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New Memory of the Old Trauma? *The Diary of Diana B.* and *Dara of Jasenovac*

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Summary

Recently, there has been a significant rise in the production of films on the Jasenovac camp and related Ustasha crimes, taking their share in the mnemonic politics. The paper focuses on the two most recent films, *The Diary of Diana B*., a docufiction filmed in Croatia, and *Dara of Jasenovac*, a feature film which was Serbia's candidate for an Oscar. The memory of traumatic events is remediated in each film differently and used for representing diverse group identities through temporal relation with the difficult past. Comparison between the two films focuses on subject positions and regimes of historicity as categories that make the production of meaning mechanism visible. The main questions that guide the analysis are: how are victims and perpetrators portrayed, who is witnessing traumatic events, and to whom is the trauma attributed? Do they bring something new to the cultural memory of the Holocaust and genocide in the Independent State of Croatia?

Keywords: Jasenovac, Trauma, Film, Cultural Memory, NDH

Introduction

In the last six years, there has been a significant rise in the film production on Jasenovac camp and related Ustasha crimes, taking their share in the memory politics. These mutually diverse films, produced in Croatia and Serbia, cover various stylistic and narrative approaches from ideologically opposing positions. They span from a classical documentary, conspiracy theory documentary negating and distorting Holocaust and genocide, or interview-oriented approach inspired by Lanzmann's *Shoah* to docufiction and fictionalised historical drama.[1] The reception of those

[1] Recent films focusing closely on Jasenovac are: *Jasenovac Memento* by B. Žižić (2015), *Legacy* by I. Jović (2016), *Jasenovac – The Truth* by J. Sedlar (2016), *Prva trećina – oproštaj kao kazna* (*The First Third – Forgiveness as Punishment*) by S. Petrov (2016), *The Jasenovac Myth*

films has been quite diverse, often related to the previous contested memory narratives. Still, it also revealed some new approaches to reshaping cultural memory and related group identities.

These films deal with the difficult topic of the Holocaust and genocide in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during the Second World War. Led by the Nazi-aligned Ustasha regime (1941 – 1945), it was a state that introduced racial laws and persecuted national minorities (Serbs, Roma, Jews) – to ethnically cleanse the territory – and all those who opposed the regime. It established a network of concentration, labour, and death camps where prisoners were killed or exhausted to death by harsh living conditions and forced labour (Goldstein, 2018, pp. 74-75). The most notorious among them was Jasenovac, a system of camps known for its brutality, where men, women, and children were killed using knives, wooden mallets, or axes, or died of thirst and starvation (*ibid*., pp. 26, 339). The Ustasha forcefully separated children from parents, sending them to separate camps, especially for children (e.g., Sisak, Jastrebarsko), where many died from infectious diseases, neglect, and malnourishment.[2]

The cultural memory of the Ustasha camps, especially of Jasenovac, proved to be problematic from the start when, in the post-war years, the intense discrepancies between the horrors of inter-ethnic hatred and the discourse on the brotherhood and unity of all Yugoslav peoples resulted in heterogeneous and conflicted memory narratives. From the late 1960s until the 1980s, when the official narrative was established, the role of the partisan fighters among camp prisoners was overemphasised and incorporated in the victorious discourse on People's Liberation Struggle (NOB). In the late 1980s (Blanuša, 2011, pp. 167-170), and intensifying with the breakup of Yugoslavia, prisoners' ethnic and religious identities were put forward to perpetuate memory wars and fuel national hatred (Byford, 2020, pp. 126-127). The public discourse in Serbia significantly increased the numbers of Serbian victims (building on the numbers from the socialist period), using them for war propaganda. On the other hand, the Croatian side downplayed the numbers of Jasenovac victims and minimised Ustasha crimes.[3] In the last 30 years, the dynamic of cultural

by R. Leljak, (2018.), *Zaboravljeni* (*The Forgotten*) by M. Petković (2020), *Dara of Jasenovac* by P. Antonijević (2021).

[2] According to historian Nataša Mataušić, although children camps supposedly had better conditions than Jasenovac, harsh living conditions prevailed in children camps in Sisak and Gornja Rijeka under the command of the Ustasha Surveillance Service. However, the children's shelter in Jastrebarsko was of a different type with somewhat better conditions for children (Mataušić, 2020, pp. 392-393).

[3] The official number of victims in Memorial Center Donja Gradina in Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) is 700 000, although there were even higher numbers in the Serbian press

memory constantly shifted with various memory agents pushing their agenda using the contested past for ideological confrontations and co-opting it for diverse political goals.

The paper focuses on the two most recent films, *The Diary of Diana B*. by Dana Budisavljević (2019), a docufiction made in Croatia, and *Dara of Jasenovac* by Predrag Antonijević (2020), a feature film which was Serbia's candidate for an Oscar. As strong female figures are the leading roles in both films, they shift focus on the heroines in the context of the memory of the Second World War, which is a novelty compared with other recent regional films.[4] However, films differ significantly in their approach, as well as in the way they are produced. *The Diary* is made in independent production, while *Dara* is an official state project (Krtinić, 2021). Nevertheless, they both reached a large audience, caused a great stir, and were highly discussed from a cinematic, historiographical, and political perspective.

Methodological Approach to Film and Memory

For the last 80 years, the memory of Ustasha camps, mainly focusing on Jasenovac, has been closely related to the (re)construction of group identities – supranational socialist, class, and political identity, or national, ethnic, and religious identity – and these two films are no exception.

Film analysis commences with the following questions: how are victims and perpetrators portrayed, who is witnessing traumatic events, and to whom is the trauma attributed? In what manners do the films produce the subject positions from which the story of Jasenovac or Ustasha crimes is narrated?

Subject positions are, in Foucauldian terms, discursive constructs from which the knowledge proceeds (Hall, 2003a, p. 62), and from which the discourse has the most sense (*ibid*., p. 56). Foucault described the subject as one of the functions necessary for statements and discursive formations to operate. A subject is "not the speaking consciousness, not the author of the formulation, but a position that may be filled in certain conditions by various individuals" (Foucault, 1982, p. 115). For Foucault, the subject position is an operational term used to describe how statements and discursive formations work. By placing the subject within the discourse as its product, he emancipates the notion of the statement (and discursive formations as groups of statements) from the transcendental subjectivity that

during the early 1990s. In contrast to that, from 1992 to 1999, the Commission for the Identification of War and Post-War Victims of the Republic of Croatia listed only 2,238 victims of the Jasenovac camp (Gaiger, 2011, p. 728); however, it wasn't woted on.

[4] There is also the film *Lea and Darija* by B. Ivanda (2011) that tells the story of the Holocaust in Zagreb from the perspective of two young girls.

governs it from the outside. The enunciative domain is "an anonymous field whose configuration defines the possible position of speaking subjects. Statements should no longer be situated in relation to a sovereign subjectivity but recognize in the different forms of the speaking subjectivity effects proper to the enunciative field" (*ibid*., p. 122).

When applied to film analysis, subject positions are positions the viewer is invited to occupy to make sense of the film (Gledhill, 2003, p. 374). They are constructed by the film's conventions of narration and address (*ibid*., p. 372). It is crucial to notice, though, that the subject position that incorporates "*the spectator in the text*, the spectator for whom the text is made, which the text needs in order for its constructed meanings and pleasures to be fully realized, is different from the common-sense use of the term *spectator* as the synonym for the individual viewer or audience member" (*ibid*., p. 373).

Although Foucault doesn't explicitly elaborate on whether the discourse entirely predetermines the process of subjectivization, the relationship between subject positions and viewers has been further developed by others. For instance, Mieke Bal explored the construction of subjectivity through the prism of performance and memory. By introducing the term *acts of memory*, Bal established critical theoretical assumptions about the interaction between performance, performativity, and memory, emphasising the viewer's role. Each viewer is ultimately the one who performs the act of remembering and connects the act of seeing with forming their subjectivity (Bal, 2001, pp. 8-10, 18). The importance of Bal's approach lies in its introduction of memory as a key concept that connects ways of seeing and subjectivity. It also regards memory not as a fixed set of meanings transmitted via film or work of art but as a performance realized in a dialogue with the viewer. Associating memory with action has also been recognized by others and led to an epistemological turn in the study of cultural memory, shifting from memory as the trace of what once was to memory as the performance of the past in the present moment (Plate and Smelik, 2013, pp. 6, 11).

In addition to analysing subjective positions and identity reconstructions, the paper examines *Dara of Jasenovac* and *The Diary of Diana B.* through the prism of the "regimes of historicity". As defined by Hartog, the term refers to categories that organise historical experience and condition its articulation. They are forms and means by which the temporal dimensions of the past and the future are placed in relation to the present (Hartog, 2012, p. 39). Temporalities inseparably intertwine with memory; that is, they are an integral part of the working of memory. According to Bal, memory is a process that is continuously formed in time and through time. It joins the past, the future, and the present at a specific moment of performance (Bal, 2001, pp. 8-9).

The memory of traumatic events is remediated in each film differently and used to represent diverse group identities and regimes of historicity through diverse temporal constellations. Comparison of the films looks at subject positions and regimes of historicity as critical categories that make visible the mechanism of the production of meaning.

Following these assumptions, the paper examines the role of the camera, editing and narration in creating empathy or distance between the subject positions and different identity groups represented in the film. The main analytical concern is to locate positions from which the story is told. In what ways do these positions influence the valorization of the narrated events and govern the understanding of the contested past? The analysis will likewise compare the historical frameworks of the films with fictionalized storylines to trace the workings of memory that emerges from the gaps between them. How is the identity construction, closely attached to the subject positions, linked with memory production in the films? How did different audiences receive both films? The public reception of the films is discussed to consider their contribution to recent memory and relation to the history of cultural memory, with a brief overview of the 1990s. Do they bring something new to the cultural memory of the Holocaust and genocide in the Independent State of Croatia?

The Diary of Diana B.

The film's central character is Diana Budisavljević, a historical figure that initiated and led a civic action for rescuing Serbian children from the persecution and the camps set by the Ustasha regime. She was an Austrian, upper-middle-class wife of a prominent doctor of Serbian origin with whom she lived in Zagreb. Diana took enormous efforts and exposed herself to danger to form "Action D.B." with a broad network of collaborators whose goal was to rescue persecuted children from certain death. The Action saved approximately 10 000 children from camps and placed them in adoptive families, mainly in Zagreb and the continental part of Croatia.

The film is made as docufiction[5], combining archival photographs and footage, testimonies of the rescued children, now adults, taken for the film, and fictionalised parts with actors. These parts are aesthetically blended into one whole, unified by the same black-and-white tone and background music.

[5] Docufiction is a hybrid between documentary and fictional film, and its main representational strategy is the dramatic reconstruction of real events. This specific position "allows for great flexibility in mobilising both the assumed indexicality of the observational film and the representational freedom of the fictional film, without committing itself entirely to one or the other gender" (Iveković-Martinis, 2013, p. 57). Such an approach is a novelty in representing Ustasha crimes, especially the Jasenovac camp, where the documentary genre has been prevalent.

The film project lasted for nine years and included extensive research on a topic with engagement of historians (Sutlić, 2014, p. 56). Before the film came out, a story about Diana's Action was under-researched and mainly unknown to the broader public.[6] Although the story of children rescue was known during the Yugoslav times, Diana Budisavljević was utterly omitted from it. The Communist Party, the Women's Antifascist Front, and illegal activists of the People's Liberation Movement (NOP) appropriated all her merits for saving children. According to historians Nataša Mataušić and Silvestar Mileta, the official historiography (headed by Tatjana Marinić, a prominent communist activist and the Head of the Department of Protection and Care at the Ministry of Social Policy in the new socialist government) erased Diana's role because she belonged to the bourgeoisie and did not accept socialist ideology (Historiografija.hr, 2020). She collaborated with many people who wanted to help or whom she managed to persuade in helping, from Ustasha and Nazi officials, ordinary citizens, clergy from the Catholic Church, to communist activists. Probably for that reason, her efforts did not fit into the then-dominant discourse on the NOB and the central role of the Communist Party in the resistance to the Ustasha regime (Mataušić, 2020, pp. 15-16, 269-270, 277). Although in 2003 Diana's diary was published, which provided deep insight into her Action[7] (Budisavljević, 2003), very few books and articles have been written about her role in saving the children.[8] Only in the last ten years did the story about Diana emerge in the public discourse, and in that context, *The Diary of Diana B*. offered a new perspective.

To understand the film's contribution to cultural memory, it is crucial to determine how the identity construction in the film is related to the subject position(s) from which the story is told. The subject positions in *The Diary of Diana B.* represent the place for establishing the ethical framework that governs empathy with some characters and condemnation of others, as well as valorising political regimes and their ideologies. The viewers are invited to subject themselves to meanings cre-

[6] However, this is not the first film on Diana's efforts in saving children. In 2018 there was a premiere of a documentary film *Diana's Children* by Slađana Zarić, in the production of Serbian Radio Television, and an exhibition of the same name was held in Belgrade. A theatre piece on the same topic, a monodrama based on Diana's diary (*Pu spas za sve nas* [*Olly, Olly, Oxen Free*], by the director and actress Jelena Puzić) has played on different locations in Serbia, Republika Srpska (in Bosna and Herzegovina) and Austria since 2017. Also, during the 2010s, several parks, streets or alleys were named after Diana Budisavljević in Sisak, Belgrade, Kozarska Dubica, Gradiška and Vienna.

[7] Diana wrote her diary in German, and Silvija Szabo translated it to Croatian.

[8] Several books have been published on Diana Budisavljević and her Action (Burazor, 2013; Lomović, 2013; Kuehs, 2017; Mataušić, 2020), and a few articles (e.g., Koljanin, 2007; Tutunović-Trifunov, 2012). Nataša Mataušić, one of the film's expert collaborators, also published articles and defended her PhD thesis on Diana's Action.

ated by discourse to make the most sense of the film. Identities as "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions" (Hall, 2003, p. 6) are also products of the film's structure. They are "a result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse" (*ibid*.).

Although *The Diary of Diana B.* composes a collage of different sources, they all merge in two positions that complement each other. The primary subject position in the film is focalised through Diana as a fictional character played by an actress. Diana's fictional character compares to the real Diana in photographs and documentary footage inserted throughout the film, showing her while she helps children. They complement the feature part of the film in a way that makes a clear distinction between the fictional and documentary parts while still mutually reinforcing one another to build one rounded story.

The secondary subject positions in the film are those of the witnesses who were saved as children by Diana's Action and placed in foster families. However, their testimonies support the central perspective of Diana's character. Namely, the storyline develops from 1941 until the war's end, following Diana's diary entries. The story played by actors is frequently interrupted by sequences with survivors recounting their memories. Despite the documentary inserts from the film's present interrupting the feature part from the past, they skilfully fit the same narrative line. The survivors' testimonies are edited to precisely fill in the gaps from the diary entries and build on the narrative from Diana's perspective. Here we can see how temporalities and narrative structure jointly construct the subject positions shared by Diana and "her children".

How these main subject positions form a unique view of the (hi)story is also evident in the parallelism between the perspectives of Diana and survivor Živko. The film's temporal structure signals that their two perspectives are governed by the same positions that construct the knowledge of the past. In the opening scene, as a reference to the beginning of *Shoah*, we see a survivor in a rowboat on a river. He recalls how he does not know where and when he was born, nor who his parents were. Right after that, the plot shifts to 1943, where we see Diana (played by the actress) typing Živko's name into card files. Živko's and Diana's focalisation reinforce one another, closely tied at the beginning and towards the film's end. He shares his feeling of identity loss and his disappointment with not being able to trace his origin, despite keeping his numbered tag that was part of Diana's record about each child. After that, in another jump to the (fictionalised) past, we see how the new Yugoslav government officials forcibly confiscate Diana's card files and lists of children's names. The film's ending suggests the neglectful loss of Diana's lists of names in the new socialist state, which led to the impossibility of reconnecting children with their parents after the war.

Diana's disappointment with the behaviour of the new government that neglected her database corresponds with the frustration of the survivor (and we might add with the disappointment of the textual spectator, as the film structure projects it). The final scene works as a metonymy for the whole subsequent communist regime, as one that does not care for these children, equalising it, albeit in another way, with the inhumanity of the Ustasha regime. Time jumps and film editing merge the perspectives of two different characters into a single subject position that condemns both regimes: for persecuting children and for their identity loss.

Although *The Diary of Diana B*. focuses primarily on the time of the Second World War, the socialist period also has a significant role in the narrative structure. It is visible in the film's final scene and in Živko's disappointment with the impossibility of tracing his ancestry. His disappointment projects from the present time of his testimony onto the past, shedding a new perspective on the story about Diana's Action, the one of disillusionment. Therefore, the narrative structure of the film consists of three time periods: the time of the NDH, the present time of the witnesses' testimonies, and the time of socialist Yugoslavia that, although only implicitly problematised in the film, influences the outcome of the whole narration (including the result of Diana's Action and the post-war lives of "Diana's children").

Also, the film's editing reveals the role of temporal symmetry in constructing meaning. Documentary footage of the German army entering Zagreb in front of the cheering crowd, from the beginning of the film, is confronted towards the end with matching footage of the People's Liberation Army entering Zagreb, also with ovations from the public. Such visual and temporal parallelism suggests equalisation between the two regimes – the collaborationist and the communist – implicitly present throughout the film. The Ustasha and the Communists seem to be two enemies of the children, both responsible for their fate. From the cultural memory perspective, such an approach is not uncommon at the European level, especially in post-socialist countries, framed within a "double totalitarianism" discourse.[9]

The film's temporal structure reveals that its regime of historicity is anachronistic. It starts from the present time and then jumps to the past, burdened with the knowledge of the present reinscribed onto the historical story. The construction of meaning in the film is produced backwards, from the post-socialist disillusionment that reconsiders protagonists of the resistance to Ustasha and Nazi crimes and rearranges their role. Apart from governing the film narration, in this case, such reverse temporal logic is a usual pattern by which cultural memory works at the more general level.

[9] There are many policies, resolutions, and decisions by the European Commission and the European Parliament that try to establish an official stance towards the recent past and regulate politics of remembrance. For more about their influence on the public memory in the context of Serbia and Croatia, see the article by Ana Milošević and Heleen Touquet (2018).

Its starting point is the present, while it reaches into the past to trace what it wants to inherit and discards what it does not consider relevant anymore. Memory is "never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present" (Erll, 2011, p. 8).

As the film director Dana Budisavljević (confusingly having a similar name as her heroine, to whom she is distantly related) stated at the premiere, the film's central message is a legacy of individual civic engagement that we can relate to today. As she views it, that legacy is opposed to the partisan fighters fighting in the woods, which is entirely unrelatable to us today (Budisavljević, 2019). This statement nicely sums up the anachronistic memory work that grasps the past only to reaffirm our current beliefs and positions. This view is confirmed by the film's structure that constructed the subject position from the perspective of class and of post-socialist disillusionment – it represents middle-class citizens, focusing on civic resistance.

Binary oppositions between perpetrators and victims, righteous and bystanders, as primarily ethical categories, are the basis for the power dynamic that positions different group identities within the discursive framework of the film. These abstract categories function as a grid that places (textual) subjects within the diegetic value system they produce. In most films dealing with Jasenovac or Ustasha crimes in the last 30 years, nationality, ethnic background, or religious denomination are tied to the categories of perpetrators or victims as the main identity-building factor. In this film, however, a constellation of identities is more complex. Although it is clearly stated in the film that the victims are Serbian children, they are marked by identity loss: loss of their parents, homes and their pre-war way of life. Being adopted into Croatian families, they share the memories of their adoptive parents and speak in the dialects of their new homes. On the other hand, those who help the children are mainly of Croatian and Serbian origin, Catholic and Orthodox, working together side by side. They have in common that they belong to Zagreb's middle class, just like their fellow citizens who chose to stay aside, calmly carrying on with their daily lives.

Perpetrators, however, are invisible in the film. Powerful images from archive footage show some of the committed atrocities, such as emaciated, dying children or demolition of a synagogue. The Ustasha, though, are only mentioned in several dialogues, and we don't see them committing or ordering crimes. We also don't see those responsible for confiscating Diana's database. There is only a signature on the decree for confiscation by Tatjana Marinić, the same person who took part in saving children from persecution, which is left out of narration.[10]

[10] Tatjana Marinić, a pre-war Communist and pedagogue specialising in working with preschool children, was engaged in helping orphans on different occasions during the war. Kamilo Bresler, Diana's closest collaborator, asked her, among other people, to help them take care of the large number of children who arrived by transport, to which she agreed (Mataušić, 2020, pp. 115, 120-121).

Since the position of the perpetrators is lacking in the film, the only position from which the knowledge proceeds is occupied by Diana and the children portrayed as victims of invisible enemies and faceless regimes. Narrowing the focus on Diana's story, cutting out the perpetrators, and blurring the bigger picture of the NDH period and the early post-war years might lead to a misunderstanding of the broader historical context.

The exclusively negative portrayal of Communists (and NOB fighters) in a take-over of institutions after the war, while other identity groups – Nazi officers, Ustasha officials, clergy – are nuanced and individualised, reveals the subject position constructed by the film not only as a dominant viewpoint on the fight for human rights but also as a place of exclusion of other modes of struggle. Just as socialist memory omitted Diana's role in saving children to reinforce communist values in the society based on collective partisan resistance and class struggle, the contemporary cultural memory, performed in this film, does precisely the opposite. It omits the role of communist activists, especially female antifascists, in opposing the Ustasha regime and saving children to distance itself from the socialist/communist legacy. Although the Communist Party did not have an organisational (or any other) role in Diana's Action, as the socialist historiography insisted, communist activists did participate in it, among numerous other participants. They especially had a significant role in helping children in the Jastrebarsko camp, which remains invisible in the film.[11] Additionally, four of close Diana's collaborators[12] were also communist resistance activists and joined the NOB (Mataušić, 2020, pp. 358, 359, 370, 375).

Furthermore, although we do see some of Diana's associates in the film, many of her 18 close assistants are entirely omitted. Action engaged a significant number of committed participants and an even larger number of those who helped occasionally (*ibid*., pp. 354-377). Yet, the film doesn't quite show the vast scope of the whole Action, reducing its collective dimension. At the same time, it reinforces the identity relation between the textual spectator and the protagonist (Diana) as the symbol of self-organised peaceful resistance within the legal frame in opposition to the collective and violent struggle of partisan fighters. Thus, as often happens with cultural memory, the nuanced identity constellations arising from complex historical events gave way to simpler identity politics.

[11] For more info on the engagement of Tatjana Marinić, her pupils, and members of the illegal anti-fascist organisation in the Jastrebarsko and Donja Reka camp, and the NOB fighters in liberating children from Jastrebarsko, see Mataušić (2020, pp. 122, 129-138, 391-399).

[12] Those were Vera Černe, Branko Kesić, Berislav Borčić and Jana Koch. For a detailed list of Diana's close collaborators, see: Mataušić (2020, pp. 354-377).

Dara of Jasenovac

Dara of Jasenovac is a historical drama that follows the story of the Jasenovac camp through the eyes of a girl named Dara. The main narrative plot is fictionalised but with references to historical events. Description of the film states that it relies on survivors' testimonies, which the director and scriptwriter often point out (Atv, 2021). Although the authors of the film did not specify what exact testimonies they used for inspiration, in the film we can recognise commonplaces found in many different testimonies.[13] There are also references to events documented in the post-war trials, for example, when Ante Vrban, Ustasha major from the camp, admitted having liquidated 63 children in the children's hospital using gas (Goldstein, 2018, p. 560). The film also re-stages certain events for which documentary footage exists – Diana Budisavljević and Red Cross saving children from the camp – or scenes from Ustasha propaganda footage and photographs, such as scenes of inmates building the dam by the Sava river.

Despite being a feature film with a fictionalised plot and dialogues, it advertises as a story that brings the truth about Jasenovac. The authors of *The Diary of Diana B.* made the same claims on revealing the truth about the heroine erased from the history with the film's tagline 'A True Story about the Best People in the Worst Times'. Even though *The Diary* balances between documentary and fiction mode, while *Dara* belongs to fiction, they are both constructs of the film media and its characteristic techniques. Although it refers to reality, the documentary film does not belong to it more than other film genres, it only establishes a completely different relationship with extra-filmic phenomena (Gilić, 2013). Documentaries "tend to use archival footage as a means of authentication, as visible evidence to show *how it really was*", which leads to misunderstanding of the ontology of the image (Brunow, 2013, p. 5). Instead of being copies of "reality", documentary images are constructed by entangled discourses, narrative formula, and specific media technologies (*ibid*., p. 6).

Although *Dara of Jasenovac* doesn't use documentary images, its references to authenticity are equally constructed by the film media, as in the case of *The Diary*. They both manipulate (historical) events they represent, as any other media does, although each in its own manner. The "truthfulness" in both cases has a performative role, functioning as an instruction to viewers that they should relate the film to historical events. In the case of *Dara*, multiple references throughout the film to the historical figures and the events described in diverse testimonies, or scenes shown on photographs/footage, are used as signs of authenticity.

[13] Most events represented in the film, especially concerning the treatment of inmates, we can find similarly described in published survivors' testimonies (e.g., Berger, 1966; Čolić *et al*., 1961; Panić, 1969).

Also, the authors publicly emphasised the verity of the filming process in the choice of children actors for the film. None of them, including the lead actress who plays Dara, had formal acting training. They are all from the Potkozarje region, where whole Serbian villages perished in Jasenovac. The film director Antonijević suggested they were playing themselves instead of acting, pointing out that "these were children from the village who were closer to the soil, closer to the essence, closer even to that period" (*"Velika iluzija"*..., 2021). Also, authors often emphasise how the great-grandmother of the leading actress is a survivor of the Jasenovac camp (Atv, 2021). These are all strategies for adding credibility to the story and reminding the viewers that what they watch relates to the off-screen events.

Despite its quest for authenticity, there are several historiographical errors in the film, as many critics have already noticed, especially in the regional press (Yeomans, 2021; Bakotin, 2021), mostly related to the colour of Ustasha uniforms, the appearance of the nuns in the camp, and several other minor details. Apart from that, some other scenes in the film might be seen in a broader context as artistic freedom in storytelling, although they do not correspond to factual events.

Nevertheless, the film faced harsh reviews and accusations of propaganda and manipulation. However, it could be argued that the main reason for that is not historical inaccuracy but rather a poorly delivered plot. The unconvincingness of the story lies primarily within the characters' insufficient psychological profiling. Characters are one-dimensional, lacking multi-layered portrayal and growth or change as the story unfolds. It is evident in Ustasha characters, whose behaviour is presented as entirely irrational, lacking any reasonable or at least understandable motivation. The film does not indicate the political background of the camp's establishment, the mechanism of conducting the Holocaust and genocide in the NDH, or the Ustasha ideology behind it, which might affect the understanding of the plot by those not familiar with the context.

Numerous film critics, mainly foreign and Croatian, but also from Serbian independent media, have objected that portraying the Ustasha as extremely violent and brutal is propagandistic and manipulative (e.g., Weissberg, 2021; Pavlić, 2021). However, this remark does not stand when we compare them with the testimonies of the surviving camp inmates. Most published testimonies depict the brutality and sadism of Ustasha guards and the inhumane living conditions in the camp in gruesome detail. However, these testimonial descriptions often give the broader political picture of Jasenovac killings or depict perpetrators' psychological profiles, which is completely lacking in the film (e.g., Riffer, 1946).

Even though there are several appalling scenes of explicit violence in the film, the overall ambience of living conditions in the camp and the physical state of the inmates is significantly aestheticised. The stage set and costume design are visually appealing, following the model of Hollywood historical films. Therefore, the im-

pression of horror that we find in almost all survivors' testimonies is absent from the film. *The Diary of Diana B.* achieves this impression by confronting the feature part of the film and its polished aesthetics with terrifying archival footage of emaciated children, some of them dying on the floor. *Dara of Jasenovac*, on the contrary, also shows some symbolic scenes that are a substitute for direct representation of killings, but they are far from the eerie atmosphere of death in films such as Štiglic's *Ninth Circle* (1960) or Nemes's *Son of Saul* (2015).

Nonetheless, we should not search for the film's propagandistic or ideological aspect in the historical accuracy or (un)convincingness of the represented events. Instead, they can be easily found in the production of meaning related to the construction of group identities on the screen.

Dara and her father are the main focalisers of the narrated story. These two perspectives are inspired by fragments from multiple survivors' testimonies and incorporated into the fictionalised story on the level of the film script. Unlike in *The Diary of Diana B.*, the main identity-building category here is ethnicity. Although we see few Jewish and Roma prisoners in the camp, emphasis is largely on the Serbian victims and their suffering. Same as in the case of the film about Diana, the role of Communists is wholly omitted. There is no mention of Communists or other political prisoners (belonging to different ethnicities – Serbs, Jews, Croats, Bosniaks), which reduces those persecuted by the Ustasha only to their ethnicity, without mentioning ideological opponents.

The other identity-building category in the film, although a more subtle one, is religion. In the opening scene, Dara's older brother explains to her that the only difference between them and Croats is religion, and later in the film, a small wooden Greek cross, a personal belonging of a killed inmate, provokes the rage of the Ustasha guard. On a metaphoric level, the cross saves the life of Dara's father, who decided to keep and hide it. At the film's ending, we see him catching his breath after he managed to escape the guards, taking a long look at the cross he lifted towards the sky.

There is a clear visual and semantic contrast between different types of crosses throughout the film – on the one side, there is the Greek cross, related to (Serbian) victims. On the other side is the Latin cross, visually connected to the Ustasha perpetrators. The head nun, who treats the children in the camp cruelly and coldly, wears a rosary with a Latin cross in a visible place over her habit.[14] In an improvised classroom where the nun teaches Serbian children to become Ustasha youth and cross

[14] The character of the head nun is modelled on the historical figure of Mother Pulherija Barta, sister-in-law of Mile Budak, Minister of Education and Faith in the NDH. She was in charge of the children camp administration in Sisak, and socialist historiography regarded her as being rigid and cold towards the children inmates (Mataušić, 2020, p. 230).

themselves as Roman Catholics, there is a photograph of the Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac wearing a huge Latin cross. It is placed next to the photo of Ante Pavelić and the crucifix. Moreover, a character playing Miroslav Filipović, an Ustasha guard and a priest known for his brutality as pater Satan, plays with a Latin cross in his hand during the speech of the camp's commander Maks Luburić. Only the character of Diana Budisavljević doesn't fit into this binary opposition since she is a Catholic, but of Austrian origin, and has a Serbian husband. Accordingly, the Latin cross on her necklace is barely noticeable and out of the camera's focus.

Apart from the "mnemonic battle of crosses", the role of the Catholic Church in the camp leadership is overemphasised from the historiographical point of view (Bartulin, 2021). Although there were indeed priests among the Ustasha in Jasenovac, some of whom did take part in the killings, there were also Catholic priests amongst prisoners killed in Jasenovac (Goldstein, 2018, p. 672). Furthermore, the film portrays nuns in a bad light as having a significant organisational role there, even though there were no nuns in the Jasenovac camp. They worked in other, children camps, such as Jastrebarsko or Sisak. Also, it is not likely that the photograph of Archbishop Stepinac was hanging on the camp's premises since he, although a supporter of the Ustasha regime and military vicar of the NDH, expressed a somewhat negative attitude on the treatment of inmates in Jasenovac.[15] Even though the relationship between the Ustasha regime and the Catholic Church in Croatia is complex and remains disputed and contested, the film visually accentuates this relationship. It symbolically codes it in a simplified way that equalises the roles of the Church and Ustasha officials in committing crimes in Jasenovac. The binary opposition between Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church, attributed throughout the film to Serbian and Croatian ethnicity (with overemphasised connexion between the Ustasha and the clergy), is a remnant of the long-lasting memory battle between Serbia and Croatia.

As far as the temporal structure in the film is concerned, it is far simpler than the one in *The Diary of Diana B*. It chronologically follows the linear narration from the beginning to the end, without temporal leaps or inversions. The story-time spans Dara's stay in the camp, without mentioning her earlier life or providing insights into what happens after she exits the camp. The only brief reference to the future is in the speech of Maks Luburić, the camp commander, when he talks to the children turned into Ustasha youth. He encourages them to think about how Croatia will look in 2000, wishfully projecting Ustasha values and aspirations into the future. We hear short fragments of the real speech that Luburić did give, not in Jasenovac, but talking to the Croatian diaspora in Chicago in 1968 (Luburić, 1969).

[15] For more about the relation of the Catholic Church in Croatia and Archbishop Stepinac towards the Ustasha regime, see Biondich (2006) and Goldstein (2018, pp. 664-706).

Apart from that, the narration is dedicated to the confined universe of the camp, starting with Dara's arrival at Jasenovac with her family and other people from her village. The film ends with her departure from the camp together with her brother, and their father's escape. Her last line in the film is the answer to Diana Budisavljević asking her where she is from. While they ride the bus full of children saved from the camp, Dara thoughtfully answers "From Jasenovac". This response reveals her internment experience as trauma that influenced her identity more than her place of origin. Also, it directs the final retrospective focus back on Jasenovac instead of on Dara's immediate future waiting for her outside the gates, affirming the camp as the story's main protagonist. Limited to the time frame of the events in the camp, the plot focuses on the eternal present of imprisonment, torture and death.

The wide range of recognisable motifs from various testimonies brought together in the film suggests the intention of its authors to give a bigger picture of the Jasenovac camp. Some film critics also noticed how typical events from other Nazi camps are merged, with the aim of creating a Hollywoodized Holocaust melodrama familiar to the international audience (Daković, 2022). Points of view on the camp events are closer to the all-knowing narrator than to Dara and her father. Although they are the main characters in the film, the focalisation is not entirely consistent since it also shifts to other characters. Furthermore, some scenes are seen from a viewpoint that couldn't belong to any of the film's characters. For example, the symbolic scenes depicting death in which those killed enter a wagon belong to the omniscient point of view. The meaning of the film is thus grasped from the position of the all-seeing subject that, through the contrast between mainly Serbian, Orthodox victims and irrational evil in the form of the Ustasha and Catholic clergy, uses the story of Dara as a cohesive element for telling the whole story about Jasenovac.

The Reception of Films in the Media

The study of the two films showed how narration constructs time flow and subjectivities within the diegetic universe, creating positions from which knowledge is mediated and which the viewer is invited to occupy. As implied within the film discourse with its ideological effects, the textual spectator regulates the production of meaning and memory of the traumatic past. However, there is a potential disjuncture between the textual spectator or subject position created by the text and the social audience at a given point in time (Gledhill, 2003, p. 373). How an audience views a film also depends on particular social experiences and outlooks, their "reading competence", i.e., specific interpretative frameworks, cultural competencies and social practices (*ibid*., pp. 374-375).

The analysis here considers the public reception of the films in the media, primarily film reviews, press coverage and public debates. The films' ratings and inter-

pretations vary depending on perspectives shared by a particular readership. Also, they are under (in)direct political influences and partially shaped by official politics of memory in different states and national cultural practices of remembering the difficult heritage of the NDH.

For example, the mainstream media in Serbia use contextual temporal and identity framing of the film about Dara to shape public opinion on the topic. Although it does not stem from the film's temporal structure, it gives us insight into two main modes of connecting the trauma of Jasenovac with other historical periods.

The first model used in the public discourse belongs to the linear regime of historicity, contextualizing the film in the Serbian national victimhood narrative throughout history as a part of traditional values inherited in the present. The film director announced that there would be a TV series based on the film, for which they would shoot some new scenes, including the ones on the military operation The Storm from the 1990s war in Croatia (Koprivica, 2021). The screenwriter Nataša Drakulić furthermore emphasised how the suffering of Serbian people during The Storm represents the finale of Jasenovac (*"Dara iz Jasenovca" budi svest*..., 2021). Moreover, we could hear some public voices defending the importance of the film with arguments on genocide against Serbs that has been going on from the Ottoman times until today. There is a line of continuity between Serbian victims in the First and Second World War and the wars of the 1990s in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Solely Serbian victimhood is mentioned in this context to create a culture of remembrance that would associate martyrdom, (Serbian) ethnicity, and its right to statehood (*Cela Srbija je plakala*..., 2021; Koprivica, 2021).

The other approach to the extradiegetic temporal framing of the film is based on a historical rupture, emphasizing how this is the first time the truth about Jasenovac is shown on film after 80 years of silencing. Along these lines, Serbian president Vučić said that "Finally someone remembered to make a film about the place of the greatest suffering of our people ever" (Tanjug, 2021). Serbian Patriarch Porfirije likewise stated that it is a film about something that has been shrouded in the fog of oblivion and deliberately hidden (I. Ba./Hina, 2021). However, the Jasenovac trauma was publicly visible and commemorated in socialist Yugoslavia, all testimonies on which the film is based were published during socialism, and there have already been 20 films about Jasenovac.[16]

[16] There are two feature films on Jasenovac – *Deveti krug* (*The Ninth Circle*) by France Štiglic (1960), *Crne Ptice* (*Black Birds*) by Eduard Galić (1967) – and one short fiction film *Prva trećina. Oproštaj kao kazna* (*The First Third. Forgiveness as Punishment*) by Svetlana Petrov (2016). There are 16 documentary films focused on the topic of Jasenovac. However, the number of films that partially touch upon Jasenovac (whilst dealing with Ustasha crimes or children from Kozara) is significantly higher.

After the film's premiere on Serbian television, some voices arose invoking a conspiracy theory about the role of the Vatican and Catholic Church in the genocide against Serbs. During communist times, it was supposedly forbidden even to mention Jasenovac, and Tito never visited the Jasenovac site because he wanted to abolish the NDH. The theory also refers to the historical figure of Diana Budisavljević, whose diary was allegedly hidden for decades to prevent parents of Serbian origin from finding their children (*Cela Srbija je plakala*..., 2021).

The origin of Jasenovac memory reframed in such a way traces back to the late 1980s as a part of the broader Comintern-Vatican conspiracy. The theory is a combination of two different interpretational streams that combined the Ustasha regime, Catholic clergy in Croatia and the Vatican on the one side, and on the other, the efforts of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, directed by the Comintern, to destroy the first Yugoslavia (Blanuša, 2011, p. 143). Different versions of this theory circulated the limited Serbian intellectual and Communist-Party circles in the late 1980s (*ibid*., pp. 144-145). In the 1990s, different streams of this theory reached the broader public, fuelling war propaganda. We can see this in the documentary *God and Croats* by Krsto Škanata from 1993 which accuses the pope-led Vatican of allying with the Communist Party to erase the memory of Jasenovac.

Similarly, the theory about a communist conspiracy hiding the truth about Jasenovac exists in Croatia, albeit with the opposite aim of denying and distorting the Holocaust and the genocide against Serbs and Roma. Proponents[17] of the theory are gaining visibility through public appearances, lectures, publishing books and articles. Two recent films, *Jasenovac – the Truth* by Jakov Sedlar (2016) and *The Myth of Jasenovac* by Roman Leljak (2018), propagate such negationist theory. The main idea here is that the Jasenovac camp led by the Ustasha was a mere labour camp, while the real extermination camp was established after the war, led by the communist government, to conduct genocide against Croats (Kršinić-Lozica, 2018). Although the evidence does not support it, this theory intensively circulates at the margins of the public media, gaining popularity, with occasional breaches into the mainstream.[18]

[17] Proponents of this theory are several NGOs and individuals, the most active of them being the Association for Research of the Threefold Jasenovac Camp, a Zagreb-based NGO.

[18] For example, Jakov Sedlar received the City of Zagreb award in 2017, a year after his notorious film *Jasenovac – The Truth* caused quite a stir in the public sphere. In 2018, proponents of a conspiracy theory on Jasenovac, Igor Vukić and Roman Leljak, promoted their books in Croatian mainstream media denying genocide and distorting the Holocaust in the NDH. The same year, Croatian President Grabar-Kitarović said that the truth about what was happening in Jasenovac in the period from 1941 to 1945, but also later, must be investigated, thus implicitly legitimising the conspiracy theory about communist Jasenovac (Hina, 2018). For more about Holocaust and

The promotors of *Dara of Jasenovac* – its authors and media close to president Vučić's regime – pushed the film narrative to a much broader context. They positioned their view of the film within the limits of the old memory and identity battles that already peaked during the 1990s wars. Instead of revealing new approaches to Jasenovac, as they claimed, they perpetuated old mnemonic politics already familiar to the audience, which are part of a broader and more complex contemporary mnemonic politics in Serbia and Republika Srpska.[19]

However, the film's reception in Serbia was divided and provoked heated public debates. The film was accused of being a political project from the start, initiated by president Vučić, backed up by the state and non-transparently chosen as Serbia's candidate for an Oscar. It was entirely financed by a special decision of the Government of Serbia, including complete funding of the film's promotion in the United States (Glavonić, 2021). Some critics claimed that the motives for making this film were propagandistic, with the primary aim to justify the crimes of Serbian armed units in the wars of the 1990s and to change the "bad image of Serbs" in the West (Ilić, 2021). Others claimed that it parasitises the difficult topic of Jasenovac without any creative accomplishment (Jovanović, 2021), or that it is an example of "soft power" aiming to rebrand Serbia by populist retelling of its history of victimhood and sacrifice (Daković, 2022).

The Croatian media, especially the mainstream press, were harsh on the film, accusing it of political propaganda and, sometimes without valid arguments, of historical revisionism (Pavlić, 2021; *Polimac preporučuje*..., 2021), although there could also be found more balanced reviews (Klasić, 2021; Tučkar, 2021). The film also received a few very negative international reviews in renowned magazines (Weissberg, 2021; Abele, 2021), causing quite a stir in Serbian and Croatian media.

The public reception of *The Diary of Diana B.* had a very different path. Unlike the film about Dara, which was a state project, this one is perceived as an independent production, although this is not entirely true, since it was partially funded by government institutions such as Croatian Audiovisual Centre, Slovenian Film Centre and Film Centre Serbia. Nevertheless, the film resulted from an NGO project that lasted ten years and consisted of different phases. The media praised the enthusiasm of the film director and her team, who tirelessly collected funds from numerous sources to finance not only the making of the film but also everything that

genocide denial and distortion in contemporary Croatia, see S. Goldstein (2016), Kasapović (2018) and Milekić (2020).

[19] For more about public memory of the Second World War in contemporary Serbia, see Đureinović (2020) and Subotić (2019), who focuses on Holocaust remembrance. To link Holocaust memory in contemporary Serbia with the remembrance of Serbian victims, see Byford (2007) and David (2013).

preceded it: collecting the testimonies of survivors, researching archives, involving historians in the research for the film script, etc. (Sutlić, 2014; NN, 2020, Glavonić, 2021). The film has been almost unanimously acclaimed by film critics and the broader public. There were several dissonant voices that criticized the film from the ideological and historiographical perspective (Barić, 2020; Kevo, 2020) or they objected to the film's equating of the Ustasha and Communist regimes (Kostanić, 2019; Zahtila, 2020; Postnikov, 2019), but they didn't gain much public attention. The press in Croatia, Serbia, and Republika Srpska equally lauded the film (J.M., 2019; RTRS, 2021) and perceived it as a result of a new approach that counters the official mnemonic politics in Croatia (Pavičić, 2019). The film is thus mainly viewed in the light of ongoing debates on the public usage of the Ustasha chant, the conflict between representatives of the Jasenovac victims and the Croatian government regarding official commemorations at the Jasenovac Memorial Site, and the rise of initiatives that deny and distort the Holocaust and genocide committed in the NDH. There are not many recent Croatian films dealing with the NDH period, and they have mostly passed under the radar of the wider audience (*Lea and Darija*, *Ghosts of Zagreb*, *Jasenovac Memento*), or are negating and distorting genocide and the Holocaust in the NDH (*Jasenovac – the Truth* and *The Myth of Jasenovac*). In that context, *The Diary of Diana B*. has been perceived as a film with an activist allure that managed to raise the public's interest and achieve great success.

It received many awards at film festivals in Croatia, Serbia, and internationally. The film was broadcast simultaneously on Croatian and Serbian Television on the 22nd of April 2020, the day commemorating the breakthrough of the Jasenovac detainees. Since then, it has been shown on the Radiotelevision of the Republic of Srpska and twice on Croatian Radiotelevision (including the International Holocaust Remembrance Day screening in 2021).

Although the film is widely perceived as confronting dominant narratives about the Ustasha regime and the Second World War in Croatia, it was instantly recognised by the mainstream media and institutions. Its main breakthrough was at the Pula Film Festival in 2019, where it received five awards, including the Best Film Award and the Audience Award. This was the second time a female director won the award at Pula Film Festival since its establishing in 1954.

Furthermore, the film received the official consent of the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education for inclusion in the school curriculum. In 2019, about 5,000 students watched the film in Croatian cinemas, and in 2020 it was one of the most watched films in the "Film at School" program organised by Art Cinema Croatia from Rijeka (Pofuk, 2021). Among many film awards, the film director Dana Budisavljević received the Vladimir Nazor Award in 2020, the highest Croatian state acknowledgement for artists, and the Krunoslav Sukić Award for the promo-

tion of peacebuilding, nonviolence and human rights in 2021. Such a wide recognition and the impact of the film suggests that it has been quickly and easily incorporated into the official mnemonic discourse in Croatia and set a new paradigm for dealing with the difficult past on the screen.

Conclusion

The films about Diana and Dara have had a significant impact on cultural memory not only because they achieved high visibility and were widely discussed but also because they portray historical events in ways that suggest authenticity. As the paper elaborated, *The Diary of Diana B.* engaged historians to work on the script, collected testimonies and incorporated archival footage, while *Dara of Jasenovac* based the script on published testimonies and cast children from authentic locations. The authors emphasised the historical accuracy of their films, intending to bring the events of the contested past closer to a broad audience. The films' public reception also highlighted the historical importance of the subject they deal with, thereby ascribing additional relevance and social responsibility to them.

However, the relationship between cinema, history and memory proved to be much more complex. Due to the specificities of its medium, the film constructs an image of past events that can never be completely accurate. Moreover, telling a coherent story that will engage the viewers is often at odds with a historically accurate narrative that would be more complicated, with many digressions and entangled identity constellations. The rules of storytelling often dictate a clear plot development, avoiding secondary explanations and multiple and intertwined subject positions that would undermine the narrative sequence and disrupt the story's coherence.

The analysis of the two films focused on gaps between historical events and the films' narratives to see how they constructed the story about the past and framed it within the memory discourse. It concentrated on locating subject positions as points of view that make discrepancies visible in how identities are presented on the screen. Since identities are constructed within discourse, emerging "within the play of specific modalities of power", they are "more the product of marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity" (Hall, 2003, p. 4). To grasp the underlining ideological effects on meaning production, the text considered how films negotiated and represented diverse group identities and what (and who) they left out of these identity constructions.

Furthermore, the analysis showed how both films use a pronounced identity-oriented approach to create subject positions that impact memory construction. *Dara* uses traumatic memory to represent group identities based on the equalisation of ethnicity and religion (in the case of victims), and political regime and religion

(when portraying perpetrators). *Diana* uses it to reinforce group identities from the class perspective, emphasising a civic, legal and self-organised aspect of the resistance to the abstract regime in which perpetrators remain hidden. In both cases, the identity-building process simplified historical events since it is based on the inclusion of groups to which trauma is attributed, at the expense of excluding other groups (ethnic, religious, political, ideological) from it.

One of the identity constellations that the films share is that the story revolves around the main female characters. Dara and Diana are both portrayed from the traditional perspective as nurturing female figures taking care of helpless child/children without parents, facing the swirl of violence by caring for others. Nonetheless, there are some essential differences in how the films approach the representation of their heroines. In *Dara of Jasenovac*, the narration is inconsistent, with shifting focalizers and with different points of view changing throughout the film. Numerous events, taken from various published testimonies, make an incoherent plot that doesn't seem to be seen through the eyes of a girl. Diana's story, on the contrary, is based on her diary as the primary source for forming the film's narrative. Although we see many other female characters taking an active part in the Action, together with very few male characters (Kamilo Bresler and Marko Vidaković),[20] the leading focalizer is Diana. Survivors' perspectives are incorporated to fit the main storyline, subordinated to the thread of Diana's diary entries.

The other important category of analysis was the temporal structure and its impact on the construction of identities and the production of cultural memory. The study of *The Diary of Diana B.* showed how the knowledge of what comes after the ending sets the tone for understanding the film. It is already visible in its framing, i.e., at the beginning and the end of the film. In the opening scene, the survivor's statements about his identity loss suggest that the film we're about to see doesn't end entirely happily. The closing scenes, similarly, show us Diana's disappointment and the suggestion of the future undoing of her efforts to reconnect parents and their children. The paper traced how multiple time jumps and temporal parallelisms through the film significantly impacted the creation of the central subject position, which looks at the movie plot from the perspective of post-socialist disillusionment. Such retroactive meaning construction leads to an anachronistic historical interpretation based on the knowledge and zeitgeist of the present.

Although the temporal structure of *Dara of Jasenovac* is much simpler and mainly linear, we could see similar complex temporal constellations in the discour-

[20] Bressler is portrayed in the film as Diana's important helper, which corresponds to his actual contribution to the Action (Mataušić, 2020, p. 64). Vidaković, on the contrary, is depicted as a reluctant and frightened figure, although he, as a historical personality, did commit himself to help Diana in saving children (Budisavljević, 2003, p. 14).

sive framing of the film. Various streams of contextual interpretation connected different epochs with the memory of the Jasenovac camp. Such chaining of events in the course of history aimed to anchor the identity positions of perpetrators and victims within fixed ethnic and religious categories. These interpretations have in common that they place the difficult past in direct relation to political goals and identity battles of the present.

Seeing the past through the present is a phenomenon that Hartog calls presentism, characteristic of the contemporary regime of historicity that he recognises in our present epoch. History being replaced by the more fluid term *past* and distanced analysis by emotions and affect are some of the numerous strategies for placement of history in relation to us today (Hartog, 2012, pp. 99-100). Erasure of the boundary separating the past from the present results in memory replacing history as its alternative (*ibid*., pp. 52-53). Considering this, *Dara* and *Diana* are, in terms of their structure and mechanisms of producing meaning, much closer to memory than they are to history. They both, although in different ways, offer a contemporary view of the past that serves the purposes of the present moment, which is characteristic of how memory works. Thus, how films portray the traumatic experience of genocide in the NDH tells us above all about today's attitude towards the problematic legacy of the Ustasha regime.

The films' roles differ in the type of memory discourse they offer. *Dara of Jasenovac* did not give significant input to the already existing cultural memory of Jasenovac. There are already many films on the topic, including feature films, and the only novelty is aestheticized approach to scenography. The discoursive framing of the film fits into the well-established memory wars about Jasenovac that have dominated the Croatian and Serbian public sphere for the last thirty years. The strongly contested reception of the film suggests that the memory as it is represented on the screen causes social divisions, not only between audiences from different states but also within the same state (mainly in Serbia). The reason for such criticism may be that a part of the audience did not accept the identity divisions established by the film or was bothered by how it was produced and advertised, considering it a political project.

The Diary of Diana B., on the contrary, did make a particular breakthrough. It brought a new story to the public, significantly influencing how we perceive civic resistance to the Ustasha regime. Also, it introduced novelties in the cinematic approach to the topic by collaging various valuable media sources while confronting documents, testimonies, and fictionalised story. Its almost unanimously positive reception among disparate audiences in Croatia, Serbia and Republika Srpska, as well as internationally, indicates that the memory offered by the film corresponds with the contemporary cultural memory in the transnational context.

The public reception of both films belongs to a broader phenomenon of the revival of the mnemonic battles that focused again on the difficult heritage of Jasenovac and Ustasha crimes. They are taking their share in the struggle over meaning that is continuously led around interpreting the past, determining the present, and defining belonging to particular identity groups. Disputes around the films confirm Bal's argument on the performative aspect of memory being realized through forming subjectivity in the present of viewing (Bal, 2001, pp. 9-10). Although the subject positions that organise the place of memory transmission within the narrative are a construct of the film medium, they aim at the audience as an invitation for various identification processes. It is the moment when film ceases to be only a representation and takes an active role. Instead of only transmitting memory, films perform memory instead, taking their share in forming identity discourses that become an integral part of the public sphere.

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