

Media as Memory Makers: Television, Film and Music in the Construction of Yugonostalgia Across Generations¹²

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Abstract

The topic of our paper will primarily be the role of media (films, TV shows, music) in conjuring (Yugo)nostalgia in the former citizens of Yugoslavia and, vicariously, in their descendants, although they might not have been born during the existence of Yugoslavia. Consequently, the media proves to be of enormous importance in creating not only a form of shared, cross-cultural memory of the former citizens, but a sort of cross-generational memory, providing an opportunity to the younger generations to see what living in Yugoslavia looked like. The corpus for our research will consist of the selected examples from the Yugoslav films and entertainment programs which still present a part of some television programs, as well as certain radio stations which specifically broadcast music from the former Yugoslavia. The analysis will try to reach the conclusion that the video or auditory content might represent a powerful tool in arousing pleasant, or unpleasant emotions in their potential consumers, or in bridging the cross-cultural, or cross-generational gap.

Keywords: media, Yugonostalgia, films, music, memory

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Introduction

In the context of our paper, it is important to talk about nostalgia. The very term nostalgia originated in the 17th century and was coined by a Swiss physician Johannes Hofer. Namely, in his dissertation entitled *Dissertatio medica de nostalgia* (Hofer, 1688), he coined the term “nostalgia” merging two words of Greek origin:

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nostos (“the return to home”) and *algia/algos* (“pain”/“suffering”). The term nostalgia was employed in order to describe the pain that originates from one’s desire to return home. Nostalgia was initially applied in the cases of the soldiers going to wars: they felt a strong desire to return to their homes (which in some cases was tantamount to real, physical illness), but were not able to (moreover, the majority of them actually never saw their homes again). The term was later broadened so as to describe the condition of a man in the western modernity, no longer being qualified as a disease (Mijić, 2017). Mitja Velikonja states that:

“Nostalgia always appears when history ‘accelerates its pace’ and ‘shows its teeth’, so it is inevitable, although deliberately concealed, companion of modernization and progressivist ideologies, as well as of dynamic and dramatic periods following the destruction of the old world when we still wait for the new one to be constructed. Therefore, nostalgia dwells in an interspace between ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’” (Velikonja, 2013: 112).

Consequently, nostalgia originates when a radical discontinuity in people’s lives takes place, a “shock” that has to be overcome in a certain way or, as Mijić states, “when the feeling of discontinuity prevails, a space for nostalgia opens, i.e., longing for the past which from the given perspective looks safe, stable and predictable⁵⁶” (Mijić, 2012: 11). Routledge et al., according to van Tilburg and Igou, state that “nostalgic reverie instills meaningfulness and protects the self against existential threat” (van Tilburg and Igou, 2013: 3). Routledge et al. further state “nostalgia, set off by aversive conditions including existential threats, constitutes a source of meaning” (van Tilburg and Igou, 2013: 6). Wildschut et al. support this claim stating that “the negative affect is widely considered to be an important trigger of nostalgia” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 993). Nostalgia, according to Routledge et al., “increases perceived meaning in life. Moreover, when perceived meaning in life is challenged, individuals become more nostalgic” (van Tilburg and Igou, 2013: 21). Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, many people found themselves facing an existential crisis since the world as they knew it suddenly fell apart. Consequently, they were in need of a narrative that would help them find meaning and continue with their lives. Davis, according to Wildschut et al., argues that “nostalgia occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, and uncertainties” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 993). Yugonostalgia, namely that reverie of “a utopian country”, arose as a means of people’s “psychological survival” in a new, post-socialist climate.

The phenomenon of Yugonostalgia

The dissolution of Yugoslavia was followed by the inter-ethnic wars during the period of the 1990s, the bad economic situation, democracy that ensued after the 2000s, etc. The things mentioned represent a certain *mise-en-scène* for the (Yugo)

⁵ All the translations in the paper have been done by the author of the paper.

⁶ „Kada osećaj diskontinuiteta prevlada, otvara se prostor za nostalgiju, odnosno čežnju za prošlošću koja iz te perspektive izgleda sigurno, stabilno i predvidivo“ (Mijić, 2012: 117).

nostalgia to appear in the former citizens of Yugoslavia. Mijić, in her paper, provides the following definition of Yugonostalgia:

“From my point of view, Yugonostalgia represents a meta-term which encompasses public rituals, exhibitions, media representations, personal and collective nostalgias, mythology of the golden Yugoslav past, brotherhood and unity, Titostalgia, Yustalgia and, in general, nostalgia for the shared identity and values of the former SFRY and popular Yugoslav culture (music and motion pictures from that period of time)” (Mijić, 2017: 188-189).

In the reminiscences of the majority of the former Yugoslavs, Yugoslavia is depicted as a country of “the good standard of living, high employment and income opportunity as well as job security”⁸ (Spasić, 2012: 583). All things considered, it is no wonder that, in the scenery that looked quite the opposite of what the attributes of Yugoslavia used to be, former Yugoslavs felt nostalgic for “the life as they knew it”. According to Spasić, “SFRY”⁹, even today, functions for the common people as a model of normal life. Twenty years after the launching of the ‘changes’, that’s how the things are, since the period of transformations did not give birth to any new, alternative model, an ideal worthy of being striven to¹⁰” (Spasić, 2012: 581). Velikonja emphasizes the so-called “emancipatory potential” of Yugonostalgia whose first aspect is the “criticism of the present state of affairs” (Velikonja, 2013: 121). According to this emancipatory aspect of nostalgia “the assumingly superior past is recollected primarily to be able to criticize the inferiority of the present” (Velikonja, 2013: 121). Davis, according to Palmberger, likewise states that “the act of comparing is inherent to nostalgia, since it always forms a reaction to the present state” (Palmberger, 2008:358). Mijić argues that “through the glorification of the socialist period those who are Yugonostalgic give a critical image of the present and the system that leads them to the future¹¹” (Mijić, 2012: 123). According to Mijić, “the positive evaluation of the socialist period is further strengthened by a critical view of the current socioeconomic situation in the country¹²” (Mijić, 2012: 130). However,

⁷ „Jugonostalgija, po mom mišljenju, predstavlja meta-termin koji obuhvata javne rituale, izložbe, medijske reprezentacije, lične i kolektivne nostalgije, mitologiju o zlatnoj jugoslovenskoj prošlosti, bratstvu i jedinstvu, titostalgiju, yustalgiju i uopšte nostalgiju za deljenim identitetom i vrednostima bivše SFRJ i popularnom jugoslovenskom kulturom (muzikom i filmom iz tog perioda)“ (Mijić, 2017: 188-189).

⁸ „(Ono što je najčešće i najupadljivije u svim nostalgичnim prizivanjima SFRJ): dobar životni standard, mogućnost zaposlenja i zarade, sigurnost posla“ (Spasić, 2012: 583).

⁹ Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

¹⁰ „SFRJ, naime, i dan-danas funkcioniše za obične ljude kao *model normalnog života*. Dvadeset godina posle pokretanja ‘promena’, stvari stoje tako, jer period preobražaja nije iznedrio nikakav novi, alternativni uzor, ideal kojem građani smatraju da treba i vredi težiti“ (Spasić, 2012: 581).

¹¹ „Kroz glorifikaciju socijalističkog perioda jugonostalgичari daju kritičku sliku sadašnjosti i sistema koji ih vodi u budućnost“ (Mijić, 2012: 123).

¹² „Pozitivno vrednovanje socijalističkog perioda osnaženo je kritičkim osvrtom na trenutnu socio-ekonomsku situaciju u državi“ (Mijić, 2012: 130).

despite the fact that it can represent the criticism of the current state of affairs in a certain society, Yugonostalgia does not possess an active role, namely it cannot be an agent in the (potential) transformation of the society. According to Mirkov et al., “Yugonostalgia cannot be politically active until there is a political subject that might articulate it”¹³ (Mirkov et al., 2018: 1254). This claim is further supported by Kuljić who, according to Spasić, argues that “Yugonostalgia might express dissatisfaction, but it cannot be criticism, because there is not a political subject that could directly operationalize the memories of the alternative model of the society”¹⁴ (Spasić, 2012: 591). In the light of what has been said, Yugonostalgia can hardly be considered subversive: at best, it can be interpreted as a model for some potential, future society or, as Velikonja argues, “the utopian desire for an ideal society” (Velikonja, 2013: 129). The Yugonostalgists do not actually aim at restoring old Yugoslavia, but at regeneration of the (ethical) values on which the former (dissolved) country was founded, namely brotherhood and unity, social justice, friendship, etc. (see Velikonja, 2013: 129). Therefore, Yugoslavia in the reminiscences of its former citizens might be considered as an “anticipation of a utopian society” (Velikonja, 2013: 129), a “potential vision of a better future” (PalMBERGER, 2008: 355), the fact that emphasizes its productive potential.

Yugonostalgia and the younger generation

Apart from Yugonostalgia experienced by the former citizens, it is important to talk about Yugonostalgia in the younger generations. In spite of Wildschut et al.’s claim that “nostalgia pertains to a personally experienced past” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 981), Markovina, according to Drašković, emphasizes the existence of the so-called “action type” of Yugoslavism which consists of the “young people who did not have the immediate experience of the life in Yugoslavia”¹⁵ (Drašković, 2016: 60). Mijić likewise highlights the importance of the neo-nostalgists, or “those who do not have a ‘direct’ experience of living in Yugoslavia, but are young people who, through mediated experiences, use the symbols and are nostalgic for the imagined community of SFRY”¹⁶ (Mijić, 2012: 121). According to Mijić:

“Neo-nostalgists experience stereotyping of Yugoslavia as a country of prosperity and the big part of their (virtual) nostalgias they created through the prism of their parents and their surroundings’ narratives. Namely, it seems that the youngest participants (in the questionnaire), who do not remember the period of socialism, feel more regret

¹³ „Jugonostalgija ne može biti politički delatna sve dok ne postoji politički subjekt koji bi to artikulisao“ (Mirkov et al., 2018: 1254).

¹⁴ „Jugonostalgija može izražavati nezadovoljstvo, ali ne može biti *kritika*, jer nema političkog subjekta koji bi sećanja na alternativni model društva neposredno operacionalizovao“ (Spasić, 2012: 591).

¹⁵ „Nosioći akcionog tipa jugoslovenstva su mladi ljudi koji nemaju iskustvo života u Jugoslaviji“ (Drašković, 2016: 60).

¹⁶ „Postoje mnogi neonostalgici, koji nemaju ’živo’ iskustvo, već su to mladi ljudi koji posredovanim iskustvima koriste simbole i nostalgici su prema zamišljenoj zajednici SFRJ“ (Mijić, 2012: 121).

for the collectivist ideological system, than exclusively for the better living standard remembered by the participants of the middle generation. They think that the period of socialism was a better time for life and that they will never have, in a material sense, what their parents used to¹⁷) (Mijić, 2017:192).

A poll conducted by an Al Jazeera journalist in a high school in Podgorica testifies to the popularity of Yugoslavia among the younger generations: namely, the majority of the students opted for SFRY as their preference for where they would like to see Montenegro in the future¹⁸. Velikonja likewise talks about the phenomenon of neonostalgia or *neostalgia*, which is “an encouragement for something new which is associated with *good old times*” (Velikonja, 2013: 123), and is common among the younger, post-Yugoslav generations (see Velikonja, 2013: 123). Neo-nostalgists therefore represent a group of people (of the younger generation) who have a vicarious experience of life in Yugoslavia. In a commercial sense, neonostalgia or neostalgia has its counterpart in the commercial industry, the so-called “ercez nostalgia” which is defined as “a nostalgia ‘without lived experience or collective memory’, which in the market context is deliberately ‘installed’ in the goods, ‘as a trick pulled on the consumers to long for something they had never lost¹⁹’” (Drašković, 2016: 66-67). Wildschut et al. partially agree with this claim stating that “product styles (e.g., of music, motion pictures, and automobiles) that were popular during an individual’s youth influence the individual’s lifelong preferences” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 979-980). Thus, nostalgia may sometimes be used as a way of manipulating consumers, i.e., abusing their naivety.

Yugonostalgia and postmemory

Yugonostalgia might be discussed in the context of the so-called “postmemory”, the term that was coined by Marianne Hirsch. In her work, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Marianne Hirsch defines the concept of postmemory in the following manner:

“Postmemory describes the connection that exists between the members of the so-called second generation and powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their birth. However, these experiences are so strong that they seem to be the part of their own memory (the memory of the members of the second generation)” (Hirsch, 2012: 103).

¹⁷ „Kod njih (neonostalgičara) se javlja stereotipizacija Jugoslavije kao države blagostanja i veliki deo (virtuelnih) nostalgija stvorili su kroz prizmu narativa svojih roditelja i okoline. Naime, najmladji učesnici, koji ne pamte vreme socijalizma, čini se, imaju veći žal za kolektivističkim ideološkim sistemom, nego isključivo za boljim standardom koji pamte učesnici srednje generacije. Oni (neonostalgičari) smatraju da je tada bilo bolje vreme za život i da oni nikada neće imati, u materijalnom smislu, ono što su njihovi roditelji imali u vreme socijalizma“ (Mijić, 2017: 192).

¹⁸ Rašić, S. (2017). *Vodič kroz jugonostalgiju: Da li je 25. maj u modi? (Guide to Yugonostalgia: Is May 25 in Fashion?)*, Esquire Serbia. “Guide to Yugonostalgia” * Remembering Yugoslavia. <https://rememberingyugoslavia.com/guide-to-yugonostalgia/>

¹⁹ „Ercez nostalgija je nostalgija ‘bez proživljenog iskustva ili kolektivnog sećanja’, koja se u tržišnom kontekstu planski ‘ugrađuje’ u robu, ‘kao smicalicu koja navodi potrošače da čeznu za nečim što nisu ni izgubili“ (Drašković, 2016: 66-67).

Considering the given assertion, “it is not surprising that family represents a means of generating and transmitting given experiences, from ancestors to descendants” (Lazić, 2022: 83).

Despite the fact that the concept of postmemory primarily refers to the memory (and trauma) that the survivors of the Holocaust transmitted to their descendants, we will, for the purposes of this paper, endeavor to apply it on the memory of the former Yugoslav citizens and the memory that they, although vicariously, transmitted to their descendants (children and grandchildren). However, postmemory in relation to Yugoslavia might likewise be interpreted in the context of trauma: namely, Goli otok and the “psychological scars” that the former inmates bore from it represent the “dark side” of the otherwise idyllic Yugoslav history (which we will discuss further in subsequent analysis). The testimonies of the former inmates were often transmitted to their descendants.

Different forms of media have a significant share in transmitting Yugonostalgia, such as films, music, documentaries, etc. Moreover, various forms of media may perform a role of the so-called “prosthetic memory” in transmitting Yugonostalgia to the younger generations who do not have a direct experience of living in Yugoslavia. Historian Alison Lansberg, according to Scott, argues that “like an artificial limb, prosthetic memories originate outside a person’s lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memory” (Scott, 2022: 135). Therefore, the prosthetic memory through popular media “bridges the gap” between the neo-nostalgists and the memories they do not personally possess. In the context of postmemory, a photo (as a form of visual media) has likewise a prominent role, as photos might represent a useful means of acquiring information about the past. Roland Barthes introduces the concept of “punctum” in the context of photography and states that photos might be perceived “as a place of intersection of the past and present” (Hirsch, 2012: 61). The younger generations might acquire an insight into the (Yugoslav) past (namely, the way that people lived, dressed, how they used to spend their time, etc.) by seeing the old photographs of their parents or even grandparents. Consequently, “photographs, alongside other documentary material, represent the only available means of acquiring information about the past (and the people that were part of it)”²⁰ (Lazić, 2022: 87). As Lawrence Quill in his work *Nostalgia and Political Theory* states, “the improved material comfort and technological advances (e.g., photography and radio) do not reduce the nostalgic impulse. In some ways, they increase it” (Quill, 2023: 11). However, photography might in a sense prove to be “deficient” since there exists “a constant fluctuation between what we may see and what we may find out by seeing”²¹ (Lazić, 2022: 87). In other words, there is a whole plethora of information that we cannot acquire

²⁰ „Samim tim, fotografije, pored drugog dokumentarnog materijala, predstavljaju možda i jedino sredstvo da o prošlosti (i ljudima koji su njen deo) nešto saznamo“ (Lazić, 2022: 87).

²¹ „Fotografije mogu u izvesnom smislu biti ‘manjkave’, jer je prilikom posmatranja određene fotografije prisutno konstantno fluktuiranje između onoga što možemo da vidimo i onoga što gledajući možemo da saznamo“ (Lazić, 2022: 87).

just by looking at a photograph. In the context of postmemory, Hirsch also stresses the importance of the so-called “family romance (of the Holocaust)” which is often equalized with the “journey to the past”. According to Hirsch, “journey is undertaken out of longing to rediscover the world that had existed before the loss occurred, out of need for the irrevocably lost innocence that descendants imagine and invoke” (Hirsch, 2012: 214). In the context of the aforementioned, it is important to emphasize that the people (especially those who lived in Yugoslavia) often express nostalgic feelings for the former country or, as Spasić argues, “all the characteristics of the Yugoslav and socialist past make it possible for one to discern, in the discourse of it, a strong feeling of nostalgia and a longing for a certain kind of the Lost Eden²²” (Spasić, 2012: 585). Through their stories (of those who had a direct experience of living in Yugoslavia), this “strong feeling of nostalgia and longing” is transmitted to the descendants.

Food is often something that invokes nostalgic feelings in the former Yugoslavs. Namely, “food is not only what it is, a means of satisfying one’s hunger, but it brings along the memories of the place(s) where we consumed it, and primarily of the dear people we were surrounded with: consequently, it bears a certain nostalgic note which invokes pleasant memories in a person²³” (Lazić, 2022: 89). Chu & Downes, according to Wildschut et al., state that “the role of sensory input is consistent with findings that tastes and odors can trigger vivid, affect-laden memories (i.e., the “Proust phenomenon”)” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 993). Among the most common delicacies the former Yugoslavs pine for are various brands of sugar-based confectionery, as well as rakija, Dalmatian wine and Sarajevo delicacies, etc. However, due to the existence of the various shopping malls and markets, the craving of the Yugo-nostalgists for their favorite delicacies can easily be overcome²⁴, unlike other, more abstract aspects of former Yugoslavia the nostalgists would like to compensate.

Goli otok – a dark spot in the Yugoslav history?

In spite of the fact that Yugoslavia remains an eternally idealized country in the reminiscences of its former citizens, its history is not impeccable. The testimonies of the majority of the ex-Yugoslavs deny the existence of the ideological monism, namely they “never mention the political repression or any other lack of freedom as the characteristics of the life in SFRJ²⁵” (Spasić, 2012: 584). Moreover, if they

²² „Sve ove karakteristike jugoslovenske i socijalističke prošlosti čine da se u govoru o njoj oseća snažan ton nostalgije i čežnje za nekom vrstom izgubljenog raja“ (Spasić, 2012: 585).

²³ „Hrana nije samo to što jeste, sredstvo da se utoli čovekova glad, već sa sobom nosi uspomene na mesto gde smo je konzumirali, a pre svega na drage ljude kojima smo tada bili okruženi. Stoga ona u sebi poseduje izvesnu nostalgičnu notu koja u čoveku izaziva lepe uspomene“ (Lazić, 2022: 89).

²⁴ Rašić, S. 2017. *Vodič kroz jugonostalgiju: Da li je 25. maj u modi? (Guide to Yugo-nostalgia: Is May 25 in Fashion?)*, Esquire Serbia. “Guide to Yugo-nostalgia” * Remembering Yugoslavia. <https://rememberingyugoslavia.com/guide-to-yugonostalgia/>

²⁵ „Ispitanici nisu ni u jednom trenutku pomenuli političku represiju ili neki drugi oblik neslobode kao obeležja života u SFRJ“ (Spasić, 2012: 584).

ever talk about this topic, they claim “that the politics was *better* back then and that it had less impact on the people’s lives than today, in the time of pluralism and democracy²⁶” (Spasić, 2012: 584). McAdams et al., according to Wildschut et al., mention the so-called “redemption sequence” as a pattern or narrative strategy “that people use to give their life stories meaning and coherence” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 981). According to this narrative strategy, “the narrative progresses from a negative life scene to a positive or triumphant one” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 981). Unlike redemption sequence, a contamination one “moves from an affectively positive life scene to an affectively negative one” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 981). Davis states that, according to Wildschut et al., “the nostalgic experiences are more typically characterized by redemption than by contamination sequences” (Wildschut et al., 2006: 981). Therefore, people are often prone to “romanticize” the past, losing the ability to perceive it objectively. However, try as they might to deny it or hush it up, the existence of the prison islands such as Goli otok and Sveti Grgur for the political prisoners remains an indisputable fact in the history of Yugoslavia. We will first provide the historical background of the establishment of these prisons on the territory of Yugoslavia.

The year of 1948 marked the final split between the politics of president Tito and Stalin and “a notable distancing of *our* communism from the communism that was present in other Eastern European countries under The Soviet Union²⁷” (Baković, 2008: 3), and consequently some radical changes that would ensue in Yugoslavia and that would bring about a form of collective paranoia. It all started with the year 1947, with the establishment of The Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties (or Cominform) on the territory of Poland. Cominform consisted of the communist parties of the following countries: The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, France, Italy and Bulgaria, and its establishment was a response to the clustering of Western countries headed by the USA, the event that marked the beginning of the Cold War between these two blocs. However, following the establishment of the numerous Yugoslav-Soviet societies, whose aim was to give rise to the economic cooperation between these two countries, there came about gradual conflict escalation. Namely, the political conflict of many of these Yugoslav-Soviet societies was directly opposed to that of Yugoslavian economic and political interests. “The final straw” that finally brought about an open enmity between The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was the refusal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to attend the Cominform meeting in Bucharest in June 1948, as well as the refusal of its resolution, since Yugoslavian representatives knew that their proposals would not be accepted in the first place”

²⁶ „Ako se o tome nešto govorilo, tvrdilo se da je politika tada bila *bolja* i da je manje uticala na život ljudi nego danas, u doba pluralizma i demokratije“ (Spasić, 2012: 584).

²⁷ „(Razlog tome leži vjerojatno i u 1948. godini i znatnom odmaku *našeg* komunizma od komunizma kojim su bile zahvaćene ostale istočnoeuropske države pod plaštem Sovjetskog saveza“ (Baković, 2008: 3).

(Lazić²⁸²⁹, 2024: 206-207). At the same time, Yugoslavia had to deal with a hostile propaganda conducted by The Soviet Union: the aim of this propaganda was to weaken Yugoslavia's economy. Simultaneously, the supporters of the Cominform resolution endeavored to weaken Yugoslavian socialist economic system through espionage from the inside. Such an atmosphere brought about the mass arrests of the suspected political misfits (the so-called "Cominformists") and their sending to Goli otok and Sveti Grgur (the isolated Adriatic islands turned into concentration camps) and many other islands. These reckonings of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia with the real and the alleged political dissidents became the cruel and everyday reality of the Yugoslav people (Lazić, 2024: 207-208).

According to Lazić, "the aim of the incarceration of people on the islands of Goli otok and Sveti Grgur was the (political) re-education of the Stalinists (or Cominformists), the real and the alleged ones" (Lazić³⁰, 2024a: 95). However, this "political re-education" left deep psychological scars on the returnees from these islands, to the extent that many of them struggled to continue with their life. Martin Previšić, according to Lazić, states that:

"An analysis of the State Security Service states that 739 returnees from Goli otok became alcoholics, 350 criminals, while 739 indulged in 'other' vices. The returnees from Goli otok were not the same people that went serving their prison sentences. The parole found them broken in spirit, frightened, demoralized, disappointed, embittered and insecure³¹" (Lazić, 2024: 207).

In such an atmosphere, suicides of the former inmates of Goli otok became something common. Previšić, according to Lazić, argues that:

"A former inmate of Goli otok, Andrija Barić, 'committed suicide because of the Cominform', Nikola Burica lost his life in a rail accident throwing himself under the train 'for some unknown reason' in 1958, while Andrija Duplančić was expelled from the Communist party over his support for Cominform and poor performance at work in 1953, so he committed suicide next year feeling falsely accused³²" (Lazić, 2024a: 108).

²⁸ The historical background of the Cominform resolution might likewise be found in Isaković, A. (1982). *Tren 2: Kazivanje Čeperku*. Beograd: Prosveta.

²⁹ Lazić, K. (2024). The Holocaust, investigative discourse and *Bare life* – trauma and memory. *Uzdanica*, XXI/2, 205-219. <https://doi.ub.kg.ac.rs/doi/casopisi/10-46793-uzdanica21-2-2051/>

³⁰ Lazić, K. (2024a). The representation of PTSD in *The Original of the Forgery* by Dragan Kresoja. In Ž. Milanović & S. Skuban (Eds.), *The Seventh International Interdisciplinary Conference for Young Scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities: Contexts*, Book of Proceedings (pp. 91-112). Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad.

³¹ „Jedna udbaška analiza govori kako se 739 povratnika odalo alkoholizmu, kriminalu 350, a 'ostalim' porocima 739. Povratnici s Golog otoka više nisu bili isti ljudi kao oni koji su otišli na izdržavanje kazne. Na slobodu, makar i uvjetnu, vratili su se slomljeni, uplašeni, demoralizirani, razočarani, ljuti, nesigurni“ (Lazić, 2024: 207).

³² „Andrija Barić učinio je 'samoubistvo radi IB-a', logoraš Nikola Burica učinio je samoubojstvo 1958. skokom pod vlak iz 'nepoznatih razloga', Andrija Duplančić isključen je iz SKJ zbog podrške IB-u i slabog rada 1953., pa se naredne godine ubio jer se 'osjećao nevin'“ (Lazić, 2024a: 108).

Even today, Goli otok remains a dark side of the history of Yugoslavia, a necessary evil resorted to in order for the unity of the country to be preserved.

The role of (popular) media in producing Yugonostalgia

When it comes to the role of media in producing Yugonostalgia in its consumers, its role might be momentous. Wilson stresses the influence of popular culture and the entertainment industry on nostalgia. This creation of mediated memories produced the so-called “displaced nostalgia”, nostalgia “for places and times that had no place in one’s own remembered past” (see Quill, 2023: 5). According to Wilson, “even if we haven’t directly experienced an event from the past, we may have a collective memory of the event, most likely through the media” (Quill, 2023: 5). Drašković states that:

“No story about the past is ‘a narratively neutral discursive form’, and its representation in the media always has certain ideological connotations since ‘media representations do not act only in talking to other people about us, but in talking to us about other people’ and serve as ‘a means of transmitting ideology in the service of maintaining and strengthening power relations³³” (Drašković, 2016:66).

Consequently, the media representation of Yugoslavia, resulting in Yugonostalgia in the spectators, does not have such a negligible role in an ideological sense. Nataša Simeunović Bajić, according to Ajduk, stresses the importance of media “in constructing and reconstructing the images of the past in order to invent the present³⁴” (Ajduk, 2016: 12). Nikolić, according to Drašković, argues that “media content, as the most important means of media memory/memory of the media, has the role of an active agent in: the interpretation of the past, development of the individual and collective identities, encounter with the past through the glorification of the success or facing the guilt³⁵” (Drašković, 2016: 64). Nora, according to Drašković, states that “media in general represent ‘the memory banks’ which, through the collection of individual memories, impose on and impress the social, and subsequently cultural or collective memory³⁶” (Drašković, 2016: 64). Radović highlights the role of mass media and popular culture “in regenerating and remodeling of the past³⁷” (Radović,

³³ „Nijedna priča o prošlosti ‘nije narativno neutralna diskurzivna forma’, a njeno predstavljanje u medijima uvek ima izvesne ideološke konotacije jer ‘medijske predstave ne deluju samo tako što drugim ljudima govore o nama, već i nama govore o drugim ljudima’ i služe kao ‘sredstvo za prenošenje ideologije u službi održavanja i jačanja odnosa moći’“ (Drašković, 2016: 66).

³⁴ „Nataša Simeunović Bajić primećuje kako se putem medija konstruišu i rekonstruišu slike prošlosti kako bi se osmislila sadašnjost“ (Ajduk, 2016: 12).

³⁵ „Medijski sadržaji, kao najznačajnija sredstva medijskog pamćenja/pamćenja medija, imaju ulogu aktivnog činioca u: tumačenju prošlosti, izgradnji individualnih i kolektivnih identiteta, susretu sa prošlošću kroz glorifikaciju uspeha ili suočenja sa krivicom“ (Drašković, 2016: 64).

³⁶ „Mediji generalno predstavljaju ‘banke sećanja’ koje, prikupljajući individualna sećanja, na taj način nameću i utiskuju društveno, a potom i kulturno ili kolektivno pamćenje“ (Drašković, 2016: 64).

³⁷ „Obnavljanje i remodelovanje prošlosti moguće je zahvaljujući i masovnim medijima i popularnoj

2015: 11). According to Bajić Simeunović, “mass media ‘pack’ the events in certain symbolic forms thus impacting the formation of all the patterns of culture³⁸” (Radović, 2015: 11). Consequently, mass media and popular culture (the film industry, TV shows, commercial products, music, etc.) might represent the most suitable means of helping people accept and identify with the values of the former Yugoslavia.

Popular culture may induce a creative potential of Yugonostalgia. As Velikonja states:

“Yugonostalgia has a significant creative potential within various fields of culture, including pop culture, and contemporary design and arts. In my opinion, this creativity constitutes its third emancipatory potential. Positive figures, episodes and values from the past have become an inspiration for the artists of various generations, ranging from film directors to performers” (Velikonja, 2013: 122).

Nevertheless, the “explosion” of Yugonostalgic themes and motifs in the film and music industry, TV shows, i.e., popular culture in general comes as no surprise.

The role of TV series is likewise of momentous importance in inducing Yugonostalgia in both the former Yugoslavs and the younger generations. According to Ajduk, “the influence of TV series is being reflected in the possibility of creation and presentation of certain ideas (about the specific time, the manner of life, and so on) which subsequently became accepted by a large number of people, and then newly reproduced through the different meanings that people give to it³⁹” (Ajduk, 2016:11). Krstić, according to Ajduk, argues that “if a TV series is being perceived as a segment of the popular culture which communicates with its consumers bidirectionally, a spectator becomes an active creator of the message, and not just a simple recipient of it⁴⁰” (Ajduk, 2016: 22). TV series might be interpreted as a “media which gives us the opportunity to peek into the past, i.e., to reconstruct that past through the shared ideas anew⁴¹” (Ajduk, 2016:12).

The research corpus

The corpus for our research will consist of the following material. When it comes to TV shows, we have included the selected examples:

kulturi“ (Radović, 2015: 11).

³⁸ „Masovni mediji dogadjaje ‘pakuju’ u odredjene simboličke forme utičući tako na formiranje svih obrazaca kulture“ (Radović, 2015: 11).

³⁹ „Uticaj (televizijskih serija) ogleda se u mogućnosti kreiranja i prezentovanja odredjene predstave (o nekom vremenu, načinu života i sl.) koja potom biva usvojena od strane velikog broja ljudi, a zatim iznova reprodukovana kroz različita značenja koja joj ti ljudi utiskuju“ (Ajduk, 2016: 11).

⁴⁰ „Ukoliko se televizijska serija posmatra kao segment popularne kulture koji komunicira sa svojim konzumentima dvosmerno, gledalac postaje aktivni primalac poruke, a ne tek puki primalac iste“ (Ajduk, 2016: 22).

⁴¹ „Serija tako može biti shvaćena kao medij na osnovu kojeg je moguće zaviriti u prošlost odnosno tu prošlost iznova konstruisati kroz deljene predstave“ (Ajduk, 2016: 12).

1. “Šou svih vremena” (“The show of all times”), a TV show that was broadcasted on RTS 1 during 2013-2014. The show host was the actor Nikola Kojo. The TV show covered music, dance, information, commercials, films, and more from the period of ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s.
2. “SFRJ za početnike” (“SFRY for beginners”). It is a documentary TV series of sixteen episodes formerly broadcasted during 2012., dealing with the topics of Yugoslav music, film, sport, fashion, popular culture, etc.

“The show of all times”

When it comes to the TV show “Šou svih vremena” (“The show of all times”), Radović states that “the TV show was initially planned as a collage-type TV show, consisting of the elements of the different television genres such as talk show, quiz, music show, performances (comedy sketches), etc.”⁴² (Radović, 2015: 13). Radović further argues that:

“This mixture of different genres was the characteristic of the central entertainment television program in Yugoslavia, which might directly suggest that the TV show is by its very structure and content an attempt at recreating certain segments of the entertainment shows from the period which arouses nostalgia for the former Yugoslavia in all the male and female participants of the TV show”⁴³ (Radović, 2015: 13-14).

Yugonostalgia as the main topic of the show is visible both in the internal and the external structure. Moreover, the TV show’s opening credit sequences contain Yugonostalgic elements, namely a video collage with the symbols and the characters the period from ‘50s till the end of ‘80s is known for, such as Arsen Dedić, David Bowie, Milena Dravić, Tito, Elvis Presley, Walter⁴⁴, Zdravko Čolić, Vučko⁴⁵, Andy Warhol’s Campbell’s soup cans and the Volkswagen Beetle⁴⁶ (see Radović, 2015:14). According to Radović, “‘The show of all times’ often has a firmly defined structure with the narrative subsets within which metanarrative elements of the former Yugoslavia are being formed”⁴⁷ (Radović, 2015: 14). “The show of all times” therefore represents a perfect example of a TV show which, “through the collective

⁴² „Emisija ‘Šou svih vremena’ je zamišljena kao emisija kolažnog tipa, sastavljena od elemenata televizijskih žanrova kao što su tok šou (talk show), kviz, muzički šou, igrane strukture (humoristički skečevi), itd.“ (Radović, 2015: 13).

⁴³ „Ova mješavina elemenata različitih žanrova upravo je bila karakteristična za centralni zabavni televizijski program u Jugoslaviji, što bi moglo direktno sugerisati da je emisija već svojom strukturom i sadržajem pokušaj rekreiranja određenih segmenata emisija zabavnog karaktera iz perioda koji kod svih učesnika i učesnica emisije budi nostalgiju za bivšom Jugoslavijom“ (Radović, 2015: 13-14).

⁴⁴ The fictional character from *Walter defends Sarajevo* (1972) played by Velimir Bata Živojinović. The film was directed by Hajrudin Krvavac.

⁴⁵ The Olympic mascot of 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo.

⁴⁶ a small family car typical for the period of Yugoslavia.

⁴⁷ „Emisija ‘Šou svih vremena’ ima često čvrstu definisanu strukturu sa narativnim podskupovima unutar kojih se grade elementi metanarativa o bivšoj Jugoslaviji“ (Radović, 2015: 14).

memory of the life and popular culture of the former Yugoslavia, positively interpreted and repositioned the relations and values of that period⁴⁸) (Radović, 2015: 23).

“SFRY for beginners”

“SFRY for beginners” is a TV show that was awarded a Silver Plaque at the Film festival in Chicago in the category of the documentary educational TV series (Drašković, 2016: 62). According to Drašković:

“As an important educational media content, ‘SFRY for beginners’ represents a link with the mutual cultural heritage of the Socialist Yugoslavia and an upgrade of the therapeutic process of decontamination of memories whose confiscation had been done during the nineties under the attack of the nationalist ideology in the newfound countries in the Western Balkan⁴⁹” (Drašković, 2016: 59).

Drašković further emphasizes the importance of SFRY as “an example of the representation of nostalgia as a positive discourse⁵⁰” (Drašković, 2016: 62), as well as the fact that “it addresses not only those spectators whose life in SFRY occupied smaller or bigger parts of their biographies but the younger generation that does not have a direct memory of that country⁵¹” (Drašković, 2016: 66). In the light of what has been said, “SFRY for beginners” is not an ideologically empty media content but it also holds “a clear ideological stance in the creation of the critical counter-narratives regarding the memory of Yugoslavia⁵²” (Drašković, 2016: 72).

Film and Yugonostalgia

According to Kennedy, “within theorizations of global and traveling memory, film has been granted a privileged position as a kind of prosthesis that can facilitate a mediated form of distant memory for viewers outside of the local or national collective that has an experiential or historic relation to the memory of an event” (Kennedy, 2017: 49). Grace Leksana, according to Kennedy, further argues that “film will provide an important vehicle for reconstructing ‘the nation’s social memory...

⁴⁸ „(Emisija nostalgije ‘Šou svih vremena’), kolektivnim prisjećanjem na život i popularnu kulturu bivše Jugoslavije, pozitivno je interpretirala i repozicionirala tadašnje odnose i vrijednosti“ (Radović, 2015: 23).

⁴⁹ „Kao važan edukativni medijski sadržaj ‘SFRJ za početnike’ predstavlja poveznicu sa zajedničkim kulturnim nasljedjem socijalističke Jugoslavije i nadogradnju terapijskom procesu dekontaminacije sećanja čija konfiskacija je izvršena devedesetih godina pred naletom nacionalističke ideologije u novoosnovanim državama na Zapadnom Balkanu“ (Drašković, 2016: 59).

⁵⁰ „‘SFRJ za početnike’ primer je predstavljanja nostalgije kao pozitivnog diskursa“ (Drašković, 2016: 62).

⁵¹ „Ona (emisija) se ciljano ne obraća samo onim gledaocima kojima je život u SFRJ zauzimao manji ili veći deo njihovih biografija nego i onoj mladjoj koja nema direktno sećanje na tu zemlju“ (Drašković, 2016: 66).

⁵² „(‘SFRJ za početnike’) ima i jasan ideološki stav u kreiranju kritičkih kontranarativa kada je u pitanju sećanje na Jugoslaviju“ (Drašković, 2016: 72).

since film had such a major contribution to constructing the existing social memory” (Kennedy, 2017: 50). Concerning motion pictures, the body of research would be too large to do honor to all the Yugoslav films dealing with the overall atmosphere that might invoke the nostalgic feelings in the audience that lived in the former Yugoslavia, as well as their descendants. Some of the films that we can enlist are: “Ko to tamo peva?” (“Who’s singing over there?”, 1980.), “Varljivo leto ‘68” (“The elusive summer of ‘68”, 1984.), “Maratonci trče počasni krug” (“Marathon runners do a lap of honor”, 1982.), “Nacionalna klasa” (“National Class Category Up to 785 ccm”, 1979.), “Majstori, majstori” (“All that Jack’s”, 1980.), “Davitelj protiv davitelja” (“Strangler vs. Strangler”, 1984.), “Lude godine” and its later sequels (“Crazy years”, 1977.), etc.

The impact of music on Yugonostalgia

When it comes to music, it is undisputable that the music from the former Yugoslavia (Ex-Yu), ranging from rock, to pop, to folk music, is still popular nowadays; the invention of the Internet is boosting the popularity of this music. However, there are few radio stations or TV channels that broadcast exclusively the former Yugoslav music (be it rock, pop or folk). Some of the exceptions might be Radio Belgrade 202 that broadcasts pop and rock music (including Ex-Yu pop and rock music), Radio S Ex Yu (digital radio option) that broadcasts only Ex-Yu pop and rock music, and Radio Braid (Radio Pletenica) that, among others, broadcasts the old Yugoslav music.

Conclusion

In the paper, we have primarily dealt with the role of the selected media (TV shows, films and music) in producing Yugonostalgia primarily in the people that have a direct experience of living in Yugoslavia (the older and the middle generations) and, vicariously, in the younger generations. Through the analysis conducted on the selected corpus we have reached the conclusion that media can by no means be an ideologically empty content, but may deliberately be employed in the (re)creation and (re)interpretation of the certain ideologies and their values, in this case Yugonostalgia and its values. It is important to note here that people often use these values as a form of criticism of the negative aspect of the present and its deficiencies, through the comparison of socialism in Yugoslavia with the current political system(s). In line with the preceding analysis and the implication of media-constructed nostalgia in post-socialist contexts and its political ramifications, it is important to talk about the concept of “collective memory and collective future thought” (see Szpunar and Szpunar, 2016: 381). Coser, according to Szpunar and Szpunar, states that “collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present” (Szpunar and Szpunar, 2016: 381). As Szpunar and Szpunar further argue, “the ways in which past conflict is remembered in the contemporary

moment are more an indication of current needs, intentions, schisms, and aesthetics than those that defined the original milieu in which the past conflict unfolded” (Szpunar and Szpunar, 2016:381). When it comes to collective future thought, “it serves as a driving force of collective memory and can affect the ways in which a past is reconstructed. (...) The invocation of collective memories is often goal-oriented, supporting future visions. (...) We use memory to imagine the future” (Szpunar and Szpunar, 2016: 382). Therefore, the former Yugoslavs (and the Yugonostalgists in general) might resort to the memory of the past (of the “idyllic” Yugoslav past) in an endeavor to imagine the future, to potentially re-establish that “perfect” country or create a country akin to it.

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Mediji kao kreatori sećanja: uloga televizije, filma i muzike u konstrukciji jugonostalgije kroz generacije

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Sažetak

U radu smo se prevashodno bavili ulogom medija (filmovima, TV emisijama i muzikom) u izazivanju osećaja jugonostalgije kod nekadašnjih građana Jugoslavije i, posredno, kod njihovih potomaka, iako oni nisu bili rođeni tokom postojanja Jugoslavije, te ne mogu imati iskustvo života u njoj. Shodno navedenom, mediji se pokazuju ne samo kao sredstvo od velikog značaja u kreiranju deljenog, kros-generacijskog pamćenja koje mladim generacijama pruža priliku da uvide kako je izgledao život u Jugoslaviji. Korpus istraživanja sastojao se od odabranih primera jugoslovenskih filmova, zabavnih programa koji su i danas deo televizijskog sadržaja, kao i radio stanica koje emituju specifično muziku sa prostora bivše Jugoslavije. Analizom se došlo do zaključka da video ili zvučni sadržaj može predstavljati moćno sredstvo u izazivanju prijatnih ili neprijatnih emocija kod njihovih potencijalnih konzumenata, ili pak u premošćavanju kros-kulturalnog ili kros-generacijskog jaza.

Ključne reči: mediji, jugonostalgija, filmovi, muzika, pamćenje

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