

## **TRANSFORMATION OF TRAUMATIC CHARACTERS IN POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the changes Yugoslav cinema realized from the 1980s to the 2000s, and seeks to see the contributions of three important post-Yugoslav directors to the transformation of the cinema characters. The post-Yugoslav states emerged after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and they underwent political and cultural changes as a result of the collapse of the former Yugoslav socialism and the post-civil war. Post-Yugoslav cinema, which took its share from these changes, experienced crises of national identity and modernization. Examining these changes in cinema with cinematic characters is also very important in terms of visualizing cultural and economic changes in a cinematic sense. The real problem here is where the boundary of this change will be drawn. This is because, although the characters in post-Yugoslavian cinema have been transformed, there is still some cinematic tradition that continues today. Post-Yugoslav cinema will therefore be considered within the period of 1980s.

**Keywords:** Post-Yugoslav cinema, trauma, cinematic characters

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## INTRODUCTION

Often, the concept of post-Yugoslavian cinema offers curative effects on rejection of failure and the search for hope, and becomes a common stake of new countries emerging after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, which is increasingly adopted in the field of film studies (Šprah, 2015: 184). These emerging new countries offer us many conveniences for studying areas of cultural encounter. This is because these are not countries that can be easily understood by their historical, political, religious or ethnic origins. As Miskovic (2006: 440) noted, the knowledge of Westerners cannot go beyond generalization, oversimplification, and sometimes false information for this particular region. Yugoslav films, like many Eastern European films with experimental and avant-garde aesthetics of this low budget, have been subjected to criticism by Western critics for a long time, with the reason that they “come from the moon” (Mihancsik as cited in Imre, 2000: 1). Deterioration disorders caused by the choice of irrationality and uncontrollable emotions, exaggerated reactions and violent tendencies are the main reasons for the criticisms on Yugoslavian cinema.

The widespread criticism of Yugoslavia by Westerners is closely linked to the identity problem along with the cultural structure of the country. As Lederer (as cited in Griffiths, 1993: 38) pointed out, there is no such a network of complicated relationships anywhere in Europe. The region has a small universe as a whole. We can explain this in the following way. After the independence movements in the Soviet bloc, the nations that became independent in Eastern Europe were not culturally close to each other. So, this fragmentation facilitated the formation of national identity. The opposite situation is that most Eastern European cinemas were filming more nationalistic films before the bloc was demolished (Mazierska, 2010: 9). In Yugoslavia, the nations that emerged after the civil war could not immediately complete the construction of their identity. Thus, after the country collapsed, films that were reminiscent of the former Yugoslavia were produced. The deep traumas created by the civil war in the post-Yugoslav era were softened in a sense by leaning against the romantic and nationalistic feelings of the past. The post-Yugoslav era was kept outside of Europe and associated with the old regime. The orientation of post-Yugoslav cinema to this thought had a cause related to the old regime, as understood by Tito's words:

Federal borders should be similar to something to those white lines on the marble column. What is the meaning of federal units in today's Yugoslavia? We do not consider them as a group of small nations. Rather they have a more administrative character, the freedom to govern oneself. That is the character of independence of each federal unit, full independence in the sense of free cultural and economic development (Shoup, 1968: 116).

These words show that different cultures have been democratically adopted since the beginning of Yugoslavia. Even today, given the fact that the multicultural society design seems to be a dream, the importance of Tito's words may be understood better. However, rejection of the communist party by rejecting cultural boundaries has overshadowed this multiculturalism.

The multiculturalism that Yugoslavia later began to ignore has dragged the characters of post-Yugoslav film into an unknown, marginal one. We may compare the emerging movie characters to Bakhtin's (1982: 159) comparison with a rogue, a clown and an idiot. While living in their own little worlds, these three figures do not directly understand what they do and say. Although they have different characteristics that separate them from each other, they all have the privilege of being different in this world. No other category fits in them, in any case they have a fakeness. Levi (2014: 212-213), asking if it was a type of madness described in post-Yugoslavian cinema characters similar to Bakhtin, found that this delusion continued today and contained too many metaphors. These metaphorical narratives in Post-Yugoslav films seem to be a result of the cultural permeability of characters.

The identity metaphors in post-Yugoslavian cinema are similar to the construction of the semi-mythical area mentioned by Halligan (2000: 78). This mythical area has been highly aestheticized and exoticized. In post-Yugoslav film characters, this situation is seen on a certain level, and modern efforts are shown directly instead of as a global metaphor.

While it is quite difficult to define the post-Yugoslav film characters presented through the marginalized identities after 2000, post-Yugoslavian cinema entered a process called Jurica Pavicic's (2010) *normalization*, and this have caused the films to share certain topics and forms. The *normalization* process may also be viewed as an evolutionary extension of ideological films and films with similar themes in the 1990s that has a plain tone. The identity that gained momentum from the 1990s to the 2000s and the cinematic characters associated with it set the scope of the research; but first, it is necessary to refer to the post-1980 cinematic trends affecting post-Yugoslav cinema and the changes that have taken place since 1990. Thus, the transformation that the post-Yugoslavian filmmaker undergoes while trying to incorporate into European cultural artifacts would be understood.

## **POST-1980 YUGOSLAV FILM INDUSTRY AND CINEMA MOVEMENTS**

In terms of the film industry, in the 1980s, it was seen that every federal republic had its own film studios in Yugoslavia. The Central Culture Administration funded filmmaking financially, so that the producer, distributor and advertising companies belonged to Yugoslavia Film. Thus, the repressive state regime had been influential on cinema for many years. The film industry, which depended on the political regime in the country, produced films in accordance with the ethnic-linguistic regions. Within these regions, Serbia had an important place. Serbia, Yugoslavia's highest-populated republic, was a center for both Yugoslavia's most frequently film-producing place and cultural and political sense of strength. For this reason, the discourse of nationalism, which held the state together, had been largely identified with Serbia at this time. The weakening of the communist structure had also brought the nationalism discourses, which advanced in Serbia's direction, into cinema films.

Thus, Yugoslavian cinema had become the scene of the continuation of the old partisan war films in addition to the surplus of American films that had been shown. The events and people in partisan films influenced by the iconography of cartoon books and Hollywood western films were often based on real events for the reproduction of the communist regime (Levi, 2007: 64-65). The continuation of the discourse of nationalism over war films was closely related to the end of brotherhood and the propaganda of unity in the country. The death of Tito, the head of state, in 1980 brought about the necessity of staying together. The state pressures on the society and the decline of the censors over the cinema films also directly affected the film characters of the 1980s. The marginalized characters that appeared to be far from society, the light-handed individuals gradually becoming deprived of the stereotypes of nationalist ideology. Another point that should be kept in mind is that concepts such as nationalism, heroism and romanticism in films where characters are undeveloped and action-oriented were already always used at certain doses due to the complex nature of the country (Horton, 1981: 18-19).

The real reason for this freedom, reflected in the film characters, was the fact that after the death of the president, there was a lack of government in the country and the drift of the country towards an economic crisis. This significant change in the country means the end of Tito's unprecedented authority. Particularly powerful federal republics clearly began to voice their reactions to political and economic growth at this time. Towards the end of the 1980s, the rise of political crises led to the shift of film topics towards feelings of social alienation, anxiety and lack of interest, and Yugoslavian cinema entered a new phase of what is now

called *new Yugoslavian cinema* (Goulding, 2002: 144). This period was also the beginning of a period called the *new primitivism* at the same time. The *new primitivism*, which was a Sarajevo-based subculture trend at the beginning of the 1980s, aimed to recognize the local cultures by natural means (Nagy, Rouyer, Rubin, 2008: 147). The *new primitivism*, which was nurtured from the emotions of everyday life, had a non-political structure and first appeared in mass media such as radio and television (Levi, 2007: 126-127). Zildzo (1990) interpreted this movement as an art form in which anti-intellectual, local words and icons are used and prejudices are manipulated. With this trend, filmmakers found new ways to critically deal with the old revolutionary past, even if they are in complex and abstract forms. The film character, which is defined as the *wild Balkan man*, also appeared in this movement. This film character, which is fed from a folk culture out of the official culture, became particularly evident with the films directed by directors such as Kusturica in the early 1980s. The stereotype of the *wild Balkan man* that was created in Yugoslavian cinema was, in fact, a different interpretation of patriarchy and tradition. These characters, who misunderstood and damaged everywhere, separated their countries from Europe with their irrational and uncanny behavior, also kept women away from violence.

The development that brought out different character types from the past was the start of a process which was reminiscent of the *French New Wave* movement of the directors of the Film and Tv School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) and later to be called Czech / Prague School (Goulding, 2002: 145-146). In their films, these directors conveyed social criticism to the audience in a non-dogmatic manner with contemporary themes, including both irony and love. The anti-communist film directors of the *new primitivism* movement worked with local people and non-professional actors (Gocic, 2001: 21). This trend emerged as an anti-political, low-energy, self-styled punk culture in the United Kingdom as a reflection of the *new romance*. The movement, seen as a complicated art movement in Slovenia, is thought of as a search for a new identity in Yugoslavian cinema, which uses the Muslim identity in the suburbs in Sarajevo without prejudice (Levi, 2007: 63). In short, these films tried to show the contemporary presentation of everyday life in a local and unique way, with characters outside the system (Batel, 2009: 9).

## EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMA

The 1990s, when European countries joined the European Community, were years of development in the global market. Outside of this market, Yugoslavia's disintegration from the civil war drove the remaining countries into semi-democratic regimes, neo-liberal politics and globalization. These years are the years when the post-Yugoslav countries had come to the world stage and begun to turn to Europe. Rapid democratic and economic changes in these countries had caused the emergence of both post-Yugoslav cinema and new cinema characters. The cinematic characters, kept away from social events and fed from locality, evolved into universal characters that tried to describe the trauma of the civil war in a realistic way. According to Longinović (2005: 37), orienting to poetic cinematic performances from Western perspectives to defeat Hollywood dominance has been one of the most important economic strategies of the 1990s. These strategies helped the cinema characters display excessiveness and become marginalized on the one hand. On the other hand, they helped them tend to the truth. This cultural transformation brings to mind the concept of *Western Orientalism*. This concept describes local discourses and identities internalized by modern societies (Sulstarova, 2012: 133). Local identities that we are accustomed to see in Yugoslavian cinema, on the one hand, thus began to take place within modern society, while on the other hand, they started to appear in a sort of post-modern identity struggle, on the border between culture, religion and other identities they belong to.

The cinematic characters' attainment of a more advanced structure in the 1990s than their old one, is closely related to the tendency of post-Yugoslav cinema to develop into more sophisticated films. Hollywood stereotypes were now combined with national aesthetic codes, and they created a creative and universal aesthetic form rather than direct transmission (Jameson, 2004: 252). Thus, the concept of national cinema has been defined in the Balkan countries, which were not included in the European Community, in a form that was opposed to Hollywood and Europe (Crofts, 1993: 49). Some of these national and original films, which were shot in the countries most affected by the civil war, won many awards in the international arena. It may be stated that the 1990s were the most productive years for Balkan cinema considering that many more international films were filmed than the old times. At the same time, these films had been a breeding ground for hybridity between Western culture and Balkan culture. When we consider the fact that the majority of films that gained the applause of the reviewers internationally belonged to the post-1990 period, the significance of this hybridization where new universal values were created, is understood better.

The increase in film production may be attributed to the changing and developing cinema industry. Now state-based studios had left their place to small, independent production companies. The contracts between the small film production companies and the big studios and the exchanges between these companies and the television, the video market provided the necessary financial support for the increase in international co-productions. The development of a cheap, fast-paced video film market was also very effective in this case (Horton, 1995). In this respect, film genres were more diverse in comparison to the old times. When we look at the genres of movies that were common in post-war Serbia and Croatia, a wide spectrum is seen, including thrillers, urban hero stories, comedies, nostalgic literary adaptations and science-fictions (Ognjanović, 2009). However, there were some differences between this two cinemas. “Serbia had many commercially successful low-budget and low-quality comedies. By contrast, Croatian films were usually structurally and formally complex” (Pavicic, 2000).

In terms of post-Yugoslav cinema, the 1990s were the years when the film industry was gradually evolving, and social and regional differences were gradually discovered, as well as being directed towards universal values. Now the cinematic characters were traveling in different countries without concealing their ethnic identities and communicating with Western European countries. However, since opponent heroes with specific goals did not seem to be abundant on the screen, characters were having difficulty confronting their differences directly.

There were uncanny characters who were uncertain about what to do in the future, pursue their pleasures that they did not hinder in public and private spaces by acting out of social norms and kept up with ever-changing social situations, from the usual course of life, in excess of their behavior in a manner consistent with Bakhtin's concept of *carnavalesque*. Accordingly, the films of the period frequently used Balkan metaphors. Horton (1999) stated that violence was used again to condemn violence in films and an opposite standpoint was displayed towards the victim cinematic character so that the responsibility of the events was solely attributed to the persons. Figure 1, shows a scene from the film *Rane (Wounds)*, Srdjan Dragojević, 1998) through presenting the opposite emotions at the same time in the film, one escaped the responsibility of the civil war, and the offending characters, criminal characters, were brought to the forefront. Gocic (1992: 6), after this collapse of communism, interpreted these films to resemble Nazi movies.



**Figure 1.** Metaphorical narration in the film *Rane (Wounds, Srdjan Dragojević, 1998)*

The 2000s were the years when post-Yugoslav countries had completed authoritarian, semi-democratic regimes and opened themselves to the outside economically and culturally. In this, the elections in Serbia and Croatia had a big share (Pavicic, 2010: 47). Post-Yugoslav cinema had also taken its share from these social changes. Now post-Yugoslav cinema was trying to test the multiculturalism, capitalism transition through the Balkans, and presented ethnic identities to us in a bolder way than in the past. This is because the post-Yugoslav countries were now looking for their own identities. This period in which similarity and homogeneity were laid back was striking with collective cinema identities being backwards. This perspective, mostly inclined from majority to minority, led to an increase in past inquiries in post-Yugoslav cinema. Retrospective individual identity inquiries were an extension of post-Yugoslav countries efforts to create democratic nation-states linked to the West. Despite this, the adherence to the old culture and the economy, modernization and the pains of the new capitalist order were directly represented in the cinema films. In most movies, these pains were described with some distinctions. While, honest but unhappy characters who continued their ancient traditions continued their lives in areas far from urban life, the effects of civil war did not stop following them. The urban, modern characters whose financial situation did not improve, could not get rid of criminal gangs whatever they did. This is because now wars were much different than the old ones. As in the film *Iluzija (Mirage, Svetozar Ristovski, 2004)* the war created by the capitalist order could go as far as elementary school children (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Child violence in the film *Iluzija (Mirage, Svetozar Ristovski, 2004)*



Civil war pains and violent tendencies, which continued in the post-Yugoslav cinema of the 2000s, were now more realistically represented and purified from metaphors. As a result of that the cinematic characters were turning to the truth in search of a new life, the feeling of hopelessness towards the future had come to appear in a realistic way. This was an indication of how difficult it was to get rid of past sufferings. The search for hope in post-Yugoslav countries was also closely related to the late democratic nation-state efforts. The political efforts that countries had carried out in different times were also reflected on cinema and led to the formation of cinema industries that differed in different countries. It is already difficult to evaluate post-Yugoslav cinema within a single category. For example, looking at Slovenian cinema, it is seen that the films that were produced were separated from others because of their cultural proximity to the West and the few number of the films that were produced. However, it is also difficult to say that it was completely different from other countries. The word "post", which has already been brought forward before post-Yugoslav cinema, indicates a cultural limit that can never be completely transcended (Jelača, 2015: 1). However, certain states come to the forefront when we mention post-Yugoslav cinema. These countries are Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially Serbia in the first place. Montenegro and Kosovo, which gained their independence after 2006 and started their nationalization processes late, were the countries remaining at the back. Macedonia is among the countries that could not come to the forefront. As Iordanova (2000: 12) pointed out, "In Macedonia, the entire film production is made up of about 50 full-length films, and the country becomes known with Milcho Manchevski's famous film *Pred Doždot (Before the Rain, 1994)*".

If we briefly mention the changes in the main country cinemas mentioned above, the following are seen. Serbian cinema continued its tradition and conservatism in the 2000s. Serbian cinema, which used male heroes intensively in accordance with the norms of the society, filmed a few anti-war films. Compared to the 1990s, these anti-war films adopted humanism more intensively and tried to address the serious problems in society honestly by taking gender equality into account (Kronja, 2008: 80). Croatian cinema continued its old traditions just like Serbian cinema. Drama and movies of black humor were leading as a genre. However, these films now dealt with different historical events that occurred after the civil war or in the past. For the first time in this period, Croatian cinema shot a movie called *Svjedoci (Witnesses, Vinko Bresan, 2003)*, which dealt with the crime committed against a Serb family in the civil war. This late confrontation was a courageous attempt for a country

that does not have enough space on the international market and cares about strange, cheerful cinematic characters. At the same time, Croatian cinema turned to the others within itself and addressed issues of cultural harmony based on ethnic identities outside the country. In addition to these, they shot films that did not have a link to outside artistic movements such as *Što je Iva snimila 21. Listopada 2003*. (*What Iva Recorded on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2003*, Tomislav Radic, 2005), which use *cinema verite* techniques in search of self (Zmak, 2008: 53). Similar to Croatian cinema, Bosnian cinema began to turn to different types and characters. Now people were showing their reaction with ridiculous situations, as in *Gori vatra* (*Fuse*, Pjer Zalica, 2003). This is because now there was a light of hope even in wars. Blindly attaching to the Western democracy and fulfilling the vague promises of Westerners causes hope to decrease and increase in funny situations. While Bosnian cinema was trying to confront its own problems, it did not hesitate to use its egotistic characters. These characters were those who were among the political, economic elites, isolated from the society in a radical way and connected to the criminal world (Rawski, Roman, 2014: 195-203).

The changes that post-Yugoslav cinema experienced over the years cannot be considered independently of the country's directors. This study is primarily interested in the changes that the cinematic characters experienced; so it is necessary to recognize some of the important directors from the former Yugoslavia and those who led post-Yugoslav cinema together with their films of the 1990s.

### **GORAN PASKALJEVIĆ**

Paskaljević, one of the well-known directors of Balkan cinema abroad, graduated from the Film and Television School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU), one of the major film schools in Europe. Goulding (as cited in Levi, 2007: 58) stated that graduates of this school show a "very critical attitude of consensus from a dialectical conflict". Thus, when we look at the films of Paskaljević, it is seen that they were very similar in many aspects to the films of directors such as Kusturica, and Marković. The director, who embraced socially marginalized people in the context of human love, handled stories in a historical and political context. However, it may be stated that the trauma of the Yugoslav community had been dealt with in a non-reactionary manner in his films until 1998. In *Tango Argentino* (1992), the collapse of Yugoslavia is reduced to the dissolution of a family, while in *Someone Else's America* (1995), a family in Serbia, entering America illegally, is described in a tragic way. The film in which Paskaljević fully changed his tone and style was *Bure baruta* (*Cabaret Balkan*, 1998). In this film, the city of Belgrade, where the confusion arose, was

represented as a place full of crime, where people were never happy. The fact that the bombing of the city of Belgrade by NATO took place only one year after the film shows how accurate Paskaljević's conclusions about the crisis could be. The film, reduced the economic and political crisis to the characteristics of the cinematic characters (uncontrollable behaviours, violence etc.) rather than directly displaying it. The people in the city showed their reactions very hard from the moment they felt threatened. People also attracted the people in their surroundings to physical violence. As the exaggerated character representations brought Paskaljević closer to Kusturica, the sense of happiness was laid back, and the bleak ambience that was created separates him. Again, in Paskaljević's films, he did not refrain from being dragged towards marginal characters generally. *Bure baruta* (*Cabaret Balkan*, 1998) which showed that irrational reactions play a crucial role in the opening of the Balkans to the outside world, is a proof that the *wild Balkan manhood* was changing and continuing in films. In the film, the opposite of the *wild Balkan manhood* was represented by people who were victimized by the society in a sense that was not prone to violence. From this point of view, the main condition of living in such a society was to behave strangely like them, perceive it wrongly and be pro-violence. Thus, the film combined these with elements of comedy and became a kind of black humor.

Paskaljević filmed the film *How Harry Became a Tree* (2001) in English with Irish actresses, focused on the life of a British family living a rural life, and sent messages about the war in Bosnia. The film tells the story of the character named Harry, who often lives with emotions of hatred and death due to his dreams and experiences. This sense of hatred was caused by the loss of his wife and children, and this causes him to compete with George, the leading person in the village, and eventually see him as an enemy over time. The frantic efforts that spent to destroy George's reputation in the village result in losing his own family.

Although Harry has no reason to see George as an enemy to him, George's all-inclusive characteristics, including matchmaking, are bringing the characters closer to post-Yugoslavian cinematic characters. Although characters do not display exaggerated reactions, such as those in the film *Bure Baruta* (1998), they can be hateful and foolish at the same time, as well as taking part in illegal activities. Thus, traumatic characters in post-Yugoslavian cinema were reproduced in a different way. Traumatic characters were now trying to gain a place in the society, in a realistic way.

About *San zimске noci* (*Midwinter Night's Dream*, 2004), in which Paskaljević returned with a single distinction to his former cinematic characters, he says, "Maybe it's my

only non-humorous film", focuses on a human tragedy in Serbia after Milošević (Gallagher, 2008). In the film, where the characters are as real as possible, focused on Lazar, a former war criminal, there are friendships and efforts to stay in his hometown after his return to home. After returning home, Lazar finds his home, Jasna, a war refugee, and Jovana, his autistic brother as occupied. The bond that joins these three is marginalized by the society.

The next film, which looks at Serbia's democratic struggles from a different perspective and combines five different stories that are irrelevant, was the film named *Optimisti (The Optimists, 2006)*. Inspired by Voltaire's satiric book *Candida*, the film is about people who do not give up their irrational optimism although they live in lonely farms with hate, poverty and injustice. Although people seem desperate for the situation, with their humble and cynical attitude, they dream of a world with a better future (Holden, 2011).

Paskaljević tried to move away from marginal characters in his next film. *Medeni mesec (Honeymoons, 2009)* focuses on the efforts of two Serbian couples to go to Western Europe from their own countries in hopes of a better future. Since, Western Europe finds the Balkans unreliable, this will cause the characters to become ill-treated and acquainted with pain. It is understood from this that Western Europe's stance on Serbia and Albania was criticized severely. This attitude towards the West is evidence that the real problem is abroad. This is because people can live happily in their own countries, even if they do not get economically viable or have a more modern life.

Paskaljević later returned to his former marginal characters with his famous film *Kad svane dan (When Day Breaks, 2012)*. The film is about the story of a music teacher living in Serbia learning coincidentally that his real family is Jewish. While these Jews who live in the segregated regions of the city are carrying their past sufferings to today, the feelings of loneliness and their music make them more marginal.

Paskaljević's latest film, *Dev Bhoomi (Land of the Gods, 2016)*, just like the film *How Harry Became a Tree (2001)* deals with outside of Serbia. In the film, along with telling the hopeful stories of people living in North India, the drama of people that are pushed out of the society is the main topic of film. The difficulties that a couple faces are dragging them towards violence, and it may be seen that the humanity drama that is experienced in a different geography of the world may be similar to the Balkans. As it is understood, Paskaljević continued his oldest film clichés in this film, too.

**GORAN MARKOVIĆ**

After graduating from the Film and Television School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU), Marković stepped into the directing profession with short films and documentaries that he filmed for television. Marković, in his politically-oriented films reflected his period in a revolutionary way. Marković continued this political attitude in the post-Yugoslav era. In his film *Tito i ja (Tito and Me, 1992)*, he went directly on to criticize the former Yugoslavia through the dreams of a child. Marković moved to a more advanced level thanks to this film, which criticizes the system through government institutions. In the film, Josip Broz Tito, the president of Yugoslavia, made a realistic picture of the state propaganda imposed on the people by taking advantage of archive images. However, it was not the case that Tito was directly criticized or degraded. In the film, only the people around the president are degraded.

If one talks about the characters in *Tito i ja (Tito and Me, 1992)*, some of the changes that may be important for Marković are striking. For example, some of the characters immediately reconcile after their usual quarrels. From this point of view, it may be stated that criticism of the social system or culture is presented in an implicit way through the characters. These violent characters are evidence of traces of the *new primitivism* movement seen in Marković's films. There is also a character in the film that advocates and alienates the old social system. Raja, who pursues the walking activity in Tito's hometown, is striking with his very unstable attitude. Raja who memorized children's nationalist songs and said that there are enemies everywhere, scared the children by wearing ghost clothes when the times came. Even if he often emphasized equality, at the end of the film he understood that children were no longer with him and would commit suicide. This is a sign that the former Yugoslavia will no longer live. Although there are different social criticisms in the film, there is also a feeling of naive longing for the former Yugoslavia. This is due to the fact that the film characters want to stick to the old nationalist values without breaking their connection with the West. The Zoran character, for example, longing for the former Yugoslavia, gives examples from Hollywood movies while talking. This is because his love is not limited to Yugoslavia.

Marković, in the film *Urnebesna tragedija (The Tragic Burlesque, 1995)*, continued the same themes as in his former films. People who love and criticize the former Yugoslavian era, mental patients who have a tendency towards violence, and continued to give examples from America and connect with the West and speak English, like the character Neven, who represents this situation. Although the film depicts the situation of uncanny and humorous mental patients in a critical way, it contains more realistic characters unlike the film *Tito i ja*

(*Tito and Me*, 1992). These characters reproduce the economic crisis that is reflected in state institutions, showing us a world in which people except the idea that mental patients cannot be happy.

In his other film Marković went on to analyze the political regime and the economic situation of the country in more detail. *Poludeli ljudi (Belgrade Follies, 1997)* is a documentary-style film with added fiction. During the war years in which Milošević ruled Serbia, anti-regime protests in Belgrade, along with future hopes of the students in the country, are the main themes. For Marković, Belgrade was already in the center of all the problems he wanted to discuss. The problems in movies are solved through the characters. Marković continued his criticism of the political regime in Belgrade through his film called *Kordon (The Cordon, 2002)*.

In his next film, *Turneja (The Tour, 2008)*, the funny situations that a group of theater actors in Bosnia have fallen in the midst of civil war are explained in an objective way. The film focuses on interesting situations that people fall into while pursuing their material interests and staying away from the civil war. This way, the characters resemble the usual characters Kusturica uses in his films. Marković made a new addition to his depiction stories of Yugoslavia, which he always focused on with his films, through a character who forged an official document in his latest film, *Falsifikator (Falsifier, 2013)*. The difference of this film from the others is that it focuses on Yugoslavia at the end of the 1960s.

## **EMIR KUSTURICA**

Kusturica, one of the most famous and renowned directors of Balkan cinema, started his career with television films and short films. Later, with the poetic, satirical, and exaggerated cinematic trait, he brought excessiveness to Balkan cinema. Moreover, by radically opposing authorities and advocating freedom of opinion, he gave a new direction to Balkan cinema. Kusturica could be argued to have blended the sense of humor of the Czechs, the ethical commitment of the Polish and the artistic forms of the Hungarians, while moving to new wave of movement into the Balkans (Bertellini, 2014: 1). Kusturica helped Yugoslavian cinema to develop its own cinematic understanding while the Yugoslav national culture interpreted cinematic trends in Europe in a unique way. In this respect, terms such as *self-balkanization* and *self-victimization* have been used to describe Kusturica's unusual cinematic characters away from politics and society, while Orientalist discourses deal with the Balkans. It is interesting that such a director had very little interest in cinema before he

studied at the Film and Television School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU). After Kusturica proved himself, he became one of the most prominent directors not only for domestic viewers but also for the international market. Therefore, it is necessary to mention here the importance of FAMU. Kusturica is the youngest and the last graduate of the Yugoslav film directors of this school. Important directors of the *Czech New Wave* also graduated from this school. From this point of view, it may be stated that the school has produced important directors who have created anti-heroes in cinema. There are also many Yugoslavian directors who graduated from the same film school and have a career on the international scene. Kusturica, however, won the Cannes Film Festival Grand Prize (Palme d'Or) twice in addition to the awards he received at different film festivals, leaving behind all other Yugoslav directors (Gocic, 2001: 15)

Kusturica, who did not make many changes in film understanding, directed for the first time a film outside of Yugoslavia called *Arizona Dream* (1993), which was his first movie filmed in the post-Yugoslav era. Describing the American dream only tackling Americans, Kusturica referred to the marginalized people in the United States from the Yugoslavian point of view and described the capitalist American dreams that these people were deceived with.

In his next film, Kusturica took his camera from the Americans and back to the old Yugoslav period. In the film *Underground* (1995), Kusturica showed that the former Yugoslavia is now a dead country and used a new technique and storytelling. The movie, which depicts a baby born in the form of extraordinary shooting, also interpreted ongoing violence in the Balkans from 1940s to 1990s (Iordanova, 2010: 69). In the film, rather than the pro-Western characters of the Cold War era or the pluralistic, revolutionary characters of the Balkans, authentic, usual, and misleading characters in Tito's Yugoslavia were discussed (Keene, 2001: 234).

After *Dom za vesanje* (*Time of the Gypsies*, 1988), Kusturica returned to the authentic life of the gypsies in a different way with *Crna macka, beli macor* (*Black Cat, White Cat*, 1998). The film tried to look at the life of resident gypsies, free from stereotypes, in a transformed form of modernity. The difficulties encountered in this life, which belongs solely to them, were tried to be handled in a non-political manner, abstracted from the society. Thus, a grotesque world in which love and criticism coexist in the same way as Fellini's films was created (Zelevinsky, 1999: 7).

Kusturica's films returned to their usual character forms in *Zivot je чудо* (*Life is a Miracle*, 2004), *Zavet* (*Promise Me This*, 2007) and *On the Milky Road* (2016). These films, which reproduced the negative image of the Balkans with non-modernized and primitive cinematic characters, were in fact a criticism of the post-civil war nation-state process. In this respect, they showed how important the nationalist propaganda that existed before Yugoslavia's disintegration, through their neutral attitudes towards the civil war.

## CONCLUSION

This study, which focused on the transformation of traumatic characters in post-Yugoslav cinema, which may be considered as the cinema of excess for a cinematic understanding that is often directed with effects of the former Yugoslav political regime.

However, the rapid and necessary changes in Yugoslavia's post-civil war period brought about the reflection of the formerly ignored crises in the society, the prospects of younger generation, and more importantly, civil war traumas, the reflection of the search for self-discovery in the society. Considering that Post-Yugoslavian cinema dealt with the post-1990 period, and the society had undergone a total change in this period, transformation of the characters in cinema may also be naturally observed. This is because the characters in cinema began to stay away from ideological pressures and became closer to the society. Nevertheless, it is also seen that the cinematic traditions that were formed in the past continued in some way. When we look at the film concept of the 1990s in general, it appears that there are characters who seem passive in politics still in cinema. Over time, these characters would begin to look at the future differently, engage the West, and learn to recognize themselves honestly. This process, which accelerated in the 2000s, brought along new cinematic characters, who actively criticized the old political regime, and innocent people became criminals because of economic crises. For this reason, the uncanny, violent, mysterious, traditional and exciting characters that unusually introduce the Balkan culture into the world, by ignoring the serious problems that the society has, were now considerably diminished.

The study, examined three Serbian-originated Yugoslavian directors who graduated from the Film and Television School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU), as major filmmakers in Europe. These people are those who have different characteristics from each other, and at the same time, they are those who dominantly have common characteristics. That is, the three directors have used local, unique characters pushed out of the society to blend in with human love and show the disruptions in the society in a way similar to the new



wave movements emerging in Europe. At the same time, the characters they handled were transmitted to the audience using comedy items in some places. However, there were some differences in terms of the cinematic characters used by the directors. Paskaljević chose the way to tell the world about the problems in the Balkans by addressing different ethnicities outside the country. Thus, all over the world, similar human traumas have been revealed. The director also showed us how difficult it can be to get rid of these traumas by using characters that were overly optimistic about the economic and social issues in a film. Marković attracted attention with his political attitude, in comparison to the other directors. The director did not only use different professions such as doctors and teachers in his films, but used Tito, the former Yugoslav president, in one of his films critically. The last studied director, Kusturica, used the local, uncanny and non-modernized characters more intensely in his films. These characters have been on the frontline even in the films directed by the 2000s. This is because of these characters that the director has marginalized, he has been criticized in the Balkans for his propaganda of nationalism. However, the film *Arizona Dream* (1994) in which the similar people in the United States were dealt with, may be considered a reaction to this criticism.

Although the characters used in the films of the examined directors may be different, the traces of the old Yugoslav history and cultural and economic issues are common to most of these films. Post-2000 Yugoslavian cinema characters have chosen to look more freely at the present reality and cope with these common problems.

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