the films act as a generative force—circulating back into the culture the epistemological regimes of knowing that they help stabilize and normativize into meaningful utterances with which to address trauma. These regimes of affective economy circulate as recognizable scripts that establish the parameters within which it becomes possible to talk about the (still recent) conflict. More often than not, each individual film discussed here sheds light on trauma's effect on the collective and individual psyche in a slightly new, often unnerving way. Together, they form an intricate, locally informed archive of dislocated screen memories that attempt to work through trauma in challenging postwar times. Furthermore, post-Yugoslav trauma cinema perpetually gives the spectator an opportunity to experience counter-narratives to those discourses overly reductive to the plurality of possible experiences about the event. What is often neglected about movies is how they can function as vehicles of counter-memory, as repositories of stories experienced otherwise, against the dominant grain of grand narratives and official histories.

In their writing about traumatic memories, van der Kolk & van der Hart argue that those memories are essentially always crippling, inarticulate, and resistant to narrativization. The authors draw a firm line between traumatic memories and what they call narrative memories, which they understand as the ordinary memories not related to injury or extreme experience, and which can, as their name indicates, be verbalized and described. "Thus, in contrast to narrative memory, which is a social act, traumatic memory is inflexible and invariable. Traumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity" (1995: 163). At the same time, "through subconscious, they continue to influence current perceptions, affect states, and behavior" (163). Thus, traumatic memories are never

merely invisible or unaddressed—they always resonate within a person's subsequent interactions with the world and create a dislocation of sorts, in which a duality is introduced: a seeming ordinariness always interrupted by invisible marks of trauma. Traumatic memory is then always shaped and expressed through unmitigated affect—horror, fear, shame—and while it cannot be narrativized, it shapes the narratives that emerge around it. Since individual manifestations always take place within an existing (but also ever shifting) social milieu, in this book, I examined trauma's influence on perceptions and affective states in the domain of the collective and public archives of cultural memory constituted in and around post-Yugoslav cinema.

Van der Kolk & van der Hart's insight on trauma/memory does not rest on speculative descriptions of what traumatic memories are and how they reveal themselves. Rather, they suggest a course of action whose affirmative potential they claim to have witnessed in clinical practice. Namely, in order to become more operationalized, unfixed and less crippling, traumatic memories need to be "transformed into narrative language" (176). Van der Kolk & van der Hart suggest that this be done by introducing so-called alternative scenarios in which some of the most injurious aspects of traumatic memory would be displaced by becoming *unfixed* from their association with deep injury and injury only. They describe how "one contemporary therapist of a Holocaust survivor had the patient imagine a flower growing in the assignment place in Auschwitz—an image that gave him tremendous comfort" (178). It strikes me that the creation of such alternative imagery—it is an *image* rather than a story that displaces one's stuckness in crippling trauma—can serve as a poignant metaphor for how film often circulates in post-Yugoslav public cultures. Its spectators are invited to experience alternative visual narratives seen on the screen as a way to unfix their own, deeply intimate associations with the said wars. There is potential for attainable optimism in such a dislocating encounter between the intimate and the public, the fixed and its unfixing through an exposure to the stories of others, which might be the most important alternative scenario.[4]

Just as the flower is movingly imagined in Auschwitz, so is a form of alternative scenario envisioned through magic realism in one of the most touching and subtle films about the Bosnian war, *Snow*. This film represents an enactment of an alternative scenario, whereby the fixity of the unclaimed trauma that still haunts postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina is here at least partially resolved by being made into a concrete process of burying and mourning work. At the same time, it is a process also enshrouded by magical elements, such as the ever-soothing power of nature. The heavy rain brings out the truth, and the snow that falls

at the end of the film is akin to the flower envisioned in the concentration camp—it is imagined and surreal, but it also has deep material effects articulated through hope for a future less stuck in melancholia. It cannot be assumed, however, that the dislocated screen memories reflected in post-Yugoslav cinema have an imagined closure of healing as their only goal. Quite the contrary, to neglect the extent to which "bad feelings" persist would be to simplify cinema's effect. In fact, objects of memory, and those who experience them, sometimes need to remain attached to negativity, as a way to resist erasing painful history. In her work on happiness and negativity, Sara Ahmed has proposed the following thought-provoking conclusion:

> Bad feelings are seen as oriented towards the past, as a kind of stubbornness that "stops" the subject from embracing the future. Good feelings are associated here with moving up and getting out. I would argue that it is the very assumption that good feelings are open and bad feelings are closed that allows historical forms of injustice to disappear. The demand that we be affirmative makes those histories disappear by reading them as a form of melancholia (as if you hold onto something that is already gone). These histories have not gone: we would be letting go of that which persists in the present.
>
> (2010b: 50)

That which persists in the present is trauma itself, in its various forms and iterations. To insist on its resolution and on "letting go" would be to deny its deeply seeded aspects that cannot be easily resolved by narrativization, visualization, or other forms of address. Grappling with trauma is an ongoing process that has uncertain ends. In the post-Yugoslav context, and particularly in the cultural domain of cinema, trauma and its effects inform meanings and attachments to various object of identity. They are susceptible to ideological manipulation that amounts to a fetishization of suffering, where suffering is understood in very static ways that typically delegate those who suffer to the domain of helpless, passive victims who, in turn, become symbols of an entire collectivity. At the same time, a complete cooptation of trauma to various ethno-nationalist ends is made impossible due to trauma's inherent latency, partial *un*knowability, and lack of resolution. How can something that is not fully known be fully assimilated to ideological ends? It cannot, and trauma's loose ends, incommensurable aspects, and incomplete ways of knowing thus haunt post-Yugoslav cinematic space as ghosts that cannot be fully assimilated into ethno-nationalist projects of collective belonging, nor entirely ignored either. It is in this incommensurability between official truths and their loose ends that are captured in trauma cinema that trans-ethnic dislocated screen memory

lodges itself, as a residue of excess meanings rather than an indication of the lack of meanings.

By way of ending, I want to briefly return to spectatorship—an encounter in which dislocated screen memories are not only textual reflections, but also meanings actively created. If spectatorship is about movement, and if "film viewing involves the observer taking a mobile view on a mobile world" (Cresswell & Dixon 2002: 4), then it is bound by a mutual relationship of becoming, both for the text and for the spectator. Cresswell and Dixon claim that "as we watch the film we travel—we become somewhere else" (5). This *becoming somewhere else* is crucial for the way in which traumatic memories circulate on post-Yugoslav cinematic screen and affect the spectator by way of dislocation through moving elsewhere. This impact is particularly important in the context of ethnic and national divisions in which trauma is often traded as political currency and a premise for further divisions. The dislocation of the primacy of ethnically identified traumatic memories is a key step toward envisioning a future in which such divisions would not instigate further animosity. Rather than "making" the spectator feel, films "*extend an invitation* to feel a particular way" (Smith 2003: 12, emphasis mine). Whether that invitation is accepted or not is not entirely up to the films themselves.

In the aftermath of Yugoslav wars, trauma cultures that appeared on the horizon often took the most visible, immediate shape through cinema, arguably more so than through other vehicles of cultural expression. Perhaps the openness of the cinematic image to expand rather than limit the conversation about trauma, as well as the medium's persistent popular appeal, makes it a suitable domain in which challenging forms of cultural memory are always being established—forms of memory that do not limit our understandings of trauma, but rather perpetually refine it in intricate, often seamless ways.

Throughout the pages of this book, I have argued for a reparative approach to reading trauma in post-Yugoslav cinema, especially as that reading pertains to the circulation of trauma narratives through the prism of mutually connected assemblage parts: from the way gender becomes a defining factor of traumatic war experience, to the way queer trauma can destabilize the primacy of stable sexual and ethnic identity, to the ways in which traumatic memory becomes a key element for constructing history on screen, to the way in which age and class position bodies differently with respect to the phantom of injurious memory. All these elements inform and complement one another, but never fully coalesce into a complete, singular narrative—nor has getting at such a narrative been my goal. Instead, I have attempted to offer insight into some of the complexities that inform cultural circulations of screen trauma after a catastrophe

rooted in particular time and space, bearing in mind that there is always more to uncover; just as there is always more to remember and forget at the same time.

Rather than focusing on how collectivities envision cultural memory as reflected in cinema, I have examined here how dislocated screen memories that reflect and conceal trauma in the post-Yugoslav cultural spaces constitute new possibilities for differently imagined collectivities in their own right. Or rather, how dislocated screen memories *extend an invitation* for collectivities forged through empathic unsettlement to emerge, as a way to break down the boundary between the dichotomously imagined Self and Other rather than reiterate it.

Notes

Introduction

1. Whether trauma can be narrated in linear, traditional forms is a matter of contention for trauma theorists. While Cathy Caruth's theories are widely understood as claiming that trauma is often inexpressible, that might be an oversimplification of her ideas. Berlant (2001) and Stacey & Ahmed (2001) emphasize trauma's ineloquence as a way to challenge the primacy of testimonials as the normative genre of trauma, while Jane Robinett (2007) challenges assumptions that trauma cannot be expressed, arguing that the survivors' impulse to write—even in syntactically non-normative ways that point to the breakdown of language rather than its ability to fully depict traumatic experiences—is proof to the otherwise.
2. Morag insightfully notes in her discussion that perpetrator trauma has been largely repressed in the vast majority of trauma research (13). In her definition of perpetrator trauma, Morag draws on LaCapra's statement that "there is the possibility of perpetrator trauma which must itself be acknowledged and in some sense worked through if perpetrators are to distance themselves from an earlier implication in deadly ideologies and practices" (2001: 79; quoted in Morag 2013: 13).
3. In his response to Craps & Buelens, Michael Rothberg warns that "[I]nstead of focusing criticism on the supposed 'whiteness' of trauma studies' subjects, we might want to say that as long as trauma studies foregoes comparative study and remains tied to a narrow Eurocentric framework, it distorts the histories it addresses (such as the Holocaust) and threatens to reproduce the very Eurocentrism that lies behind those histories" (2008: 227).
4. Several other volumes have looked at the circulation, reverberation, and constitution of trauma in cinema in the context of different conflicts. Thomas Elsaesser's *German Cinema—Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945* (2014) looks at German cinema made in the aftermath of World War II. While Elsaesser's book concentrates on Germany's coming to terms (or unwillingness to do so) with the Holocaust as played out through cinema, Raya Morag's *Defeated Masculinity* looks at the ways in which film contributes to a stabilization of certain kinds of cultural memories over others. Morag looks at New German Cinema and American Vietnam War cinema and takes on a distinctly psychoanalytic trauma study approach that positions gender as its

main framework of critique. In *Waltzing with Bashir* (2013), Morag looks at perpetrator trauma, in particular, as a form of trauma that is increasingly permeating the cinematic screen and its relation to injury. Other volumes on war, cinema, and trauma include Nurith Gertz and George Kheleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory* (2008); Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* (2004); and Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representations: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (2013).

5. Freud argues the following: "What is recorded as a mnemic image is not the relevant experience itself—in this respect, the resistance gets its way; what is recorded is another psychical element closely associated with the objectionable one—and in this respect, the *first* principle shows its strength, the principle which endeavors to fix important impressions by establishing reproducible mnemic images. The result of the conflict is therefore that, instead of the mnemic image which would have been justified by the original event, another is produced which has been to some degree associatively *displaced* from the former one" (1976: 490).
6. https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2014/07/05/you-are-triggering-me-the-neo-liberal-rhetoric-of-harm-danger-and-trauma/

Chapter 1

1. Originally in BCS. All translations of BCS sources into English are mine, unless otherwise stated.
2. With production so high-profile that major Hollywood stars were brought in to participate, most notably Richard Burton, who played Tito himself in *The Battle of Sutjeska* (*Sutjeska*, Stipe Delić 1973), or *The Battle of Neretva* (*Bitka na Neretvi*, Veljko Blajić 1969), in which Orson Welles played a Chetnik leader and Yul Brynner the lead partisan soldier's role. On the role of such films in cultural memory and last Yugoslav wars, Eric Gordy notes:

   > The Partisan epics were not only popular—for many people they constituted the only source of knowledge about elements of the WWII experience that were not taught. So when war started again in 1991, and paramilitaries started searching for a visual code to define their new identities, they found them in the previous generation's films. A new group of violent enthusiasts who wanted to play as Ustashe and Chetniks went into the fray disguised as the actors who played them in the Partisan films. The elaborately produced ignorance of one period became the negative dogma of a later one.
   >
   > (Gordy, Eric, "The Opposite of Memory Is Not Forgetting," *The Balkanist*, November 26, 2014: http://balkanist.net/the-opposite-of-memory-is-not-forgetting/)

3. Wolff argues that "the idea of Eastern Europe was entangled with evolving Orientalism," which had the result of constructing "Eastern Europe as a

paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe" (7). Similarly, Todorova notes that, while "the West and the Orient are usually presented as incompatible entities, antiworlds, but completed antiworlds [. . .], the Balkans, on the other hand, have always evoked the image of a bridge, or a crossroads" (15).

4. In addition, Iordanova refers to it as "voluntary self-denigration" and "self-inflicted exoticism" (2001: 67), and "Third-Worldisation" (68).
5. As Dubravka Ugrešić argues in *The Culture of Lies*: "Today Europe rummages through drawers of memories, particularly those which contain the traumatic files of the First World War, the Second World War, fascism and communism." London: Phoenix House (1998: 224).
6. For insightful work on the role of memory in the post-Yugoslav context, see Jansen, Stef. "The violence of memories: Local narratives of the past after ethnic cleansing in Croatia." *Rethinking History* 6.1 (2002): 77–93; Volčič, Zala. "Yugo-nostalgia: Cultural memory and media in the former Yugoslavia." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24.1 (2007): 21–38; Hoepken, Wolfgang. "War, memory, and education in a fragmented society: The case of Yugoslavia." *East European Politics & Societies* 13.1 (1998): 190–227; Mikula, Maja. "Virtual landscapes of memory." *Information, Communication & Society* 6.2 (2003): 169–86; Velikonja, Mitja. "Lost in transition: Nostalgia for socialism in post-socialist countries." *East European Politics & Societies* 23(4) (2009): 535–551; Miller, Paul B. "Contested memories: The Bosnian genocide in Serb and Muslim minds." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.3 (2006): 311–24.
7. Jurica Pavičić's unfavorable review of the film criticizes it for glossing over the more uncomfortable aspects of Croatian collaboration with the Nazi regime during WWII ("*Lea i Darija*: Malograđanska fantazija o tome kakvi smo bili dok na vlast nisu došli divljaci," *Jutarnji list*, April 2, 2012: http://www.jutarnji.hr/-lea-i-darija—malogradanska-fantazija-o-tome–kakvi-smo-bili-dok-na-vlast-nisu-dosli-divljaci/1004366/)
8. Reportedly, while filming in Višegrad, Žbanić had to keep local Serbian authorities in the dark since any kind of memorialization of atrocities that were committed in the town during the war is immediately suppressed.
9. I take the term "counter-monument" from James Young (2000).
10. For recent surveys of some aspects of post-Yugoslav cinema, see Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija* (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez. 2011), Vidan, Aida. "Spaces of ideology in South Slavic films" (*Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 2.2 (2011): 173–92), Gordana P. Crnković, *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film: Fires, Foundations, Flourishes* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group. 2012), and Andrew Horton, "The Vibrant Cinemas in the Post-Yugoslav Space" (in *After Yugoslavia: The Cultural Spaces of a Vanished Land*. Edited by Radmila Gorup, 185–99. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2013). Separate ethno-national cinemas are discussed in Ranko Munitić's *Srpski vek filma* (Beograd: Institut za film. 1999), Lojz Tršan's *Slovenski film in njegovo varovanje* (Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije.

1998), Dejan Kosanović's *History of Cinema in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1897–1945* (Beograd: Naučna KMD, Feniks Film. 2005), Nikica Gilić's *Uvod u povijest hrvatskog igranog filma* (Zagreb: Leykam International. 2010), Ante Peterlić's *Iz povijesti hrvatske filmologije i filma* (Zagreb: Leykam International. 2012), to name but a few notable works.

11. Indeed, efforts to establish neatly divided ethnocentric film traditions have extended to Yugoslav cinematic tradition itself. Nebojša Jovanović (2012) has noted that these efforts to divide Yugoslav cinema into separate ethno-national film histories has resulted in an implication that Yugoslav cinema as such never truly existed.
12. Dubravka Lakić, "Đavo je bio civil"/"Devil was a civilian," *Politika*, November 3, 2011 (http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Kritika/filmska-kritika/Davo-je-bio-civil.lt.html)
13. Iordanova classifies under diasporic post-Yugoslav films' additional titles such as Zoran Solomun's *Tired Companions* (1997), Jasmin Dizdar's *Beautiful People* (1999), and Damir Marjanović's *My Father's Angel* (1999). Other examples of accented/diasporic cinema in the post-Yugoslav context include Goran Rebić's *Yugofilm* (1997), Krsto Papić's *When the Dead Start Singing* (1998), Andrea Štaka's *Fraulein* (2006), Goran Rusinović's *Buick Riviera* (2006), Dino Murselović's *Elsker deg ogsa* (2012), and Igor Drljača's *The Curve* (2012), to name a few.

Chapter 2

1. For insightful essays on gender in the former Yugoslavia, see Ramet, Sabrina P., ed. *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*. University Park: Penn State Press, 1999.
2. For instance, Catherine MacKinnon (1993) became an early voice against the practices of mass rape taking place in Croatia and Bosnia, only to reduce the issue to a mere caricature of the problem that it posed, by attempting to blame its occurrence on the "saturation" with pornography. Apart from claiming questionable links between pornography and violence, MacKinnon here reiterates the trope of passive femininity, and furthermore, caters to a problematic alignment between gender normativity and ethno-nationalist stances that essentialize not only gender, but also ethnicity. MacKinnon's approach is at odds with that of local Yugoslav feminists, from Serbia's activist group Women in Black, to Croatia's Vesna Kesić, Slavenka Drakulić and Dubravka Ugrešić. They have raised objections to the reiterations of ethno-nationalism by way of perpetuating gendered clichés (Kesić 1994).
3. Emanuel Levi is his *Variety* review: http://variety.com/1996/film/reviews/pretty-village-pretty-flame-1200446922/
4. For further insightful discussion of *Pretty Village Pretty Flame*, see Mazaj, Meta. "Tunnels, trenches, cellars: Nation and heterotopia in post- Yugoslav film," in *Mythistory and Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans*, ed. Tatjana Aleksič (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).

5. For an insightful and detailed discussion of the valances of Serbia's denial, see Gordy, Eric. *Guilt, responsibility and Denial: The Past at Stake in Post-Milošević Serbia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
6. The tunnel in *Pretty Village Pretty Flame* has been interpreted through a variety of other analytical frameworks: for instance, Rosalind Galt (2006) draws parallels between the cellar in *Underground* and the tunnel in *Pretty Village*, arguing that they stand for the abject loss and the work of mourning. Nedin Mutić argues that " 'tunnel' implies a durational passivity" which serves as a relativization of accountability of any one side of the conflict (2009: 218). Sanjin Pejković argues that the tunnel is a "transformed grave" which "creates direct contact between mythologized land and the bones that rest in it" (2009: 63).
7. The link between the disembodied voices and that which is suppressed—or unconscious—has been established by Krstić, who takes a somewhat different interpretation that goes back to the mirror stage and a generational showdown between fathers and sons. Krstić argues that "the invisible Muslim voices echoing outside represent the unconscious voices of the hated other, the life threatening antagonist, who is in fact a product of this regression into primal fantasy, which again, can be seen as a direct result of the rejection of the identification with the father's generation" (2002).
8. TIFF 08: "A Q&A with Aida Begic": http://twitchfilm.com/2008/09/tiff08-snijeg-snowqa-with-aida-begi.html
9. Kazaz, Enver. "Ka transetničkom pamćenju rata," Tačno.net, March 25, 2014: http://tacno.net/kolumna/ka-transetnickom-pamcenju-rata/

Chapter 3

1. As Kevin Moss notes about the increasing number of queer-themed films, "One might read this phenomenon as an index of increasing tolerance of homosexuality or an attempt to conform to Western European cultural norms" (2012: 352).
2. For a more detailed discussion of the links between Serbia's EU integrations and sexual politics, see Blagojević, Jelisaveta. "Between walls: Provincialisms, human rights, sexualities, and Serbian public discourses on EU integrations," in *De-Centering Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, eds. Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company 2011), 27–41.
3. Three central ideological functions of traditional, violent Balkan masculinity, according to Koteska, are "dislocation of accountability, censorship and brotherhood" (119), all three, as she argues, present in *Parade*.

Chapter 4

1. For recent work on post-Socialist and post-Communist nostalgia, see Velikonja, Mitja. "Lost in transition: Nostalgia for socialism in post-socialist

countries," (*East European Politics & Societies*, 23.4 (2009): 535–551), *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova & Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), and Bartmanski, Dominik. "Successful icons of failed time: Rethinking post-communist nostalgia" (*Acta sociologica* 54.3 (2011): 213–231).

2. Most films discussed in this chapter are indeed Serbian, as its national film industry seems to be currently invested in heritage cinema more than other post-Yugoslav film industries, with the possible exception of Macedonia. In recent years, the rise of heritage cinema in Serbia has seen enthusiastic box office returns, from *Zona Zamfirova* (Zdravko Šotra 2002) to *Montevideo, bog te video* (*Montevideo: Taste of a Dream*, Dragan Bjelogrlić 2010). Jurica Pavičić notes that *Montevideo*, one of the biggest Serbian box office hits in the last few years, reflects Serbian efforts to redefine their collective identity away from Yugoslav collectivity, and toward Serbianness as its defining trait (2011: 54). Another notable Serbian heritage film is *Solemn Promise* (*Besa*, Srđan Karanović 2009), a WWI drama about cultural barriers and interethnic links between a Slovenian woman and an Albanian man. In Croatia, besides the films discussed later in this chapter, heritage has been a prominent theme in the work of Branko Ivanda (*The Horseman*, *Lea and Daria*).
3. Perhaps most obviously, the nationalist Serbian investment in the historical myth-making is reflected in *Boj na Kosovu* (*The Battle of Kosovo*, Zdravko Šotra), a 1989 film that falls outside the scope of this book and was made on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Serb's titular battle against the Ottomans—an event that represents one of the founding myths of Serbian nationhood (Dobreva 2012).
4. Moreover, Pavičić notes that Vinko Brešan's two 1990s comedies, *How the War Started on My Island* (1997) and *Marshall* (1999), served as "mass collective therapy for Croats, still traumatized by the war" (2012: 53).
5. Žižek also notes that "In Slovenia, the right is advocating the rehabilitation of the anti-communist Home Guard which fought the partisans during the Second World War: they made the difficult choice to collaborate with the Nazis in order to thwart the much greater evil of communism" ("Barbarism with a Human Face, London Review of Books, May 8, 2014: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n09/slavoj-zizek/barbarism-with-a-human-face)
6. Levi, Pavle. "Kapo iz Omarske: Zašto neću gledati film *Sveti Georgije ubiva aždahu*," *e-novine*, July 2009: http://www.e-novine.com/kultura/kultura-tema/27796-Kapo-Omarske.html
7. This is yet another intertextual reference to the history of cinema, particularly to what Tom Gunning has called "the cinema of attractions" (2000).
8. A Sarajevo native, Kusturica chose to leave his hometown at the start of the Bosnian war, and eventually move to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. In Bosnia, this was perceived as a direct betrayal, as Sarajevo spent several war years under the siege by the Bosnian Serb army. Far from being affected by the criticism that he seemingly sided with the aggressor, Kusturica converted from Islam to Orthodox Christianity and refused to show remorse. While Kusturica's

first two films are today considered unquestionably a part of the Bosnian cultural heritage, and celebrated for the masterpieces that they are, the rest of Kusturica's film oeuvre is inevitably inspected through the political prism of the controversies surrounding the filmmaker's own persona and life choices (Škrabalo 2006).

9. In an otherwise favorable review of the film in *The Village Voice*, J. Hoberman described it as "truly maniacal" ("Lost Worlds," *The Village Voice*, June 24, 1997: 75).
10. Rosalind Galt notes:

> There is at once a directly politicized comparison drawn between 1941 and 1995 and a confusion in which space is reduced to the cellar, time is blurred so that all wars look alike, and the nation exists outside history. The film describes the ideology of Balkanism and speaks from its abjected place.
>
> (2006: 174)

11. As Susannah Radstone notes: "Nostalgia becomes, perhaps, not just the symptom of all that has been lost, but a term that, for those wrestling with expressing and analyzing those experiences, comes to condense the hopes and fears that accumulate around them" (2010: 187).

Chapter 5

1. The list includes *Armin* (Ognjen Sviličić 2007, Bosnia/Croatia), *Ostavljeni* (*The Abandoned*, Adis Bakrač 2010, Bosnia), *Ljeto u zlatnoj dolini* (*Summer in the Golden Valley*, Srđan Vuletić 2003, Bosnia), *Djeca* (*Children of Sarajevo*, Aida Begić 2012, Bosnia), *Fleke* (*Spots*, Aldo Tardozzi 2011, Croatia), *Neposlušni* (*The Disobedient*, Mina Đukić 2014), and so on. Moreover, Andrej Košak's *Outsider* (1997) serves as both heritage cinema and cinema about youth cultures, depicting the life of a disillusioned young man in the late 1970s Yugoslavia, leading up to Tito's death in 1980.
2. While the term "postmemory," coined by Hirsch, has been one of the most influential in the exploration of trans-generational memory, similar terms have been introduced by others as well: "vicarious witnessing" (Zeitlin 1998), "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 2004), "received history" (Young 1997), or "absent memory" (Fine 1988), to name a few.
3. Yet this pioneering work did not, as it is sometimes assumed, "discover" subcultures. For an extensive discussion of the term's long history, see Chris Jenks' *Subculture: The Fragmentation of the Social* (2005).
4. In "post-subcultural studies," one of the key premises is that the days of heroic working-class subcultural resistance are over (if they ever truly existed outside of being constructed as such through scholarly romanticizing to begin with) (Weinzierl & Muggleton 2003). The term "subculture" itself has been subject to scrutiny for its rigid association with social class (what Rupa Huq calls "subculture theorists' collective obsession with class," 2006: 15).

5. The skinhead subculture is explored in a few other recent films, such as *The Barbarians* (*Varvari*, Ivan Ikić 2014, Serbia), *The Whirl* (*Vir*, Bojan Vuk Kosovčević 2012), and *Metastases* (*Metastaze*, Branko Schmidt 2009, Croatia).
6. Obućina proposes that a more plausible explanation, for post-Socialist spaces at least, might be the theory of political opportunism, by which extreme right-wing ideologies position themselves as historical alternatives that have predated Socialism—and are thus appealing as "authentic" movements, less as contrived political platforms, because they present themselves as a callback to homogenous national histories that predate politics as such.
7. See also *Romper Stomper* (Geoffrey Wright 1992, Australia), *American History X* (Tony Kaye 1998, US), or *This is England* (Shane Meadows 2006, UK).
8. A term used by Ana Kržavac in her *B92* review "*Šišanje*: Ne samo srpska priča."
9. "Statement related to the forced eviction from the informal Roma settlement Belvil," *Praxis*, April 25, 2011: http://www.praxis.org.rs/index.php/en/praxis-in-action/social-economic-rights/housing/item/380-statement-related-to-the-forced-eviction-from-the-informal-roma-settlement-belvil/380-statement-related-to-the-forced-eviction-from-the-informal-roma-settlement-belvil
10. The latter form of "objective" observation is what Haraway calls the "ideology of direct, devouring, generative, and unrestricted vision, whose technological mediations are simultaneously celebrated and presented as utterly transparent" (582). This description could easily be applied to the representational/expositional framing in *Skinning*.
11. Slobodan Vujanović, Tilva Roš: Dečko koji obećava: http://www.b92.net/kultura/moj_ugao.php?nav_category=389&yyyy=2011&mm=02&nav_id=491168
12. My use of the term "jouissance" is influenced by Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975) and implies the possibility of oppositional pleasure that "escapes the control of culture," and moreover, "occurs at the moment of the breakdown of culture" (Fiske 1994: 244).
13. New Serbian Film (Vojnov 2011) paints a gloomy, even gruesome picture of the post-conflict transitional reality, with graphic violence being its most prominent marker. *Skinning*, and to some extent *Tilva Ros* (although Dimitrije Vojnov himself classifies it as New Serbian Avant-Garde Cinema), as well as Srđan Spasojević's *Serbian Film*, and Mladen Đorđević's *The Life and Death of a Porno Gang*, cast a gloomy look on post-conflict Serbia and the region, at times overtly eliciting sensationalism and moral panics through graphic representations of visceral violence, in order to address the brutality of post-conflict reality by sadistically objectifying those very weakest members of society as a means to ostensibly arrive at a wider critique of a system that breeds and perpetuates such violence.
14. Moreover, Zoran Ćirjaković suggests that the bulk of men who fought in the Yugoslav wars were people "from the margins, without good education or promising perspectives" (2012: 93). This assessment may to some extent be an overgeneralization, but it nevertheless highlights an important and often ignored confluence between social class and the nature of wartime experience.

Conclusion

1. In her book *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930*, Steedman argues that "child-figures, and more generally the idea of childhood, came to be commonly used to express the depths of historicity within individuals," and moreover, "emerged at the same time as did the modern idea of history and modern conventions of historical practice" (1995: 12).
2. "Ko mi je ohladio 'Top'," *Politika*, February 22, 2014: http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Kultura/Ko-mi-je-ohladio-Top.lt.html
3. From the film's official website: http://www.silentsonatamovie.com/film/synopsis/
4. As van der Kolk & van der Hart argue, "once flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience. By imagining these alternative scenarios, many patients are able to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror" (178).

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