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COPING WITH THE PAST STRATEGIES. MULTIPERSPECTIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

The book promotion of the Macedonian translation of *Time shelter* [mk. Zasolnište vo vremeto; bg. Vremeubezhishte] by Georgi Gospodinov in Skopje, in early December 2022, was certainly the event of the day in the capital city of North Macedonia. Gospodinov, unarguably the most prominent contemporary Bulgarian writer, and his newest novel which eventually became the first Bulgarian-language entry to win the International Booker Prize in 2023, were received with pomp by his Macedonian readers little short of the one reserved for music stars or sports idols. The *Time shelter*, another of his studies of the past minglings with the present – all of them timely translated in Macedonian – depicts clinics of the past where different eras from the recent history are being frozen: an idea which evolved from a Zurich-based Alzheimer center where it is always the middle-class 60s to European (Union) nations' level in no time. As a crescendo, the ongoing sociopolitical tensions resulted in national referendums about the decades their citizens would prefer to return and live in. In turn, the Bulgarian society crashed over two past decades, while Europe come to the brink of a second First World War. In this very scenario, how much of the past, asks Gospodinov, can a single person stand? (2021, 55).

Indeed, how much of the past can a single person stand? A question as vague as the many and different approaches to studying history and memory. However, it came in handy in the immediate contexts pertaining from the historical pretexts behind the Russian aggression against Ukraine to the Bulgarian claims over history and memory in the most recent episode of the Bulgarian-Macedonian dispute. We hence started by considering exclusive those history and memory narratives which block alternative visions to the fore, while we also highlighted their invasiveness understood both in instrumental terms, as in the digital world of targeted (dis)information, and as political categories, hinting at the weaponization of the past for achieving present political goals (a similar approach as in Wilson 2023; a paper developed during the same time period). This positioning, of course, is neither novel nor aims at being novel. Nonetheless, we observed that it contains the necessary potential for localizing the hot and cold memories debates, as well as the ones related to the past, present and the future memory conflicts (as in Saryusz-Wolska, Wawrzyniak and Wóycicka 2022; also see Kończal and Dirk Moses 2021).

This inquiry resulted in a set of texts-responses which are published in the present special issue of EthnoAnthropoZoom titled “Coping with the past strategies. Multiperspective and interdisciplinary approaches”. All the texts deal with different chronotopes (Spaskovska 2016) of the Yugoslav past, while highlighting several features of the narrative carriers and different dynamics among the receivers of those narratives. The article by Gala Naseva hence focuses on the work of the Bosnian director Aida Begić and emphasizes the cinematography and music in her films as a mean of highlighting the female solidarity in coping with the traumatic experience of the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. In a similar vein, the article by Lisa Maria Haibl focuses on David Albahari’s novel *Danes je sreda* to discuss the narrative strategies for coping with the post-memories of the political prison Goli Otok. The text of Eda Starova Tahir looks at the present invocations of the Yugoslav socialist healthcare in North Macedonia as means of coping with the contemporary healthcare, in turn; which eventually set the policy expectations of the citizens in the post-socialist period. Finally, the text by Nenad Makuljević looks at the shifts in the memorial architecture and politics related to the First World War in Yugoslavia and argues that its emergence in the 1980s eventually ended up in militarizing the Serbian society. The special issue also has a review of Makuljević’s newest book titled *Memorija i manipulacija* and authored by Eda Starova Tahir.

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