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Authors	Djordjevic, Ana
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One More for the Road: Director's Notes on Exile, Family and Film, by Rajko Grlić. Berghahn Books, 2021, 346 pp.

Ana Djordjevic

Rajko Grlić's book *One More for the Road: Director's Notes on Exile, Family and Film* is an autobiographical view of a life, told through film terminology. Grlić writes the stories of his life through the lexicon of film, whether the stories are personal or work related, true or imagined, anecdotes or facts. In the story "Rome", named after Federico Fellini's film *Roma* (1972), Grlić writes: "Going through my director's notebook which has given birth to this lexicon, I feel how my memories, like those frescoes, are fading as I tuck them in under these headings, lay them in one of the graves in this cemetery of my movies that have never been filmed" (258).

Rajko Grlić was born in Croatia in 1947, he graduated in feature film directing at FAMU (The Academy of Performing Arts) in Prague, Czech Republic, and, together with Srđan Karanović, Lordan Zafranović, Goran Marković, Emir Kusturica and Goran Paskaljević, was part of what was known as Prague Film School (Praška filmska škola) in Yugoslav cinema. He is a professor of film theory at Ohio University and artistic director of the Motovun Film Festival. Grlić's opus encompasses twelve feature films in which he is credited as director and writer such as *Kud puklo da puklo* (*Whichever Way the Ball Bounces*, 1974), *U raljama života* (*In the Jaws of Life*, 1984), *Čaruga* (*Charuga*, 1991), *Karaula* (*The Border Post* 2006), and *Ustav Republike Hrvatske* (*The Constitution*, 2016). Most of these were presented in film festivals and have won international awards. He also has written and produced six documentary films, and co-written dozens of films and television feature films and series.

The original edition of this book was published in 2018 in Croatia as *Neispričane priče* (*Untold tales*). The English title comes from the last story in the book, "Wrap Party", where Grlić quotes Frank Sinatra's song "One More for the Road". After Aida Vidan's introduction, the author's short introductory preface is followed by the "Lexicon of Untold Tales". In this lexicon from A to W, in alphabetical order, Grlić lists terms associated to cinema. Throughout the book, the author keeps the steady and familiar form of the lexicon, providing each term with a short description and an explanation of the meaning of the word and the use of the term in the world of cinema. However, every term is followed by a story that is loosely related to the term itself. In this way Grlić tells his life's story through film terminology showing how his profession as a writer and director shaped his life. He writes:

> I've spent my life hiding behind my film characters. Living their lives and recounting their lives, I've hidden my own. The untold tales were stowed in my director's notebook as if in a well-sealed bottle. […] Everything you find inside—afloat on chronologically unlinked bits and pieces arranged in an imaginary lexicon, more or less as they were

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> recorded—are the traces of a film life. Each piece is named after a term or phrase used in the world of film. (xxvi)

Apart from cinema related terms, Grlić also includes the titles of historically and culturally significant films such as *Faces* (John Cassavetes, 1968), *Roma,* and *The Seventh Seal* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957). The lexicon contains almost two hundred stories, which are very diverse in length and style of writing. Some stories are just a few lines long vignettes ("Cold Open", "Dialogue", "Producer", "Partisan Films III", "Rome"), while others are several pages long ("Filming Permit", "Russian Cinema"), some are short anecdotes in the form of dialogue, others are emotional and personal narratives.

While in the preface Grlić writes that all the stories in the book are plots of unproduced films, in the story "Mediterranean Cinema" he writes how he came up with this idea while chatting with Lordan Zafranović at a gathering after the funeral of Croatian writer Mirko Kovač:

> [Zafranović] talked about a movie he would like to make, although we both knew it was never going to happen. In turn, I told him about my idea for a movie which, like his, stands very little chance of being made. So it was that we came back to the point we had set off from into the world of filmmaking—our *Festival of Spoken Movies*. It was an idea we had entertained as students in Prague—a festival that would take place in a city which had no movie theatre, where each director would have two hours to tell the story of a movie he would never have been able to make. It took us less than fifty years to put the idea to work. (196)

Grlić here refers to Motovun Film Festival dedicated to independent film production, which he established in 1999 in a Croatian village of Motovun.

Grlić's films concern characters that are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances or historical events. He intricately presents relationships between characters and their interactions with an awareness of the socio-political context they are in and in which the story is set. In the story "Silver Screen", he writes:

> I grew up going to the movies and imbibed the moving pictures on the screen with equal eagerness. The difference is that these had almost nothing to do with my life, my street, and the people around me. Back then, Yugoslav cinema was either caught up in war without end or steeped in ponderous rural dramas [. . .] Hollywood was caught up either by Californian swimming pools, dusty prairies, or the distant past [. . .] Very little of what I saw on screen had anything to do with my life. For me, movies were something else, something larger or smaller than life, but certainly not the life around me. (274)

Due to the geopolitical circumstances in Croatia in the last fifty years Grlić's life was directed by his films as he says. In the story "Rules of the Game", he writes "Life or cinema? I don't know. I tried making movies, and yet, life happened to me. I'm not sure whether things would've gone better had I taken the opposite road" (259).

In socialist Yugoslavia his films were censored while he was feted abroad. Later in independent Croatia he was deemed undesirable due to his collaborations with his Serbian colleagues, which led him to move to the US where he works at the University of Ohio. This book is a testament to resilience and devotion to film craft that, on one hand made Grlić's life

difficult as his work was censored and scrutinised by politics and state officials, while, on the other hand, in a life-threatening situation during the 1990s, his film legacy helped him escape Croatia and political turmoil, and persevere. As he says at the end of the preface "all good stories, both in life and on film, come down to one of these two patterns: either a person sets out on a journey, or a stranger comes to town. I'd say I'm both—the one who left, and the stranger who has arrived" (xxvi). "Filming Permit" is one of the stories that resemble journal entries mapping Grlić's immigration journey from Zagreb, in spring 1988, to New York, in spring 1993, to Columbus, Ohio, in 1999. It shows how the political situation in the Baltic region changed rapidly, and how international immigration laws followed, which led him to some interesting situations at airports and a continuous battle with bureaucracy.

Other stories in this book that are concentrated around Grlić's life and the political and social events he witnessed that have all the markings of a good film narrative are stories such as "Cinema Exile II" and "Special Screenings", which are about his student days at FAMU in Prague in 1968 and the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia; stories about cinema in the 1990s in Croatia, on the brink of the war, and later in the aftermath of the war described in "Suspense", "Cold Open", "Damnatio Memorie", and the already mentioned "Filming Permit". He also writes about his family history in stories such as "Box Office" or "Documentary (Auto)", "Photograph", about his great-grandfather, and "Head & Final Shot", about his parents' internment at Goli Otok, a gulag-like prison-camp in Yugoslavia. "Lost Movies" examines the state of Croatian cinema, and in "Walt Disney" Grlić talks of Charlie, their family cat. Several stories in the book describe his creative process, such as "Fiction & Non Fiction", in which he writes about Mrs Ruža, whose love story inspired the film *Samo jednom se ljubi* (*You Love Only Once*, 1981), or "Script" in which Grlić describes his work process writing a film script that goes on for months at the time, describing the tedious and exhausting work and the rewrite after rewrite.

Stories about film projects that were never developed include a description of a script for a film about the first giraffe in Vienna Zoo and its travels in 1752 ("Animal Films"); another about two young film makers from Kula, Serbia, and Hrtkovci, Croatia, who helped their fellow citizens exchange properties, and swap village in order to escape the war atrocities during the civil war in Yugoslavia in 1990s ("Love letters"), another about the legendary origin of the Mexican song "La Paloma Blanca" that was supposedly written by a Czech and a Croatian in the 1850s ("La Paloma Blanca"); a short story about a couple that fail to video their lovemaking, recording instead a murder outside of their window by accident ("Selfie"); and a vignette about a son of the owner of a popular Belgrade hotel that gets nationalised after the Second World War, after which he ends up working in the hotel as an accountant and steals back the money ("Revenge Movies").

The aforementioned stories are examples of character types and storylines that correspond with Grlić's directorial style as presented in his successfully produced films. However, in his stories about international film stars and directors, people in the Yugoslavian film industry, and his friends, colleagues and contemporaries, the reader gets the feeling that these individuals are also just characters in Grlić's filmic universe. He writes casually about meetings and interactions with film legends such as Sam Peckinpah, Sergio Leone or Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier, as well as Yugoslav film stars Branko Lustig, Branko Bauer, Danilo Bata Stojković, or Yugoslav president and passionate cinema lover, Josip Broz Tito.

Rajko Grlić's book is a collection of stories that are autobiographical views on his life journey written in a form of a film lexicon intertwining life and cinema while "provoking in

the reader both a sense of great joy and one of deep sadness" as Aida Vidan writes in her introduction (x). Grlić skilfully manages to combine the educational form of a lexicon with autobiographical stories that are witty, allegorical, engaging, educational, and interesting to read, while being very personal, sentimental, and nostalgic at times. This book is a personal testament to Yugoslav cinema and its transition to national cinemas (for example, Croatian cinema), as well as a testament to a generation of creators and film makers that got stuck in the middle as a country was falling apart.

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Ana Djordjevic received her PhD in 2023 from University College Cork, Ireland, with a thesis on music in post-Yugoslav war films, focusing on trauma, nationalism, propaganda and Yugonostalgia. She has presented her work in conferences in Serbia, Bosnia, Ireland, and Germany, and has published articles in collective monographs and musicology journals.