

Katarina S. Lazić  
University of Kragujevac  
Faculty of Philology and Arts  
Department of English Studies

УДК 821.163.41.09:341.485  
DOI [10.46793/Uzdanica21.2.205L](https://doi.org/10.46793/Uzdanica21.2.205L)  
Прегледни рад  
Примљен: 9. јануар 2024.  
Прихваћен: 21. јун 2024.

## THE HOLOCAUST, INVESTIGATIVE DISCOURSE AND *BARE LIFE* – TRAUMA AND MEMORY

*Abstract:* The work will primarily explore the position and status of the Jews in the post-war Yugoslavia, especially in relation to the momentous year of 1948, which represents the final split between Tito and Stalin, the fact that caused some radical changes in Yugoslavia and deaths of an enormous number of people who were thought to have been political dissidents. Also, the work will touch upon the position of the Jews during the World War II which, although not as unbearable as in the rest of the world, was far from something to be desired. Further, the paper will deal with the investigative discourse employed by Danilo Kiš during his interview with Eva Nahir Panić and Jennie Lebel, two women who survived Goli otok and whose testimonies Danilo Kiš was to use in the making of his documentary *Bare life* in collaboration with the director Aleksandar Mandić, first broadcasted in 1990. In the context of the aforementioned physical torture that political dissidents had to endure on Goli otok and Sveti Grgur, the work will make use of the novel by Antonije Isaković entitled *Tren 2* which, though fiction, gives an insight into how political dissidents were treated by the authorities and which methods were used in their re-education. The analysis will try to show that evil and repression are inseparable, inherent parts of every totalitarian regime, regardless of geographical area or time of its existence.

*Key words:* Goli otok, Kiš, *Bare existence*, Isaković, trauma, memory, discourse.

### INTRODUCTION

Mihas, according to Gvozdenović, defines the discourse as “in a broad sense, a way of organizing human experience. It (discourse) creates the frames of meaning by retelling and interpretation of the events and situations”<sup>1</sup> (Gvozdenović 2016: 13). However, Mills states that “discourses are not simple strings of sentences but they constitute a sequence of statements which have their meaning, power and an impact in the social context” (Gvozdenović 2016: 13). When it comes

---

<sup>1</sup> All citations were translated from Serbian into English by the author of the paper.

to investigative discourse, Rabon and Chapman define it as “additional examination technique for the individual having the responsibility for making inquiry and bringing that inquiry to resolution. It places a focus on the linguistic aspect of interpersonal communication” (Rabon, Chapman 2024: 11). Hence, the interview Kiš conducted with Jennie and Eva (in collaboration with the director Aleksandar Mandić) might be interpreted in the light of investigative discourse: Kiš is “a narrator that took these two women (Jennie and Eve) by the hands and led them on a journey through memory” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 7). Concerning ideology which played a major role in the reckonings with the Cominform supporters, Marx defines ideology as “any form of thinking that conceals the real relations in a society” (Golić 2016: 13). Golić further states that “ideology often misuses any form of knowledge to corroborate its abstract stances” (Golić 2016: 15). Stojanović, according to Gvozdenović, states that “ideology is in its nature a perverted image of reality and, as such, it can act independently in directing the political behaviour that ought not be in line with the material processes in a society” (Gvozdenović 2016: 18). Consequently, the very communist/socialist ideology might, depending on the way of its implementation, be perverted and turned into its opposition in the reckonings with the real or the alleged political opponents<sup>2</sup>. The documentary *Bare life* was filmed in 1989. Kiš filmed it in collaboration with Aleksandar Mandić only a couple of months before his (Kiš’s) death: yet, he did not live enough to see the film broadcasted. Inspired by the movie *Shoah* (1985) by Claude Lanzmann, Kiš during his sojourn in Israel interviews two former prisoners of Sveti Grgur<sup>3</sup> (Jukić 2011: 211). According to Mandić, “*Bare life* was broadcasted 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March in 1990 from television studio in Sarajevo. As if in some sort of symbolism unusable for art, *Bare life* was the last thing that people of Yugoslavia watched together live. Except in Croatia, where they first had to ‘check’ the filmed material before they broadcasted it a couple of days later”<sup>4</sup> (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 8).

The paper will further give an insight into the historical context that gave rise to the “monstrous machinery” of Goli otok. Namely, the year of 1948 marks the final split between the politics of president Tito and Stalin, and consequently some radical changes that would ensue in Yugoslavia and that would bring about a form of collective paranoia. It all starts with the year of 1947, with the establishment of The Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties (or Cominform)

---

<sup>2</sup> The given excerpt on ideology has been taken from the author’s paper “The use of euphemisms in the discourse of Goli otok” (in review process). An anthology from the conference *Contemporary philological studies of the young researches*, held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Niš: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.

<sup>3</sup> Sveti Grgur was a female substation of concentration camp complex with the centre at Goli otok. Goli otok was used as an “umbrella term” for the whole concentration camp complex (i.e. it included other camps for Cominform supporters as well).

<sup>4</sup> The excerpt has been taken from the preface Mandić dedicated to Kiš. See introductory part of the book *Bare life* under the title “The last work of Kiš”.

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 European 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 a gradual conflict escalation. Namely, the political conduct 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 of 1948, as well as the refusal of its resolution, since Yugoslavian representatives knew that their proposals would not be accepted in the first place (Palinić 2022). According to Jukić (2011):

The Cominform resolution represents a massive intervention in the memory, in the memory of the whole community, in the memory around which the community gets together, i.e. in the memory that is formative for the community. On the other hand, as the memory which is formative for the community, that memory is in advance posed as political question, so the Cominform resolution opens the question of the interrelatedness of the politics and memory (Jukić 2011: 209–210).

Jukić (2011) further states that “Goli otok is a place where memory is given as criminal and punishable, it served as a basis for surveillance and discipline, but at the same time as the place where such an intervention in the memory is nothing other than pathology since it brings about, as it will be seen, the massive trauma that is not easy to come to terms with” (Jukić 2011: 210). According to Martin Previšić, “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 insecure” (Previšić 2019: 512–513). The regime of Yugoslavia, after Tito–Stalin split, endeavored to “erase” the common socialist past from the minds of the Cominform supporters, the real as well as the alleged ones, thus resulting in the massive trauma of the former inmates of Goli otok, to the extent that many of them committed suicide upon their return and the majority never fully recovered.

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:

The enemy does not choose means in the efforts to overthrow our socialist system and legitimate government. The espionage against our country, in various forms, is being reinforced. Our citizens are being recruited, both country and abroad, by Foreign Intelligence Service, claiming “that a communist owes his loyalty to the Soviet government in the first place, while his own government comes in the second”. In the espionage, the White Guard is included as well. The main aim of all these actions is to create a secret agency whose aim is to serve to the foreign interests against our government and country. At the same time, there are groups of Yugoslav deserters-terrorists, organized and infiltrated in our country, whose aim is to provoke the armed violence. At these difficult times for our country, the fight is being led against the supporters of Cominform within our own borders. Having accepted the Cominform resolution, they have objectively become the traitors of their Party<sup>5</sup> and nation, the weapon in the hands of foreign interests and policies. In this fight, we have achieved the strongest unity of nation and Party in the protection of freedom, autonomy and an independent socialist development of our country. There was no room for hesitation or compromise concerning these determinations. Our party and nation have striven, by all available means including administrative and judicial penalties, to oppose the exceptionally aggressive threats, pressures, as well as the organized hostile action. The Cominform supporters were administratively punished and they served their sentence on the isolated Adriatic islands turned into concentration camps (Isaković 1982: 343–350).

Such an atmosphere brought about the mass arrests of the suspected political misfits and their sending to Goli otok and Sveti Grgur 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 Yugoslav people.

In the paper, we will explore the topic of investigative discourse employed by Danilo Kiš in the process of collection and documentation of testimonies of Eva Nahir Panić and Jennie Lebel, two women who survived the horrors of Goli otok. In the context of the aforementioned torture that the political dissidents were forced to endure at Goli otok or Sveti Grgur, the paper will make use of the novel by Antonije Isaković *Tren 2: Kazivanja Čeperku* that gives an insight into how the political prisoners were treated and which methods were employed in their interrogation. Lastly, the paper will deal with the topics of trauma and memory of the surviving political prisoners as well as with the various methods the prison administration employed in order to not only annul the individual identity and memory of the prisoners, but to erase them from the memories of their loved ones as well.

The corpus for the research will consist of the testimonies of Eva Nahir Panić and Jennie Lebel, used in the documentary (and the book of the same name) *Bare life* whose authors are Danilo Kiš and Aleksandar Mandić, and the novel by Antonije Isaković *Tren 2: Kazivanja Čeperku*. The theoretical framework will include the following works: *O kulturalnom pamćenju u djelu Danila Kiša* by Davor Beganović, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* by Michel Foucault and

---

<sup>5</sup> League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

*The characters from the documentary film “Bare life” by Katarina Lazić. The aim of the analysis is to show that evil and repression are the inseparable, inherent parts of every totalitarian regime, regardless of the time or geographical area of its existence.*

## BARE LIFE ON THE BARE ISLAND

According to Tačinjska, “the topic of the Yugoslav concentration camps had for many years been absent from the social discussion not only in Yugoslavia, but outside its borders as well. A turning point occurred during the eighties of the twentieth century when the recollections of the former inmates were officially published, providing an insight into their experiences in the camp” (Tačinjska 2014: 1). The testimonies of the female experiences of Goli otok remained rare even after that, with the exception of the recollections of Jennie Lebel (*A white violet. A joke that lasted two and a half years*<sup>6</sup>, 1990) and Milka Žicina who had written her recollections during the seventies of the twentieth century but out of fear of repression she was concealing the manuscript<sup>7</sup>. The manuscript was published for the first time in the magazine *Diary* in 1993, and *Letopis Matice srpske* (the excerpts) in 1998 (Tačinjska 2014: 1). In the light of the aforementioned, the documentary film (and a book of the same title by Danilo Kiš and Aleksandar Mandić) represents an innovation as compared to its antecedents since it provides a female perspective on Goli otok. According to Jukić (2011: 211), “Kiš initially refused to write about Goli otok since, according to the testimony of György Konrád, he believed that it became fashionable to do so during the eighties, Kiš considered the books about the concentration camps under the threat of inflation; however, in Konrád’s words, those women (Eva and Jennie) convinced him (Kiš) with their stories” (Jukić 2011: 211). Jambrešić-Kirin, according to Tačinjska, puts an emphasis on the fact that “women’s testimonies were doubly excluded, since the discussion about the topic of Goli otok was, for the most part, men’s area which did not include the female perspective” (Tačinjska 2014: 3). Consequently, the information about the women’s experiences of Goli otok is scant: all that is known is that such a camp did exist and that there were women sentenced there. Further, we will provide some biographical data from the lives of Eva Nahir Panić and Jennie Lebel and the different reasons that brought them to Goli otok.

Eva Nahir Panić was born in a rich, Jewish family in Čakovci, eastern Croatia. She met Radosav Panić, a Yugoslav Army officer, to whom she later married. When World War II broke out, both of them joined a resistance movement

---

<sup>6</sup> Serb. *Ljubičica bela. Vic dug dve i po godine*, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> See Катажина Тачињска, *The discourse about Goli otok – female perspective*, retrieved in June 2024 from <http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/sr/casopisi/2014/zenska-knjizevnost-i-kultura/diskurs-ologoru-goli-otok-zenska-perspektiva#gsc.tab=0>.

in Belgrade. After that, they settled down for good in Belgrade where Radosav Panić started working as a high-ranking officer of the people's militia. A turning point in their lives will be the year of 1951, when Panić was falsely accused of espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union: he was arrested and sent to prison where he committed suicide during the investigation procedure. Eva was faced with an ultimatum by the authorities: she would either renounce her husband or she would be sent to Goli otok and separated from her daughter. She opted for the latter and considered that her greatest victory: namely, the fact that "even in the hell of Goli otok she succeeded in remaining morally pure"<sup>8</sup> (Lazić 2022: 421–427). Eva Nahir Panić was the inmate of Sveti Grgur camp "from April 1952 to November 1954", according to her words (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 17).

Jennie Lebel was born in a rich, Jewish family. She escaped deportation to Sajmište concentration camp by fleeing to Kruševac. Once there, she joined SKOJ<sup>9</sup>, upon which she got arrested by Bulgarian militia and, along with the other members of the movement, deported to Germany. After the liberation, she returned to Yugoslavia, from Poland and Ukraine, where she enrolled at the Faculty of Law, and volunteered as a journalist at *Politika*. Unfortunately, she soon got arrested in 1949 by the authorities. The reason for her arrest was that she had been told a joke about president Tito, but she did not inform on that person (who was, at the same time, a provocateur). She was sent to a forced labour in Ramski Rit camp, then to Sveti Grgur and, ultimately, to Goli otok (Lazić 2022: 421–427).

Concerning the treatment of the Jews in the camp (Goli otok and Sveti Grgur respectively), Eva and Jennie provided little information. In relation to Eva's and Jennie's testimonies (during the interview with Danilo Kiš) about the treatment of the Jews in the camp, Jukić (2013) states the following:

There is a telling incident in this sense in *Bare Life*, Kiš's narrative testament. Kiš interviewed two women who had been incarcerated as political prisoners in a socialist camp in Yugoslavia; both were also Jewish, and the interviews were filmed in Israel, long after they had emigrated from Yugoslavia. Yet, even though Kiš tried to press them into acknowledging that, while in the camp, they were also harassed for being Jewish, his question was dismissed as being without any grounds: that was the one confession he desired but could not obtain (Jukić 2013: 156).

In her testimony Jennie Lebel stated that on the eve of the World War II in Yugoslavia, "there came about the introduction of the Jewish laws, one of them being *Numerus clausus*<sup>10</sup>, preventing her brother from being admitted into the uni-

---

<sup>8</sup> These words of Eva Nahir Panić are taken from the documentary film *Bare life* by Danilo Kiš and Aleksandar Mandić.

<sup>9</sup> League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (SSOJ) was the youth movement, member organization of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (SSRNJ).

<sup>10</sup> *Numerus clausus* represents "a quantity fixed as the maximal number or percentage (as of applicants of a particular race or class) admissible to an academic institution". Retrieved in June

versity” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 14). Concerning her experience of antisemitism in post-war<sup>11</sup> Yugoslavia, Jennie told that while in remand prison, “she was given an idea that she should go back to her Palestina<sup>12</sup>”, yet she was convinced “it was just a provocation of the investigators” and not “a genuine instance of racial hate” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 118–120). On the other hand, Eva admitted that a Yugoslav army officer had been forbidden (on the pain of a grave penalty) to marry Jewish woman, “especially a Jewish woman branded as being ‘leftist’” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 21), which was her case. However, both Eva and Jennie<sup>13</sup> agreed on the fact that “their emigration to Israel had nothing to do with the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Yugoslavia” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 120), i.e. that anti-Semitism was not present in it.

When we talk about the physical and mental torture the inmates of Goli otok had to endure on daily basis, something that is common to Eva’s and Jennie’s testimonies is the so-called “špalir” that the newcomers had to go through. Špalir represented “a corridor consisting of two rows of prisoners (a couple of hundred, or even thousand), through which a prisoner had to run while being beaten, spat at, cursed, etc.”.<sup>14</sup> The consequences of the passing through špalir were that many of the inmates lost their eyes, their spine got broken, the parts of their bodies or, at best, they would just get away with bruises or scars. At the same time, the authorities insisted upon the division between “brigada” (consisting of the prisoners who redeemed their political sins) and “banda” (those who still held their old political beliefs). Michel Foucault (1975: 99) in his work *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* provides the following definition of a discourse used as a way of exerting authority over someone: “the authorities often make use of binary oppositions such as insane/normal, dangerous/harmless, normal/abnormal in order to exert their authority/power over those who are subjected” (Foucault 1975: 99). Thus, the authorities draw a distinct demarcation line between those who were still “out of favour” and those who “advanced”. “Banda” was the subject to all kinds of mistreatment and that was bound to happen constantly when the prisoners were “in boycott”, namely boycotted by their fellow prisoners. Eva Nahir Panić provides her experience of “being in boycott”:

---

2024 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/numerus%20clausus>

<sup>11</sup> World War II.

<sup>12</sup> According to Jennie Lebel’s words, “during 1948 there were a lot of Jews [in Yugoslavia] who left for Israel, today’s Palestine” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 51).

<sup>13</sup> While Eva does not clearly state the reason for her emigration to Israel, Jennie is rather explicit: namely, due to “her being unable to endure what was happening upon her liberation (the fact that she was stigmatized and couldn’t find a proper job), she reconsidered the option of moving to Israel” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 118).

<sup>14</sup> The given citation has been taken from the author’s another paper (in the printing process) entitled “The topic of PTSD in Antonije Isaković’s *Tren 2* and *The Original of the Forgery* by Dragan Kresoja – a comparative analysis”. The excerpt belongs to the exposition for the conference proceedings *Contexts*, Novi Sad: Faculty of Philosophy, 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023.

First, a prisoner “in boycott” works twelve hours per day, she is not allowed to talk to anybody and no one is allowed to talk to her<sup>15</sup>. Everyone has a right to spit at her, or to beat her. She is not allowed to sleep on the box, and she has to sleep underneath it. I, being boycotted, slept underneath qiblah, so the other inmates would often urinate in my mouth. You have no rights when being boycotted. You have one right only, and that is to ask your companion (you are assigned a permanent one), an activist (if you have luck, that companion is benevolent, if not the companion is maleficent and sadistic) the following question: “May I go to a toilet”. The companion has to accompany and take care of the boycotted one (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 87).

While being in boycott, Eva faced other numerous hardships, such as not being allowed to sleep at night or, once asleep, being suddenly awoken and interrogated, being constantly on her feet which resulted in her developing atrophy, being under constant psychological pressure from her interrogators, etc. (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 87–88).

What is more, the said branding of the Cominform supporters with the term “banda” (as opposed to the positive term “brigada”) was employed as a means of emphasizing, establishing their “otherness”, their deviation from the norm. Rene Girard states that “it is a characteristic of every sacrificial system (i.e. totalitarian system) that it presents an image of a world of an ‘absolute’ perfection since it automatically excludes everything it considers imperfect, or that might seem imperfect, unworthy of existence, everything prone to forceful exclusion” (Žirar 1989: 154).

When it comes to the aforementioned passing through the “špalir”, it is likewise present in the novel *Tren 2* by Antonije Isaković whose topic is Tito–Stalin split in 1948 as well. Though called differently (“sanitet” or “šiba”) and applied to men, by the extent of cruelty it did not differ from the one Eva and Jennie were subjected to:

No one knows who invented šiba on the island. Who introduced it and made a ritual out of it. It is being there from time immemorial, like stone, like us, our investigators who always stand aside while a work is being done. I repeat again: it’s not good to be the last one to run through “šiba”. Then, the investigators get close to and they may see everyone’s work within this human tunnel. I succeed: I enter third, followed by the Yellow Man. I cover my eyes with the palms of my hands, duck my head, shrinking to an anteater. The pervading smell of sour, human sweat, you feel overwhelmed by the heat; different are the human, bony fists, but you get missed by none of them. You can recognize the torment of pleasure, the men are moaning as though we were their females. I’m furious, I’m passing through a filthy centipede with hundred hands. I fell into abyss – in the bowel of a horrible animal; sinewy, smelly muscles, they want to cut you to pieces, to turn you into shit. I see a flash, followed by others. A starry night, my mouth full of blood, I am jerking; what

---

<sup>15</sup> Since Eva relates her experience in a concentration camp for women we have used the pronoun *her/she*.



if I get suffocated by my own teeth? My head is in blood, my forehead and my right cheek got swollen. I collapsed and I'm not afraid of anything anymore, I'm in a hot tub, scalded and flayed. I get raised by a kick of the foot. Where am I, am I halfway through šiba, who knows? I am shouldering my way through, I can, I still can. I'm protecting my eyes, and why would they look anyway? (Isaković 1982: 67).

In the excerpt provided it is obvious what was the physical (and psychological) torture the inmates of Goli otok had to endure on a daily basis. Further, there were “critique” and “self-critique”: on a week basis, the inmates of Goli otok were brought together to talk about the “sins” of other inmates (critique) and their own (self-critique), which was just another way of completely subjecting the prisoners. It is important to emphasize that in extorting confessions from the former Cominform supporters the Party officials often endeavored to represent this process as completely willing, namely as if the Cominformists gave their confessions of their own accord, often glorifying Tito and the Communist party in these “confessions”. According to Rene Girard, “it is necessary that those defeated willingly confess their sins. It is necessary that their confession does not seem extorted by violence. It is demanded that those damned bless their damnation. They do not have to forgive, it is the least needed from them, because that would mean that the persecution is not absolutely infallible” (Žirar 1989: 146). What is needed from them is, according to Girard, “an enthusiastic agreement with the decision that annuls them” (Žirar 1989: 146).

One of the ways in which the camp administration endeavored to dehumanize and annul the individual identities of the inmates, in addition to discourse, were the uniforms of the inmates, along with the hard, manual labor which was pointless by itself. Namely, when it comes to the aforementioned uniforms, according to Eva's testimony, the inmates were deliberately given the clothes or shoes that were of inappropriate size in proportion to their body type and build: “Everyone is given such rags: I, being of small stature, am given a long skirt. That Ružica Božičković who is 1.80 metres tall is given such a short skirt that half of her buttocks were visible. I am given tire sandals of the size 42, so I tie them with some rags, since we are not given anything to enwrap our feet. So, one looks disfigured. No button in sight, everything opens and one is as good as naked” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 78).

When it comes to the physical work at Goli otok, Eva called it “a Sisyphean task”: namely, the whole work consisted of “carrying a stone uphill, unloading it, loading the new one and carrying it downhill” (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 83). However, bearing in mind that Goli otok is just a stone quarry fit for the snakes only, the aforementioned fact does not surprise: what is more, the whole island is an infernal mechanism designed for the purposes of making the inmates' lives as miserable as possible.

In the discourse employed by Danilo Kiš in the process of “interviewing” Jennie and Eva, it is important to note the following fact: namely, it was the first time that the oral testimony suppressed the documentary evidence. What is likewise prominent is Kiš's insistence upon the precision of speech:

What's the reason of Kiš's insistence upon the precision of speech? First of all, he wants to consider the terminological problems that might arise between the camp inmates (versed in camp jargon) and the spectators unfamiliar with it and its different shades of meaning. The speech of the inmates is determined by the historical moment of its occurrence, where the component that may be called bureaucratic-ideological was an absolute dominant. The usage of the words in a narrowed ideological-bureaucratic world is reduced to the individuals or groups being labeled by them, and so behind the mask of an apparent clarification, there is a process of complete dehumanization of those condemned to wearing these labels being revealed. As an example of that process of dehumanization, we may use the distinction between "collective" and "banda". The collective consisted of the inmates who were ideologically "cured", whereas "banda" consisted of those inmates who still held their old political beliefs. One of the means to help "banda" renounce its political beliefs was "boycott", the procedure that implied a total isolation of the inmates that were boycotted. That total isolation went as far as prohibiting the prisoners to go to the toilet by themselves: they were assigned a companion. The further isolation is present within the category of the collective. Its especially thriving members were called "brigada", and from their ranks there were being recruited the supervisors of other inmates. These supervisors excelled when it comes to cruelty, in an act of redeeming their old political sins and acquiring a privileged place within the camp hierarchy (Beganović 2005: 181).

By this and similar innovations, Kiš draws a demarcation line between his work and that of French director Claude Lanzmann, whose movie *Shoah*<sup>16</sup> (released in 1985) served as an inspiration for Kiš, though not in its entirety.

## TRAUMA AND MEMORY

Concerning the trauma of the inmates, the aim of the totalitarian regimes is to annul it since they<sup>17</sup> are completely convinced in the probity of their "mission", to the extent that the crimes committed against the individuals such as Eva and Jennie the perpetrators consider as a way of helping those individuals get ideologically "cured": consequently, we do not talk about "traumatizing", but an "(ideological) curing":

The secrecy of all the totalitarian regimes, their craving to conceal the very existence of the camps, represents the components that one may find in Nazism and Stalinism. Their main goal is, first of all, to escape the very discourse about the camp: through their being quiet about the existence of the camps, the authorities wanted to convince the outside world of the illusory of the existence of such institutions, to prevent their cause from being stained (Beganović 2005: 168).

---

<sup>16</sup> Claude Lanzmann's documentary that recounts the story of the Holocaust using the interviews with both victims and perpetrators.

<sup>17</sup> Totalitarian regimes.

Consequently, the camps are turned into some form of penitentiaries where violence and murder are justifiable in protecting the unity of the country.

When it comes to oblivion on the island, the inmates were doubly marked by it: through self-oblivion (through the process of dehumanization and loss of one's identity) and, secondly, through oblivion of others (often dear ones). Concerning the process of dehumanization, the totalitarian regimes used this process purposefully in order to destroy one's identity and human dignity and to reduce a man to a "beast of burden" which cannot remember a time it had ever lived better. The individuality of an inmate is neutralized and annihilated, an act which, at the same time, frees the perpetrator of any responsibility for the act itself:

The torturers and their ideological commanders would often apply the strategy of oblivion on the inmates. Unlike an ordinary murder whose aim is to destroy one's life and not its former traces of existence which remain as a source of sadness to those who were closely related to the victim, the aim of a murder in the camp is the complete annihilation, an anonymization of death which, in the end, results in destruction of one's identity, in oblivion (Beganović 2005: 168).

Likewise, one of the ways in which the inmates were forced into oblivion is "keeping quiet" about one's crime (though many of them didn't have any crime to begin with) and the repetition of some significant words by which the inmates would know the reason of their being in the camp. The whole process of insisting of an inmate "discovering" his crime by himself had the following goal: the loss of individual's identity, oblivion and an indisputable conformity.

When it comes to the relation camp – outside world, besides the fact that the camp was isolated, the outside world being exempted from the proceedings within its walls, the authorities used more subtle forms of the inmates' isolation, and these were related to the methods of transportation of the future camp inmates:

In the remand Eva Nahir Panić was brought by car in which she was forced to lie face-down on the floor, in order to avoid being seen. The same happens with Jennie Lebel. According to Label, from there the prisoners are being transported, in a column of buses, under the cover of night, within the vehicles with dark screens. The trains and ships by which the inmates are being transported to the camps always drive when the outside world is fast asleep, the fact that consequently excludes any possibility of the cognition of what is being performed before its eyes – so close, yet so far. These forms of transportation are just a metonymy of the social system in its entirety. Darkness, silence and secrecy in which the inmates are wrapped are just the symptoms given as the determinants of the totalitarian societies. But above all, an uncertainty as a constant which determines the structure of the Gulag in its entirety. What is most necessary is to force its inmates to not know what to expect tomorrow, to abolish their future and, simultaneously, to convince those who might sympathize with the victims that for these people time as a projected temporal dimension has become illusory (Beganović 2005: 186).

Jennie Lebel in her testimony emphasizes the fact that the interrogators waged a specific “psychological war” on the future inmates before their transportation to the camp:

We [the prisoners] are taken out and suddenly we see a splendid, luxurious bus. I think it was “Škoda’s”, like this yellow “škoda”, it was such a splendid and luxurious bus... With the huge windows almost up to the ceiling. We are thrown into it, we enter inside and a civilian sits next to each of us, or next to every other. The seats in the bus are huge, you can see neither what is in front of you, nor what is behind you. [...] Before that [the transportation] the investigators spread a rumour that corpses were floating down the Danube. That was some sort of psychological war, or something. Almost everyone talked about the corpses floating down the Danube. And now we set out from Glavnjača, which was the name for the special police of UDBA for Serbia during the war. [...] Using the main streets, we pass the Assembly and we continue. And now we that have heard that the corpses are floating down the Danube, head towards the Danube, towards Smederevo. That was by night, we drive incessantly. I ask the civilian next to me: “Could you please tell us where are you taking us?” “Shut up!” I stopped asking further. When we arrived somewhere, that was during the August, in the summer the nights are short, whereas the days are long, and we haven’t seen a ray of sunshine for four months. There were no prison strolls in the remand. I don’t know, I hadn’t seen my father at all, or my brother, I hadn’t see anyone, we weren’t allowed the visits. We had nothing, we were completely disenfranchised. [...] Suddenly, you see that line of the Danube and everyone suddenly remembers the corpses floating down the Danube. That is the moment when everyone starts lamenting (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 60–63).

Indicative of the need for secrecy of the totalitarian regimes is likewise the description Jennie Lebel provides of the proceedings the inmates were subjected to upon their liberation. The following excerpt is given in the form of dialogue between Kiš and Jennie:

Jennie Lebel: We [the prisoners] cannot wait to see the other world besides that of Goli otok. The moment we came, we embarked the trucks, we arrived in the first city and suddenly – there is no electricity!

Kiš: I don’t understand.

Jennie Lebel: We didn’t know what had happened. We leave that city, and then there’s electricity again.

Kiš: Yes, yes. You take another look – and there’s a lighted city.

Jennie Lebel: We enter another populated place – the electricity has gone! We leave the place – the same situation happens again!

Kiš: Of course, and suddenly you begin to realize...

Jennie Lebel: That they [the other people] are not allowed to see us!

Kiš: That they [those in power] put out the electricity in the city so that people could not see you?

Jennie Lebel: Precisely (Kiš, Mandić 2020: 109).

After the deprivation of liberty, the inmates are being deprived of a short-term contact with the outside world: the “socialist darkness” devours them as if they had never existed.

## CONCLUSION

*Bare life*, a documentary and a book of the same title, originated in collaboration between Danilo Kiš and Aleksandar Mandić. Kiš employed investigative discourse (in the form of an interview) to bring to light the testimonies of Eva Nahir Panić and Jennie Lebel. Vida Ognjenović in her afterword<sup>18</sup> to the book *Bare life* states that “Kiš considered that data ought not suffer the force of political suitability because, after the application of the said force, the data are no longer data but lie, deception and propaganda” (Kiš, Mandić 2020). In his interview with Eva and Jennie, Kiš encourages his interlocutors with the questions, thus making their testimonies as precise as possible, not allowing any detail from their stories to slip away. The said fact is important from the perspective of the contemporary understanding because the Yugoslav regime often endeavored to hush up, negate or mitigate the crimes (and consequently the trauma) of the former inmates of Goli otok. According to Ognjenović, the reason why Eva and Jennie insisted on Kiš being their interlocutor is that “they [Jennie and Eva] were well acquainted with his work and shared his opinion on every political or other obfuscation of the facts in history or literature being a form of intellectual violence” (Kiš, Mandić, 2020). The topic of totalitarian regimes is always contemporary, not restricted to a specific period or area, as well as the efforts of such regimes to obfuscate their crimes against the victims such as Eva and Jennie. Consequently Kiš, in collaboration with Mandić, gave us a unique insight (no other testimonies with the former inmates were in the form of an interview, at least not in their published form) into the experiences of these two women, with whom “life played”<sup>19</sup>. Further, by being a patient sympathetic and careful listener, Kiš performs the role of a therapist, helping Eva and Jennie in coming to terms with their traumas. Through Kiš’s interview memory is doubly saved from the oblivion: namely, from the oblivion of Kiš’s contemporary audience (which was at the time on the verge of the civil war and which ran a risk of creating another Goli otok), as well as from the oblivion of future generations, in the hope that people may indeed learn from the past and not repeat the mistakes of their ancestors.

---

<sup>18</sup> The afterword is given on the cover of *Bare life* book. That is the reason of the pagination being absent in the reference.

<sup>19</sup> *Life plays with me* (2019), a novel by Israeli writer David Grossman based on the experiences of Eva Nahir Panić.

## REFERENCES

- Beganović (2005): D. Beganović, *O kulturalnom pamćenju u djelu Danila Kiša*, odlomci preuzeti iz disertacije autora.
- Fuko (1975): M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, Pantheon Books.
- Golić (2016): T. Golić, Marksovo razumevanje ideologije, *Arhe*, 13(26), Novi Sad: Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, Filozofski fakultet, 275–298. DOI:10.19090/arhe.2016.26.275-298
- Gvozdrenović (2016): T. Gvozdrenović, *Moć u jeziku*, diplomski rad, Osijek: Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmajera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet.
- Isaković (1982): A. Isaković, *Tren 2: Kazivanja Čeperku*, Beograd: Prosveta.
- Jukić (2013): T. Jukić, Between Auschwitz and Siberia: James Joyce, Danilo Kiš and Zoning of Totalitarianism, In: A. O'Malley, E. Patten (Eds.), *Ireland, West to East: Irish Cultural Interactions with Central and Eastern Europe*, Volume 52, Oxford, Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 135–158. Retrieved in June 2024 from [https://www.academia.edu/5456252/Between\\_Auschwitz\\_and\\_Siberia\\_James\\_Joyce\\_Danilo\\_Ki%C5%A1\\_and\\_a\\_Zoning\\_of\\_Totalitarianism](https://www.academia.edu/5456252/Between_Auschwitz_and_Siberia_James_Joyce_Danilo_Ki%C5%A1_and_a_Zoning_of_Totalitarianism)
- Jukić, T. (2011): Politika i memorija: Hladni rat i vrijednost jugoslovenske revolucije, u: *Desničini susreti 2009. Zbornik radova*, Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet, Centar za komparativnohistorijske i interkulturalne studije, 209–220. Retrieved in June 2024 from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347491850\\_Politika\\_i\\_memorija\\_hladni\\_rat\\_i\\_vrijednost\\_jugoslovenske\\_revolucije\\_Politics\\_and\\_Memory\\_in\\_the\\_Cold\\_War\\_The\\_Yugoslav\\_Revolution](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347491850_Politika_i_memorija_hladni_rat_i_vrijednost_jugoslovenske_revolucije_Politics_and_Memory_in_the_Cold_War_The_Yugoslav_Revolution)
- Kiš, Mandić (2020): D. Kiš, A. Mandić, *Goli život*, Beograd: YES-PRO.
- Lazić (2022): K. Lazić, Likovi iz *Golog života*, *Nasleđe, časopis za književnost, jezik, umetnost i kulturu*, XIX/51, 421–427. DOI: 10.46793/NasKg2251.421L
- Palinić (2022): K. Palinić, *Josip Broz Tito: The man who was too tough for Stalin*. Retrieved in June 2024 from <https://www.thecollector.com/josip-broz-tito-socialism-stalin/>
- Previšić (2023): M. Previšić, *Goli otok, istorija: Titov logor kroz arhive UDBE i iskaze svedoka*, Beograd: Vukotić media.
- Rabon, Čepmen (2024): D. Rabon, T. Chapman, *Investigative Discourse Analysis: From the Assessment to the Interview*, third edition, Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.
- Tačinjska (2014): K. Tačinjska, Diskurs o logoru Goli otok – ženska perspektiva, u: *Knjiženstvo, časopis za studije književnosti, roda i kulture*. Retrieved in June 2024 from <http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/sr/casopisi/2014/zenska-knjizevnost-i-kultura/diskurs-o-logoru-goli-otok-zenska-perspektiva#gsc.tab=0>
- Žirar (1989): R. Žirar, *Stari put grešnika*, Novi Sad: Bratstvo–Jedinstvo.

Катарина С. Лазић

Универзитет у Крагујевцу  
Филолошко-уметнички факултет  
Департман за англистику

## ХОЛОКАУСТ, ИСТРАЖНИ ДИСКУРС И ГОЛИ ЖИВОТ – ТРАУМА, СЕЋАЊЕ

*Резиме:* Рад се преваходно бавио положајем и статусом Јевреја у послератној Југославији, осврћући се посебно на 1948. годину која у историји означава коначан разлаз између Тита и Стаљина, а што ће изазвати корените промене у самој Југославији и страдање енормног броја људи сматраних политичким неистомишљеницима. Исто тако, рад се дотакао и положаја Јевреја у току Другог светског рата који, иако не тако мучан као у другим деловима света у том периоду, ипак није био на завидном нивоу. Даље, рад се бавио и темом истражног дискурса коришћеног од стране Данила Киша у прикупљању и документовању сведочења Еве Нахир Панић и Жени Лебл, жена које су преживеле тортуре на Голом отоку, сведочења која ће Киш у сарадњи са редитељем Александром Мандићем употребити за документарну телевизијску серију *Голи животи*, емитовану 1990. године. У контексту поменуте тортуре коју су политички неистомишљеници преживљавали на острвима Голи оток и Свети Гргур, рад се исто тако позивао на роман Антонија Исаковића *Трен 2: Казивања Чејерку* који, иако фикција, пружа увид у то како се са политичким затвореницима поступало и које су методе примењиване у њиховој реедукацији. На крају, рад се бавио темом трауме и сећања преживелих затвореница, као и различитим методама којима су се управе наведених затвора користиле како би не само укинуле индивидуални идентитет и сећања хапшеника, већ како би те исте хапшенике истиснуле из сећања њихових најмилијих. Корпус истраживања представљао је роман Антонија Исаковића *Трен 2: Казивања Чејерку*, као и сведочења преживелих логорашица Еве Нахир Панић и Жени Лебл употребљених у телевизијској серији (као и истоименој књизи) чији су аутори Данило Киш и редитељ Александар Мандић. Теоријски оквир рада обухвата: рад Давора Бегановића *О културалном њамћењу у дјелу Данила Киша*, дело Мишела Фукоа *Дисциплинују и казни: њосијанак зајвора*, као и рад ауторке Катарине Лазић „Ликови из *Голог животи*”. Анализом се дошло до закључка да су зло и репресија неодвојиви, инхерентни елементи сваког тоталитарног режима, независно од географског подручја на коме он обитава, или пак времена у коме је заступљен.

*Кључне речи:* Голи оток, Киш, *Голи животи*, Исаковић, траума, сећање, дискурс.