



*Eastern European Screen Cultures*

# **THE ARCHAIC IN THE YUGOSLAV CINEMA OF THE 1960S**

**MODERNITY'S DISCONTENTS IN A  
POST-REVOLUTIONARY FILM INDUSTRY**

Adrian Pelc



# The Archaic in the Yugoslav Cinema of the 1960s

This book investigates the “Golden Age” of Yugoslav cinema and sheds light on it from a fresh perspective. By examining various tropes and discourses of the “archaic” that shaped not only the flourishing Yugoslav cinematic modernism of the 1960s but also a broader Yugoslav cultural politics, the book reveals a nuanced panorama of cultural negotiations.

The “archaic” – that which is at odds with modernity – is a peculiar crossroads where Marxism intersects with Balkanism, while both are circumscribed by a general distrust towards representation. The analysis thus opens new perspectives on a politics of aesthetics that shaped some of the most successful Yugoslav films of all time. Furthermore, its findings will be relevant to any context in which a political as well as artistic movement seeks to present itself as avant-garde but is confronted with a discourse assigning it time-lag.

Addressing an academic audience of scholars and postgraduate students interested in Balkan and Eastern European area studies, Slavic studies, cultural studies, film, and postcolonial studies, this book is also of interest to those researching the intersections of time, aesthetics, and politics.

**Adrian Pelc** is a postdoc assistant in the Department of Slavic Studies, University of Vienna, Austria. His interests include Yugoslav cinema, cultural studies, and critical theory.

## Eastern European Screen Cultures

The series Eastern European Screen Cultures publishes critical studies on the screen cultures that have marked the socialist and post-socialist spaces in Europe. It aims to unveil current phenomena and untold histories from this region to account for their specificity and integrate them into a wider conception of European and world cinema.

The series aspires to fill gaps in research, particularly by approaching Eastern European screen cultures in a transnational and comparative framework and exploring previously underrepresented theoretical issues. It considers moving images in all stages and aspects: production, text, exhibition, reception, and education.

Eastern European Screen Cultures will also publish translations of important texts that have not been able to travel outside of national and/or regional borders.

### Series Editors:

Greg de Cuir, University of Arts Belgrade  
Ewa Mazierska, University of Central Lancashire  
Francesco Pitassio, University of Udine

### Advisory Board:

Anikó Imre, University of Southern California  
Dina Iordanova, University of St. Andrews  
Pavle Levi, Stanford University  
Eva Nāripea, Estonian Academy of Arts  
Dominique Nasta, Université Libre de Bruxelles  
Elzbieta Ostrowska, University of Alberta  
Katie Trumpener, Yale University  
Bruce Williams, William Paterson University

### Titles in this series:

#### **The Archaic in the Yugoslav Cinema of the 1960s**

*Modernity's Discontents in a Post-Revolutionary Film Industry*

Adrian Pelc

For more information about this series, please visit: [www.routledge.com/series-title/book-series/EESC](http://www.routledge.com/series-title/book-series/EESC)

# **The Archaic in the Yugoslav Cinema of the 1960s**

Modernity's Discontents in a  
Post-Revolutionary Film Industry

**Adrian Pelc**



**Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2026  
by Routledge  
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2026 Adrian Pelc

The right of Adrian Pelc to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at [www.taylorfrancis.com](http://www.taylorfrancis.com), has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 International license.

Any third party material in this book is not included in the OA Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

Published with the support of the Austrian Science  
Fund (FWF): 10.55776/PUB1261

**FWF** Österreichischer  
Wissenschaftsfonds

For Product Safety Concerns and Information please contact our EU representative  
GPSR@taylorandfrancis.com. Taylor & Francis Verlag GmbH, Kaufingerstraße 24,  
80331 München, Germany.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-90-4856-889-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-18723-3 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-70520-8 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003705208

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Newgen Publishing UK

# Contents

<b>I</b>		
<b>Setting the Stage: The Three Figures of the Archaic</b>		<b>1</b>
Introduction: Entering the Golden Age		3
1 Coming to Terms: The Archaic		15
1.1 <i>The Archaic: Three Sides of the Same Coin</i>	15	
1.2 <i>Lyotard, Hegel, and the Totalization of Grand Narratives</i>	17	
1.3 <i>Marx, Freud, Nietzsche</i>	20	
1.4 <i>Into the Market-Town: Radomir Konstantinović's         Philosophy of Parochialism</i>	27	
2 The Yugoslav Celluloid Archaic: A Panorama		31
2.1 <i>The "Third Way" and Yugoslav Cinema</i>	31	
2.2 <i>Mountains and Mud</i>	34	
2.3 <i>Beasts, Revolutions, Tribes, and Rape</i>	39	
2.4 <i>Conclusions</i>	41	
<b>II</b>		
<b>Setting the Figures in Motion: The Game of the Archaic on the Yugoslav 1960s Screen</b>		<b>45</b>
3 Balkanism: The Time-Lag of <i>Realia</i>		47
3.1 <i>Balkanism as Motif</i>	47	
3.2 <i>Balkanism as Discourse</i>	49	
3.3 <i>The Outer Region: Maria Todorova's Hors-Texte</i>	52	
3.4 <i>Conclusion: The Three Moves in the Game of the Archaic</i>	55	

4	In the Future, in the Past, Under the False Appearance of a Present: Miroslav Krleža's Timings of Yugoslav Culture	58
4.1	<i>The Victory of 1952</i>	58
4.2	<i>Yugoslavia: Under the False Appearance of a Present</i>	60
4.3	<i>Materialism: Into the Cave</i>	64
4.4	<i>Epilogue: The Pleasures and Pains of Marxism</i>	67
5	Bloody Weddings and Funeral Bells: Representations of History in Trajče Popov's <i>Macedonian Bloody Wedding</i> and Antun Vrdoljak's <i>When You Hear the Bells</i>	70
5.1	<i>Screening History in Miroslav Krleža's Shadow</i>	70
5.2	<i>The Revolution Rediscovered: The Cultural Context of Macedonian Bloody Wedding</i>	70
5.3	<i>Shooting Černodrinski: From Nationalism to Popular Revolt</i>	73
5.4	<i>When You Hear the Bells: Village Wars</i>	77
5.5	<i>The Bad Education: Narcissism of Minor Differences Revisited</i>	79
5.6	<i>Conclusion: The Balkan Revolution and Its Discontents</i>	85
6	Parody and Naiveté: Ante Babaja's <i>The Birch Tree</i> and Dragoslav Lazić's <i>Poor Mary</i>	87
6.1	<i>Things Past and Present</i>	87
6.2	<i>Two Weddings and a Funeral</i>	87
6.3	<i>The National Bias</i>	90
6.4	<i>Three Funerals and a Wedding</i>	92
6.5	<i>Conclusion</i>	97
7	Two or Three Things I Know About Burduš: Mića Popović's <i>Burduš</i> and Aleksandar Petrović's <i>It Rains in My Village</i>	100
7.1	<i>Gypsies Like Us</i>	100
7.2	<i>Don't Stab the Bass Player</i>	102
7.3	<i>The Sky over Munich: Bread, Love and Freedom</i>	104
7.4	<i>Revisiting the Projection</i>	107
7.5	<i>Apocalypse Soon</i>	109
7.6	<i>Days of the Pigs</i>	111
7.7	<i>Abject Attraction</i>	113
7.8	<i>Conclusion</i>	119
	Closing Remarks on Backwardness and Vitality	123

<b>III</b>		
<b>Revenge on Representation: The “Move 3” in the Game of the Archaic on the Yugoslav 1960s Screen</b>		<b>127</b>
8 Images, Revolutions (and Their Crusts)		129
8.1 <i>Men and the Animal</i>	129	
8.2 <i>Raw Image, Arche-Image</i>	130	
8.3 <i>Naked Image, Intolerable Image</i>	134	
9 Beauty and the Well: Dušan Makavejev’s <i>Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator</i>		138
9.1 <i>Positioning the Interpretation: Makavejev as Master of Montage and Joy</i>	138	
9.2 <i>Love Affair: The Elements of Its Mechanism</i>	141	
9.3 <i>Priapus and the Peepshow</i>	143	
9.4 <i>Izabela and Ahmed: At the Right Place at the Wrong Time</i>	145	
9.5 <i>Into the Well</i>	150	
9.6 <i>Conclusions</i>	156	
10 Yet Another Effort Yugoslavs, If You Would Become Communists: Želimir Žilnik’s <i>Early Works</i>		158
10.1 <i>Introduction</i>	158	
10.2 <i>The Phantom Revolution</i>	161	
10.3 <i>Yet Another Gang-Rape: Revolution and the Real</i>	166	
10.4 <i>The Revolution’s Crust</i>	169	
10.5 <i>Post Scriptum: Political Theatre</i>	173	
Concluding Remarks on the Game of the Archaic		177
<i>Bibliography</i>		180
<i>Index</i>		190



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

**I**

# **Setting the Stage**

The Three Figures of the Archaic



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Introduction

## Entering the Golden Age

The 1960s bear the flattering title of being the “Golden Age” of Yugoslav cinema. This is due to several reasons: the 1960s were the period when the relatively young Yugoslav film industry, whose studio system was established only after the end of World War Two, reached an unprecedentedly high level of productivity, with a fully diversified genre system largely influenced by Hollywood models, with a widening audience for its popular pieces, and with the capacity to produce genuine blockbusters, foremost partisan spectacles. Furthermore, this was the decade when Yugoslav cinema achieved wide international recognition, with its productions winning prizes at major film festivals, such as those in Cannes and Berlin.

Yugoslav cinema’s international success was fostered by another phenomenon that decisively marked the 1960s – *auteur* film and cinematic modernism (Liehm and Liehm 1977). Already in 1961, two young directors – Boštjan Hladnik and Aleksandar Petrović – broke with the conventions of classical narration that had reigned in Yugoslav cinema thus far and introduced a style which was heavily influenced by a New Wave aesthetic (for a brief time, Hladnik was an assistant to Claude Chabrol). Toward the decade’s end, the modernist trend was gaining momentum in Yugoslavia, while some of its proponents, like Dušan Makavejev, rose to genuine stardom on the international arthouse film scene.

What is more, Yugoslav films started combining modernist filmmaking with ever more critical elements and strategies. This led to the rise and fall of the Yugoslav Black Wave, possibly the most famous artistic movement in the history of Yugoslav cinema. The Black Wave is a problematic denominator.<sup>1</sup> In its original context, it was predominantly used pejoratively, and it encompasses a loosely defined group of films that were not only aesthetically but also politically provocative. The movement was dismantled through a political crackdown in 1972, with the director Lazar Stojanović landing in jail for having directed his debut *Plastic Jesus* (*Plastični Isus*, 1971) – this was the only such sentence in the history of socialist Yugoslavia – and with several of the generation’s most renowned directors (Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Želimir Žilnik) leaving the country due to political pressures. However, before it was disbanded, the Black Wave managed to impress international audiences as well as critics with its mercilessly critical, subversive films.

#### 4 *The Archaic in the Yugoslav Cinema of the 1960s*

This is and is not a book about the Black Wave. Some of the films that will receive extensive critical attention are considered masterpieces of the movement. This is the case with Aleksandar Petrović's *It Rains in My Village* (*Biće skoro propast sveta*, 1968), Dušan Makavejev's *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, 1967), and especially with Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969). Nevertheless, although present in Black Wave films, what stands at the centre of this book's attention was not their exclusive property. During the 1960s, merciless *milieus* bypassed by modernity, remnants of tribal rituals, ambivalent man-beast figures, radical, irrational violence, and destructive sexuality were becoming part of an ever-growing number of Yugoslav films. This holds true for "subversive" films but also for films that were deemed quite conformist when they first appeared, such as Fedor Škubonja's *Downstream from the Sun* (*Nizvodno od sunca*, 1969). It is my proposition that an inquiry into Black Wave films as part of this broader context will not only change our understanding of the movement; it will also challenge some of the most persistent methodological flaws characteristic of cinema studies engaging with (South-)East European socialist contexts. I will further elaborate on these points in a short while.

To return to the book's central subject: I have subsumed the above-enumerated motifs under the term the "archaic". The main objective of this book is to study a representational game that developed around the "archaic" on the Yugoslav 1960s screen. Since the "archaic" is not exactly a widespread theoretical concept within film and cultural studies, this terminological choice might need some explanation. The archaic encompasses all those motifs that are at odds with modernity; from one film to another, it gets represented as modernity's Other. The archaic is the contrasting image against which – or with the help of which – modernity needs to establish itself.

This "being-other" to modernity faces us with a terminological problem articulated poignantly by Dipesh Chakrabarty. In the opening passages of his *Habitations of Modernity*, Chakrabarty claimed that modernity is a concept which is extremely hard to define. Being conscious that every concept's meaning is relational, Chakrabarty proceeds to claim: "If *modernity* is to be a definable, delimited concept, we must define some people or practices or concepts as *nonmodern*." (2002, xix, emphasis in the original) The modern–nonmodern dichotomy then gets articulated against two further phenomena: progress and imperialism. Chakrabarty writes: "Western powers in their imperial mode saw modernity as coeval with the idea of progress." (2002, xix) Following Chakrabarty's relational logic, the "nonmodern" or the "premodern" (2002, xix) would thus be those people, concepts or practices that are at the same time excluded from progress and modernity and that grant progress and modernity their identity.

And the purely negative denominators for the Other of modernity (and progress) already point to a power relation. While modernity disposes of a full identity, its others get defined in a negative way, with regard to what they are not (nonmodern) or to what they are not yet (premodern). For Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, the mere use of the term "pre-modern" therefore produces a dominating effect; it

“assimilates history everywhere to the temporality of Western ‘progress’.” (2003, 10) The question that arises is therefore one of finding a term that would build an opposition to modernity, but would not be a simple negative denominator.

Although it might not be the perfect choice, I ascribe this role to the “archaic”. The archaic is a term that is not foreign to several discourses that had an extremely strong influence not only on Yugoslav culture, but also on cultural studies in general. The “archaic” looms from the margins of Sigmund Freud’s musings about contemporary societies and regression (1949, 10). In a letter draft to Vera Zaslulich, Karl Marx famously proclaimed that “we must [...] not be too frightened by the word ‘archaic’.” (1983, 107) A distinctly modernist aesthetic discourse does not shy away from the word either: Oto Bihalji-Merin, a world-renowned Yugoslav theoretician of “naïve” art, identified a fundamental moment of modernism in Paul Gauguin’s return to the “lost paradise of an archaic community” (1973, 9). In Rey Chow’s view, this kind of statement is rather typical; although she does not use the word “archaic” herself, Chow proclaims: “In the liberal West, it is well known that what is now termed ‘high’ modernist art [...] is inseparable from a certain fascination with the primitive.” (1995, 19)

Chow’s remark raises important questions: what is the novelty of this book, what kind of intervention does it perform? If the “primitive’s” role is well known, a study of the “archaic” could amount to nothing more than a verbal stunt, an attempt to describe a thoroughly researched phenomenon (the “primitive”) with a new term (“the archaic”). Or should this study be regarded as a simple attempt to study this well-known phenomenon in a lesser known context – the Yugoslav one? It is my claim that neither is the case. In the Yugoslav context, the archaic cannot be reduced to a metropolitan dream of “primitive passions” (Chow 1995), nor does it boil down to a margin offering such dreams through self-exoticization. While both these elements are present in it, the Yugoslav celluloid archaic encompasses much more.

As I show in Chapter One, the archaic encompasses three distinct meanings. It stands for: a) backwardness (or, in its radicalized form, primitiveness); b) an original source of vitality and sovereignty; and finally c) that which precedes – and by the same token stands outside of – language and signification. I will refer to these meanings as the three figures of the archaic. The borders between these three figures are always porous, and each one can slide toward the other two at any moment. However, each figure also performs at least two distinct roles. When applied from the centres of (discursive) power, the label of backwardness tends to signify an essentialized cultural “doom”. Yet “backwardness” can also be reclaimed by the margin and point to the gaps and shortcomings in a narrative of progress. The vitalist origin can lead to exoticizations, but it can also serve to modify a progressivist Marxist discourse, making it appropriable for those who might otherwise be excluded from it. The outside of signification seeks to contest the very relation that ties discourse to power, but it is always at risk of sliding toward representations of senseless violence.

Almost in the sense of Wittgenstein’s language games, the representational strategies that develop around the archaic are a complex game with manifold moves,

whose number is, nevertheless, limited. One of the major aims of this study is to formalize this game and to scrutinize the strategies of (discursive) resistance that it encompasses. I believe that this will lead to a nuanced understanding of a mechanism that is fundamental both for discursive domination and for gestures of resistance to this domination. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu has argued, geopolitics is without exception also a “chronopolitics” (1998, 96); in other words, the Other of Western progress is represented not only as removed in space but also as removed in *time*. Maria Todorova, in her turn, described this oppressive symbolic structure as “allochronism”: a perspective which presupposes that “the non-western world lives in another time, always ‘behind’ the west.” (2005, 145) A major problem lies in the fact that this widespread discursive formation – once established through power relations – cannot simply be discarded. This is the reason why Edward Said claimed that the Orient is “not a free subject of thought” (1979, 3). The victims of chronopolitics and allochronism cannot reject their temporal otherness in a straightforward way; rather, it is through passing through the vicissitudes of the game of the archaic that they can reclaim symbolic capital or contest the discourse-power relation *tout court*.

As the reader has in all probability noticed, the book draws strongly on theoretical insights articulated in the context of post- and decolonial studies. This leads to another question: is Yugoslavia the appropriate context for such inquiries? Or, conversely, are such notions relevant for socialist Yugoslavia’s cultural production, specifically its cinema of the 1960s? This question merits a nuanced answer. With the possible exception of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the period between 1878 and 1918, which Bojan Aleksov refers to as the “Habsburg colonial experiment” (2007, 84), the Yugoslav space was never a colony in the strict sense. Nevertheless, it was systematically described as peripheral, as not fully belonging to Europe, as the continent’s deviant margin. In her groundbreaking study *Imagining the Balkans* (2009), Maria Todorova termed this widespread set of notions “Balkanism”. In relation to the Balkans, Balkanism would play a role analogous to that which Orientalism played with regard to the Orient. Although the two discourses do not semantically overlap, they create the same effect: through discursive domination, they produce a “cognitive straitjacket” (Todorova 2009, 193) around their respective objects. I will return to the complex relation between Orientalism and Balkanism in Chapter Two of this study.

Studies in Balkanism have flourished in the aftermath of Todorova’s book (Bjelić and Savić 2005; Fleming 2000; Matešić 2015; Mishkova 2018; Sawyer 2014; Matešić and Slapšak 2017; Zinaić 2019). Furthermore, the fact that the Yugoslav – and, more broadly, Balkan or South-East European – region was faced with modes of discursive domination that are, to some extent, analogous to those which appear in (post)colonial contexts has prompted an array of scholars to apply a postcolonial and decolonial perspective to the region (Baker 2018; Rexhepi 2022; Velickovic 2012) and its cinema (Mazierska, Kristensen, and Nāripea, 2019). However, Todorova argues that Balkanist discourses receded during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia, as the country was no longer perceived as a deviant appendix to Europe but rather as “the elite of the non-aligned world” (2009, 53).

This is largely true. But Yugoslavia's engagement in the Non-Aligned Movement can be interpreted from another perspective as well. Through the role that it played in the movement, Yugoslavia unambiguously aligned itself with the "Global South" and, respectively, with its struggles against imperialism and colonialism. This might have been a diplomatic necessity that arose after the famous Tito-Stalin split in 1948. But Paul Stubbs argues that there was more to it: "The nature of the Yugoslav Partisans' struggle against fascism created, at the very least, a kind of symbolic resonance and affective affinity with struggles in the Global South against colonialism." (2023, 5) Bojana Videkanić (2020) has convincingly demonstrated that this "symbolic resonance" influenced not only Yugoslav cultural politics but also the aesthetic strategies employed by individual Yugoslav artists. It is my claim, however, that the symbolic resonance emerged not only due to the nature of the Yugoslav partisan struggle but also because the Yugoslav space had for a long time been kept in an analogous symbolic position: that of being dominated by a Western discourse appointing it time-lag.

It therefore comes as no surprise that a confrontation with the archaic was a major stake in Yugoslavia's cultural self-fashioning. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, this confrontation was built into one of the fundamental texts that defined a new cultural politics for Yugoslavia, namely Miroslav Krleža's famous address held at the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in Ljubljana in 1952. Moreover, Krleža did not simply discard the archaic; rather, he claimed that the Yugoslav peoples' "backwardness" was in fact the main source of their vitality and that it made them into prime revolutionary subjects. Yugoslavia's cultural "third way" – which was to avoid both a socialist realist Soviet model and a bourgeois Western model – thus started through a complex re-evaluation of the archaic.

At the same time, however, Yugoslavia strived for rapid modernization. In accordance with a dominant Marxist outlook on social development, its communist party insisted on a fast-paced industrialization and urbanization of the country. And these ambitions did come to fruition: Marie-Janine Calic notes that "between 1945 and 1970 the number of persons employed in the agricultural sector fell from 75 per cent to around 38 per cent. More than five million people left their villages during this period" (2011, 68). Furthermore, Yugoslav "socialist modernity", which seemed to be in full sway by 1960, did not exhaust itself in rapid industrialization. As Igor Duda notes, the 1958 programme of the Yugoslav League of Communists put forth the objective to maximize "the satisfaction of personal and collective people's needs" (2016, 173). Consequently, during the 1960s, Yugoslavia was "rapidly turning into a consumer society" (Duda 2016, 173). This included not only the development of housing and tourism, the accessibility of household appliances and cars, but also a blossoming popular culture which – thanks to Yugoslavia's non-aligned position – quite often drew on Western, foremost American, genre models.

When the archaic invaded the Yugoslav 1960s screen, it was thus not only revisiting (and challenging) imposed tropes of backwardness, it was also calling into question a complex socialist modernity; it was returning to haunt this modernity at the very moment of its apparent triumph. Finally, as in many other places,

Yugoslavia witnessed political turmoil in the 1960s, which culminated in the student protests in Belgrade in June 1968. Crudely simplified, the students put into question whether Yugoslav socialism was developing in the right way. One of their main points of critique was the consolidation of a new privileged class in Yugoslavia, which was referred to as the “red bourgeoisie”. For this reason, they called for a return to the roots of Marxism, to Marx’s and Engels’ earliest writings, which were published in Yugoslavia in a cult book bearing the title *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*). Some of the Yugoslav filmmakers associated with the aforementioned Black Wave took active part in the student movement, most notably Želimir Žilnik, who not only shot a documentary on the protests but also gave his first feature film exactly the title *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969). In 1969, this film won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale.

But the most radical critically inclined Yugoslav filmmakers of the late 1960s did not follow in the students’ footsteps and did not embrace a “humanist” Marxism that was advocated in the ranks of the prominent Yugoslav “Praxis” school of philosophy. This holds true even for Žilnik’s *Early Works*. Rather, in response to a double bind they were caught in, they devised a radical aesthetic which had very little to do with humanism. This double bind can be described as follows: a predominant way to criticise Yugoslav socialist progress was to confront it with its shortcomings. This is why many critical films of the period feature representations of poverty, marginality, mud, decay, village settings barely touched by modernity, etc. In short, they represented underdevelopment, if not backwardness. But this strategy risked softening their critical edge in quite an unexpected way. By denying the Yugoslav society an accomplished socialist modernity (or, in some cases, any kind of modernity), many of the period’s films fell back into Balkanist *clichés*: the Yugoslav space appeared to be one plagued by a hopeless and inescapable backwardness, no matter socialism’s attempts at modernization. Not surprisingly, such films were met quite enthusiastically by Western audiences.

A way out of this double bind was to push forward, toward the third meaning or the third “figure” of the archaic. As I claimed above, in its most radical meaning the archaic stands for a state that preceded the birth of language, signification and, consequently, representation. The third figure of the archaic is thus a peculiar one: a widespread philosophical as well as aesthetic discourse (which will receive abundant analysis in Chapter One of this study) endows it with the meaning of anti-discursivity. Discursively constructed anti-discursivity is, in its turn, seminally important for modernist aesthetics. In his anthological essay “Black Orpheus”, Sartre described the modern poetic experience *par excellence* in the following way: “Since we cannot keep quiet, we must *make silence with language*. From Mallarmé to the Surrealists, the final goal of French poetry seems to me to have been this autodestruction of language.” (1988, 303, emphasis in the original)

But the seminal question that Sartre poses is *why* one would attempt to break out of the cage of representation by means of representation. For Mallarmé or the Surrealists this break might have been motivated by a search for naked “Being” (Sartre 1988, 303), but for the Black poets<sup>2</sup> who stand at the centre of Sartre’s

essay, the attempt at destroying discursivity was a political act. One tried to break with discursivity because discursivity was oppressive; it was the colonizer's tool. In a different context, a different medium, and a different time, radical Yugoslav filmmakers tried to do something similar. If the archaic in its guise of backwardness was a critical tool that was prone to slip back towards Balkanist *clichés* – and, by the same token, towards discursive domination – the game could always be radicalized. By pushing the archaic towards anti-discursivity, radical Yugoslav filmmakers tried to attack the very procedures that allow us to discursively process filmic images. In the vocabulary of Živojin Pavlović, one of the major directors of the period, they attempted to “shock” the viewer with “raw”, “drastic” images (1969, 55–56). And this attack was a means to an end: what was attacked was not discursivity as an innocent cognitive tool, but discursivity as invested with power, as an agent of both dogmatically progressivist grand narratives and the “strait-jacket” of allochronism. The anti-discursivity inherent in the third figure of the archaic thus became a tool which allowed one to contest the discourse-power relation itself. Far from exhausting itself in a humanist Marxism, this strategy could best be described as a peculiar sort of aesthetic anarchism.

The Yugoslav 1960s thus prove to be an extremely fruitful context for studying the archaic. Firmly embedded in Yugoslav “third way” cultural politics, the archaic modified the Marxist grand narrative. Never simply subversive, in many instances it appeared as the supplement of progress which needed to be sublated rather than suppressed. When used critically, the archaic often slipped towards *clichés* of backwardness and, by extension, Balkanism. Finally, the archaic, in its guise of the pre-linguistic and the pre-social, was used to contest the very act of representation as one pre-invested with power. It is this complex game that this book sets out to investigate.

If the above-described traits of the Yugoslav 1960s fostered a complex confrontation with the archaic, another question arises at this point: why focus on cinema? I have already hinted at one answer to this question: during the 1960s, film was Yugoslavia's prime means of cultural self-fashioning on an international stage. I have shown elsewhere (Pelc 2024) that many of the most subversive films of the period were shown at different international manifestations organized by Yugoslav cultural institutions. One such manifestation were the so-called “Weeks of Yugoslav Film”, which took place in Berlin, Madrid, New York and London in 1969. Notorious Black Wave films such as Živojin Pavlović's *When I'm Dead and Gone* (*Kad budem mrtav i beo*, 1968) were regularly shown at such events as part of a conscious effort to demonstrate that Yugoslavia groomed a liberal cultural climate. During the 1960s, many films were therefore made with one eye turned toward an international gaze. Part of the 1960s filmic fascination with the archaic may lie in an attempt to seduce this gaze.

This attempt was, once again, stuck within a power-structure. Yugoslav cinema's international success in the 1960s can be regarded as part of a process which Dudley Andrew described in the following way: already during the 1950s, European film festivals started “inviting nations from beyond the West's periphery to submit films that might have something essential to contribute, something unavailable to those in

the center.” (2009, 74) At the same time, however, “value could properly be assessed only at Western festivals, and only by Western, specifically Parisian critics.” (Andrew 2009, 74) What was allegedly unavailable to those in the center was an “authenticity” related to questions of marginality, backwardness, and, consequently, the archaic. Andrew claims that many non-Western filmmakers “went in search for characters and spaces that seemed peripheral to their own nations but which gave these nations their strength and distinctiveness.” (2009, 74) This is a fairly precise description of the strategy pursued by some of the most successful Yugoslav films of the 1960s, with Aleksandar Petrović’s *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (*Skupljači perja*, 1967) being a prime example. In 1968, the Parisian film critic Claude Mauriac therefore entitled a laudatory article on Petrović’s film: “Not Far From Us – The Middle Ages!” (1968) The peripheral director had managed to impress the Parisian critic with the “authenticity” of his images showing allochronism.

Film was thus not one among many Yugoslav cultural products in the 1960s; it was the prime locus of an ongoing negotiation with an implicitly present international (Western) gaze searching for “authenticity”. This may be the principal reason why the game of the archaic reached its full force precisely on the Yugoslav screen. Another reason may lie in one of the general roles that the filmic medium played within modernity. Rey Chow observes that the “aggressivity of the film medium” assigned it a specific role from its earliest years: through the “force of the visual image [...] entire nations, histories, and peoples are to be exposed, revealed, captured on the screen, made visible as images.” (1995, 10) Film, therefore, came to play a pivotal role in what Chow described as “epistemological coercion” (1995, 10). The game of the archaic is, in turn, an essential part of this coercive machine, but it is also a terrain that offers numerous escape routes and opportunities for subversion.

I hope these considerations clarify why studying the archaic in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s is an urgent task. This task is a highly specific one but also one that can yield far-reaching theoretical insights. This brings me to the intended audience of this book. On a most specific level, the book is addressed to scholars of Yugoslav cinema. It offers a fresh perspective on some of the most canonized symbolic strategies employed in Yugoslav film. It challenges the Manichean dichotomy between high modernism and popular entertainment, a framework through which the Yugoslav 1960s are still often interpreted. Most importantly, it provides a new understanding of politics within Yugoslav cinema. The book also seeks to shed new light on the broader Yugoslav cultural context. By relating cinematic developments to the philosophical discourse of Radomir Konstantinović, to Miroslav Krleža’s program for a third-way cultural politics, to an aesthetic discourse on naïve painting, and to a range of popular-cultural phenomena, the book aims to reassess some of the fundamental traits of the Yugoslav cultural field.

Furthermore, the book is firmly situated within the field of film studies. It challenges an approach that has long dominated scholarship on Eastern European cinema: rather than focusing on the political provocations that a “larger-than-life” *auteur* (Imre 2012, xxii) smuggles past mechanisms of censorship, it shifts attention to a representational game in which there are no innocent positions and

which strongly communicates with (post)colonial modes of discursive domination. Taking a cue from Anikó Imre, this strategy aims to contribute to the ongoing process of opening studies of (post)socialist cinema(s) to “theoretical currents that were [...] transforming the study of film elsewhere” (2012, xii).

But the study does not merely strive to apply a theory borrowed from “elsewhere” to Yugoslav cinema; it also attempts to intervene in a broader theoretical field. In recent years, there have been repeated calls to “de-Westernize” film studies (Maty Bâ and Higbee, 2012), to reassess how Third (World) Cinema can intervene into film theory and history (Guneratne, 2003), to question the pitfalls of “exoticism” that sometimes emerge during efforts to “de-Westernize” the canon (Berghahn, 2024). This study points to a blind spot that sometimes appears within such approaches. To take an example, in the introduction to their project of de-Westernizing film studies, Maty Bâ and Higbee explicitly rebuke a “binary mode of thinking” that pits the “West against the rest”. (2012, 1) Yet in their attempt to adopt a “non-Eurocentric perspective”, the authors inadvertently homogenize European cinema as part of the “West”. As a result, cinemas that do appertain to Europe but do not belong to its power centers are left in a liminal position: being situated in Europe, they cannot take part in the fight against “Eurocentrism”; but being marginalized within Europe, they do not really enjoy the privilege of being part of the “Western canon” either.

Lucian Tion offered a solution to this impasse by emphasizing the importance of studying the “mutual affinity between postcolonial and socialist cinemas” (2020, 163). And the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s confronts us with a range of problems that can be considered typical of Third Cinema: How does one negotiate between a Marxist discourse and a discourse of “backwardness”? How can one politically use and abuse exoticizations? What kind of radical film theory is required to fight the discourse-power relation? All these questions lead back to the game of the archaic. My study will examine this game in relation to its specific Yugoslav example, but I am convinced that the strategies revealed by this example can be found in other cinematic and, more broadly, cultural contexts whenever an avant-garde aesthetic faces a discourse of time-lag. In other words, the book does not merely attempt to borrow a postcolonial perspective and apply it to Yugoslav cinema; rather, it strives to extract a theoretical model from its Yugoslav example, a model that could be applicable outside of its narrow context.

This brings me to my choice of films. Given the objectives outlined above, would it not have been more logical to pursue a transnational approach rather than remaining within the framework of Yugoslav cinema? There are two reasons why this road was not taken. The first concerns my own positionality: having an advanced knowledge of BCMS (Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian), I am not only capable of interpreting Yugoslav films in detail but was also able to access a large number of films that have never been subtitled. This sensitivity to subtle connotations, combined with an in-depth understanding of the film industry, would inevitably have been lacking in any other context. For this reason, I simply did not dare venture into broader comparisons. The second reason is rather prosaic: as the reader has likely noticed, this book is an ambitious and, consequently, quite lengthy

project. Since it strives to develop a complex theoretical model, and since the approach taken requires detailed analysis as well as a dialogue with the cultural-historical context, it would have simply taken up too much space to introduce several such contexts. The book therefore stays in the framework of one national film industry (although it is questionable whether Yugoslavia's film industry can be described as a "national" one), but I do hope that it entails a discreet transnational aspect, since its theoretical findings do not exhaust themselves in the "specificity" of the Yugoslav 1960s.

Finally, a general audience might be interested in the accessibility of films discussed in this book. At the moment of writing this introduction (September 2025), at least half of the films that appear in my case studies were accessible online with English subtitles: this includes *The Birch Tree* (*Breza*, Ante Babaja, 1967), *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (*Skupljači perja*, Aleksandar Petrović, 1967), *It Rains in My Village* (*Biće skoro propast sveta*, Aleksandar Petrović, 1968), *Love Affair; or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, Dušan Makavejev, 1967), and *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, Želimir Žilnik, 1969). Additionally, in my case studies, I have provided detailed descriptions of the narrative and formal traits of each film. The reader who is well acquainted with Yugoslav cinema might find this tedious, but it should allow for an orientation in the analysis to those who have not seen the films. There is a reason why I did not stick to a narrow choice of highly canonized Black Wave films: I believe that some almost forgotten genre films from the period – *Burduš* (Miodrag Popović, 1970), *Poor Mary* (*Sirota Marija*, Dragoslav Lazić, 1968), *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* (*Makedonska krvava svadba*, Trajče Popov, 1967) – offer valuable perspectives on the archaic. Moreover, these films sometimes critique the Black Wave in quite unexpected ways, demystifying its "subversive" aura and allowing us to view it in a new light.

The book is divided into three large parts. Part One can be considered a lengthy introduction: in Chapter One, I provide a working definition of my central term – the "archaic" – by analysing the writings of three authors who have decisively shaped the European cultural imagination: Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Chapter Two offers a concise history of the developments that led to the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. After this, a "panorama" of the Yugoslav celluloid archaic in the 1960s is presented. This "panorama" serves three purposes: to demonstrate the scope of the phenomenon, to identify the characteristic motifs associated with the archaic, and, most importantly, to address certain methodological problems that continue to affect studies of Yugoslav cinema.

Part Two focuses on the first two figures of the archaic: that of backwardness and that of originary vitality. It examines the different strategies that these two figures call forth, and it analyses a chiasmic movement that emerges between them, with vitality being transformed into backwardness and *vice versa*. Chapter Three articulates the archaic against a theory of Balkanism (which, in its turn, gets juxtaposed to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism). It then provides a close reading of Maria Todorova's seminal study, *Imagining the Balkans*, in order to show that her text discreetly relies on a logic inherent in the interplay between the

archaic as backwardness and the archaic as vitality. Chapter Four turns to Miroslav Krleža's address, delivered at the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in Ljubljana in 1952, a fundamental document for socialist Yugoslavia's cultural politics. It demonstrates that Krleža's concept of the Yugoslav cultural "third way" is deeply imbued with the archaic. Moreover, Krleža's archaic introduces the first traces of a radical politics of aesthetics into the study.

These two theoretical chapters are followed by three case studies that explore the interplay between the archaic as backwardness and the archaic as originary vitality on the Yugoslav 1960s screen. Chapter Five relates the archaic to representations of history, while focusing on two films: Trajče Popov's *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* (*Makedonska krvava svadba*, 1967) and Antun Vrdoljak's *When You Hear the Bells* (*Kad čuješ zvona*, 1969). While one film employs the archaic to depict the Yugoslav peoples' inherently revolutionary character, the other uses it to argue that the Yugoslav peoples are not revolutionary even when engaging in revolutionary activity. Chapter Six deals with Ante Babaja's *The Birch Tree* (*Breza*, 1967) and Dragoslav Lazić's *Poor Mary* (*Sirota Marija*, 1968). Both films establish complex connections between the archaic, cinema, and "naïve" painting, but the latter can be seen as a parody of the former. The dialogue between the two films thus testifies to a further aesthetic application of the archaic, while disclosing a peculiar exchange between Yugoslav high modernist and popular culture. Finally, Chapter Seven focuses on the "screen Gypsy" (Imre 2003, 15) in Aleksandar Petrović's *It Rains in My Village* (*Biće skoro propast sveta*, 1969) and Mića Popović's *Burduš* (1970). The "screen Gypsy" is interrogated in its dual role as both a vehicle for exoticization and a disruptive force that undermines narrative continuity.

In Part Three, the focus shifts toward the archaic as anti-discursivity. Chapter Eight examines this radicalized version of the archaic as articulated in Živojin Pavlović's theory of "raw images". Pavlović saw the anti-discursive archaic as a prime means of artistic anarchist destruction; he therefore forged a radical politics of aesthetics around filmic images representing the archaic. At the same time, however, he was inclined to essentialize the filmic medium. For this reason, I approach his theoretical insights through the writings of Jacques Rancière in order to obtain a relational theory of the anti-discursive archaic. The two case studies that follow scrutinize the roles that this final figure of the archaic played on the Yugoslav 1960s screen. Chapter Nine focuses on Dušan Makavejev's *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, 1967). By placing a "raw image" at the center of his film, Makavejev constructed a complex commentary on sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and modernity in Yugoslavia. Chapter Ten examines Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969). Žilnik's film interrogates a threefold relationship: that between the revolution, an ideologically petrified rhetoric, and the archaic. In doing so, *Early Works* becomes a peculiar balancing act between violence as discursivity and violence as anti-discursivity. Finally, the Concluding Remarks offer a synthesis of the game of the archaic in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. They attempt to formalize this game, to identify the possibilities of discursive resistance that it entails and to scrutinize the dangers that it gives rise to.

Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Eight form the theoretical backbone of this study: they demonstrate how the archaic became part of a powerful discursive formation, how it was articulated in relation to Balkanism, how it entered the Yugoslav cultural “third way,” and how it became central to a radical film theory. The case studies, in their turn, examine the specific negotiations that took place around the archaic. On the Yugoslav 1960s screen, the archaic haunted phenomena as diverse as historical narratives, naïve painting, and a nascent hippie subculture. Taken together, the book’s two components – the theoretical framework and the case studies – aim to shed light on both global and specifically Yugoslav issues that arise when the archaic invades the silver screen.

## Notes

- 1 Not only was the “Black Wave” label used pejoratively in its original context, but also, in later critical practice it became too broad and too constraining at once. On the one hand, it should encompass all films that “deal with neglected social settings, the suburbia and the village”, and depict characters whose lives are dependent on “chance, alienating social forces, or psychological obsessions” (Turković 1986, 235). On the other hand, it was often used to designate phenomena connected solely to Serbian cinema (Radosavljević 2019); it thus became the tool of a methodological nationalism.
- 2 Aimé Césaire, one of the founders of the *négritude* movement, began writing his *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* while he was visiting the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1935. In Alexandra Perisic’s opinion, this visit had major consequences: it prompted Césaire to claim that there are “two Europes: a Europe that colonized him and a Europe that experienced domination. This other Europe, or Europe’s internal other, Césaire encountered in the Balkans.” (2023, 3)

# 1 Coming to Terms

## The Archaic

### 1.1 The Archaic: Three Sides of the Same Coin

My central claim is that the archaic encompasses three distinct meanings or “figures”. It stands for: a) backwardness or primitiveness; b) a source of originary strength and vitality; and c) that which precedes discourse and signification. The game of the archaic unfolds as a complex negotiation among these three figures. In this chapter, I will analyse certain discourses that played a significant role in establishing the “archaic” as a discursive formation, foremost those by Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche. The analysis has multiple objectives. First, it seeks to uncover the sources of discursive “authority” ascribed to the archaic. Second, it examines the position attributed to the South Slavic space by this authority. Finally, it aims to determine the precise meaning and function of each “figure”. For this purpose, I will also examine representations of modernity against which the archaic is contrasted.

Before starting the analysis, a methodological remark is needed. The method that will be followed throughout this study draws heavily on discourse analysis, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault. This might seem an odd choice for a study whose main object of inquiry is film. As Ernesto Laclau reminds us, however, discourse analysis should be understood as a general semiology that encompasses non-linguistic signifying practices, including (moving) images (2007, 543). According to Laclau, “the basic hypothesis of a discursive approach is that the very possibility of perception [...] depends on the structuration of a certain meaningful field that pre-exists any factual immediacy.” (2007, 541) This “meaningful field” is what structures the game of the archaic. It is also what some of the Yugoslav 1960s filmmakers sought to disrupt by means of the archaic as anti-discursivity.

There is therefore no contradiction between discourse analysis and film studies. Three key insights about discourse are central to my approach. First, discourse should be approached through its “positivity” (Foucault 1969). Rather than searching for hidden meanings, one should investigate the conditions that make utterances (*énoncé*) appear at the exact time and place when they appear (Landwehr 2018, 90). Second, discourse is productive: it is neither a true nor a false reflection of reality; rather, it is a constitutive part of this reality. Moreover, it

establishes “transactional realities” (Foucault 2008, 297) and allows for objects to emerge (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 108). Third, discourse is invested with power; consequently, it is obligatory. Once a discursive formation has been established, it cannot simply be discarded or disposed of by means of criticism.

These three aspects of discourse theory have significant implications for the concept of critique. When viewed through the lens of discourse theory, the Yugoslav filmmaker cannot simply be regarded as a subversive critic; she operates within a discursive field and is, therefore, bound by the power relations that pre-exist within this field. Similarly, the scholar studying the archaic cannot fully resolve its deadlock through straightforward critique. Any attempt to do so will result in the archaic returning to haunt her discourse in one form or another. Chapter Three demonstrates how this process unfolds in Maria Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans*. It is not enough, therefore, to criticize tropes of “backwardness” and “primitiveness”. Instead, one must identify the escape routes, points of tension, and modes of resistance that exist *within* the game of the archaic. Achieving this goal would not be possible without drawing on the principles of discourse theory outlined above.

A fundamental presupposition of this approach is that certain discursive elements acquire widespread proliferation and relative stability by participating in a discursive formation. In order to trace this formation in relation to the archaic, I will analyse certain texts that had a strong and lasting impact on the European cultural imagination, particularly the writings of G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche. This should poignantly trace out the contours of a discourse governing the archaic. Regarding this method, a question that arises almost instantly is one of relevance: can one really establish strong ties between philosophical tropes appertaining largely to the 19th century and the Yugoslav culture of the 1960s, more precisely its cinema?

This question warrants a twofold answer. First, it is not my claim that the aforementioned authors directly influenced Yugoslav filmmakers of the 1960s; rather, when a discursive formation gets established, its figures achieve widespread cultural proliferation quite independently of their “sources” or “origins”. Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche – although probably not the “original” definers of the archaic – were therefore chosen because of their exemplary status, not because of their direct influence on Yugoslav cinema (although there was probably more than one filmmaker who read at least one of them). Second, there is a striking correspondence between the forms in which the archaic appears in the Yugoslav 1960s context and those it assumes within the framework of the chosen “grand narratives”. Once again, this does not necessarily testify to direct influence but rather to the stability of the discursive formation. In order to demonstrate this, I will close my analysis with a brief reading of Radomir Konstantinović’s *Philosophy of Parochialism* (*Filosofija palanke*), a seminal philosophical treatise of the Yugoslav 1960s.

My analysis of the chosen philosophical corpus has an almost propaedeutic aim: it should allow for a relatively clear orientation within the discursive game of the archaic while testifying to its wide proliferation and stability. It is of fundamental importance that this game relies on the archaic being segmented into three distinct figures that form the discursive formation’s backbone. An exhaustive reading of

complex philosophical systems is evidently beyond the scope of this study. I will therefore try to strategically and somewhat forcefully extract the following elements: a) Against which representations of progress and modernity is backwardness articulated?; b) How is the connection between teleological process and mythological origin conceptualized?; and c) What is the element that remains radically excluded? Additionally, a dynamics of space partitioning will be examined. As will be shown, a narrative of progress is never simply a temporal scheme, it also divides spaces while creating chronotopes in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense of the term. Within this structuring process, special attention will be given to the South Slavic space, which, time and again, looms from the margins of the selected texts.

## 1.2 Lyotard, Hegel, and the Totalization of Grand Narratives

As this chapter will deal with “authoritative, ‘universal’ narratives” (Spivak 1999, 8) or “grand narratives”, an unavoidable starting point is the definition provided by Jean-François Lyotard (1984). Lyotard claims that grand narratives are defined by their legitimizing function. They represent the history of humankind as a gradual unfolding towards reason, liberty, socialism, etc. In their universal guise, these “goals” legitimize all the particular, contingent phases of general development (1986, 37–38); history is world history insofar as it is directed towards a universal *telos*. In contrast to these modern, grand narratives stand mythological narratives, which seek their legitimation in an “original, founding act” (Lyotard 1986, 37–38), an *arche*. What is of interest at this point is not so much the somewhat worn-out debate on the death of grand narratives, which – just like the death of the primal horde’s father – takes place without taking place. Rather, what should be contested is Lyotard’s fundamental division between modern, grand narratives and mythological narratives. As will be shown, the *telos* is not at all emancipated from an original, founding act. Each grand narrative must necessarily be shaped by three elements: 1) a goal against which the various distances of particular “peoples”, “cultures” or “civilizations” can be measured; 2) a source that already comprises the goal in an embryonic form; and 3) a radically excluded Other that does not partake in the process in any way. Far from being a simple story of progress, a grand narrative is a field of tensions in which various elements acquire signification only through nuanced differentiations.

Let us very briefly consider Hegel’s philosophy of history, the totalization of all grand narratives in Lyotard’s view (1986, 37). Hegel portrays world history as “the labour of spirit to arrive at knowledge of what it is intrinsically” (1975, 87). Since Hegel’s spirit is defined by its capacity for self-determination, self-reflexivity, and, consequently, freedom, world history unfolds as a gradual translation of the Idea of freedom from potentiality to actuality. But freedom is not simply a question of the individual’s free will; it is, rather, the possibility of this individual will to participate in a universal element: “Justice, ethical life and the state, these alone are the positive realization and satisfaction of freedom.” (1975, 94)

The state and the nation – both founders and guardians of ethics – therefore assume a pivotal role in the development of spirit: “The various aspects of a

nation's culture are the spirit's relationships to itself; it is the spirit which shapes the nation." (Hegel 1975, 102) However, according to Hegel, not all "national" cultures mirror the spirit's relation to itself equally well. This stance is famously expressed in his verdict on "oriental despotism": "They [the Orientals] only know that One is free; but for this very reason, this freedom is mere arbitrariness, savagery and brutal passion." (1975, 54) What becomes evident, even from this extremely crude summary, is that Hegel's metaphysical machine – the "totalization of grand narratives" – relies on a differentiation that positions some cultures closer to the *telos* (freedom) than others. In other words, he needs a concept of backwardness. As will be shown shortly, this backwardness is no simple deviation; it plays a fundamental role in defining the identity of the "progressed".

Before addressing this problem, the set of representations against which backwardness is determined merits consideration. One has already been mentioned: all forms of arbitrary, spontaneous, erratic behaviour – "mere desire" and "uncultivated forms of volition" (Hegel 1975, 81) – are seen as backward. But cultivated volition is also related to a clear division of labour: "Duty is rooted in the soil of civil life: individuals follow their appointed profession and hence, their appointed duty." (1975, 81) Then there are other "powers in which the spirit particularizes itself: [...] industry, trade, arts and science, and the military world, the world of valour, by which one nation is distinguished from the other." (1975, 101) This is the "Lyotardian" moment in Hegel's system: a dense representation of modernity – economic, industrial, military, scientific – is legitimized by the universal Idea.

But it must be emphasized once again that this development is not exactly universal. It can only be measured in relation to an Other who exists in another time *and* another place. Hegel is quite explicit: although "world history as a whole is the expression of the spirit in time", the various patterns that the "nations of history" assume "appear to coexist indifferently in *space*, i.e. to exist perennially" (1975, 128, my emphasis, AP). It is not the all-encompassing, gradual unfolding of the Idea that makes the system functional. Rather, the system is founded on a fundamental asynchrony, a mapping of different times onto different spaces. It is this *distance* between time-spaces that gives identity to the individual moments in the teleology.

In this partitioning process, neither the South Slavic nor the Balkan space receives a lot of attention; however, Hegel does note in passing: "North of Greece there are Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians, of Asian origin, who stayed there in the mutual clashes of peoples as a scattered barbarian remnant." (Hegel 1986, 422) Quite expectedly, the archaic as backwardness thus takes on the contours of what will become known as Balkanism. The Balkans are a backward, liminal time-space; consequently, they lack signs of modernity: ethics, rational behaviour, a sense of duty, a developed division of labour, etc.

One figure of the archaic – that of backwardness – has thus been identified as essential to Hegel's discourse. But the teleology's founding moment, its origin, is at least as important as backwardness. This is the "mythological" aspect of the grand narrative, which Lyotard fails to notice. Not only does Hegel write a chapter entitled "The Beginning of History", but also, even before scrutinizing history's

mythological birth, he accentuates the absolute, archaic, theological primacy of the Idea: “The Idea contains the inner determination of self-knowledge and activity. For the Idea is the eternal inner life of God, the logical nexus that is present, as it were, even before the creation of the world.” (Hegel 1975, 77) This radical archaic is the foundation of all modernity’s sovereignty. Only through an “infinite potentiality” (1975, 131) situated at its absolute beginning is the process of progress endowed with authority. After this comes a second fundamental split, during which reflexivity simultaneously creates laws, the state, and the writing of history (1975, 135). This common birth of law, the state, and historical discourse is the most important moment in the Idea’s trajectory towards actuality.

However, states and nations are, in Hegel’s view, subject to a process that is the opposite of progress, namely decay: “A nation makes internal advances; it develops further and is ultimately destroyed. The appropriate categories here are those of cultural development, over-refinement and degeneration.” (1975, 56) A young nation, the one that stands close to the archaic founding moment, is, by contrast, full of vitality: “The period in which the spirit is still active is that of the nation’s youth, the finest stage in its development; during this period, individuals feel impelled to preserve their fatherland and to implement their nation’s end.” (1975, 59)

Paradoxically, to play an avant-garde role in history, a nation must be old, so that it does not fall into the category of backwardness or barbarity. But at the same time, if it does not want to slide into decadence, it must remain in close proximity to the archaic event of its birth (which, in turn, stands in proximity to the absolute *arche*). This is the second figure of the archaic: no longer backwardness, but an essential vitality that appoints an avant-garde role to the “young”. As will be shown shortly, Hegel’s rather aporetic time structure will reappear on the margins of Marx’s writings, where it will be related directly to the Slavic space.

But before entering the Marxist paradigm, a third figure of the archaic needs to be extracted from Hegel’s system. This figure can be found in the guise of the “animal”. Prior to boarding world history, Hegel must draw a fundamental caesura, that between humanity and animality. Hegel defines the animal by its pure presence, its incapability for reflection, mediation or self-consciousness: “it cannot interpose anything between its impulses and the satisfaction of its impulses” (1975, 50); it is “no more than its immediate existence” (1975, 64). Humanity – which is endowed with self-reflexivity – and animality are therefore absolutely incommensurable: “man cannot have developed from a state of animal insensibility” (1975, 133). However, man *could* have developed from an “animal humanity” (1975, 133), in fact, s/he must have spent a huge period of time in this “primeval condition” (1975, 133).

What distinguishes animal humanity from animality proper is once again the concept of potentiality. Although the spirit is fully latent in it, animal humanity already is its bearer. But by a reversal of the same logic, this also means that under “primeval conditions” there is no difference between animal humanity and animality in *actuality*. A regression towards actual animality therefore always remains the final frontier of “mere arbitrariness, savagery, and brutal passion”. But unlike

the barbarous other, this state does not acquire its own space. It is the absolutely excluded Other of teleological time-space and can take part in the articulation only as its negative binary opposition, as that which is fully non-articulated and non-mediated. Hegel never fully developed this figure, but its contours and effects were drawn out with vehemence by Nietzsche and his best students of the 20th century.

This is, quite evidently, a very reductive reading of Hegel, but it does show that the three figures of the archaic are an indispensable part of his discourse on world history. The progressed acquire their identity only in opposition to the “primitives”. Progress is protected from decadence only if the origin remains preserved and present. The whole process must be defined against a radical outside: that of an “animal state” in which mediation remains impossible. I will now proceed to demonstrate how these three figures – backwardness, originary vitality, the outside of mediation – were further developed in the discourses of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche.

### 1.3 Marx, Freud, Nietzsche

Before continuing with the analysis, I wish to briefly reflect on Maurice Blanchot’s essay “Marx’s Three Voices” (1986). In this short text, Blanchot argued that Marx always speaks in several voices, and that these voices do not necessarily form a consonant. This claim was later masterfully developed in Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1993). I propose that the same holds true for all the authors whose writings are analysed in this section: while some of their voices advocated progress or teleology, some did not. In other words, it is not my aim to prove that Hegel, or Marx, or Freud was a teleological thinker. Rather, I contend that each of them had at least *one* voice that was burdened with the idea of progress and that this voice made abundant use of the archaic.

This being said, Marx’s theory of world history is very well known. In opposition to Hegel, he saw the process as a gradual development of productive forces; the state of productive forces determines the structure of a society and is mirrored by ideas (1976, 166). But the development of productive forces does not take place smoothly. In Marx’s view, it is always based in class antagonisms; consequently, it carries within itself the possibility of surpassing the existing form of society: “It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle.” (1976, 174) The modern proletariat plays a specific role in this process: it is the oppressed class that will lead the “total revolution”, a revolution that will abolish class antagonisms and political oppression with a single stroke (1976, 212).

This is, slightly simplified, the *telos*, the grand narrative’s emancipatory idea that proclaims the end of history. But before the revolution can happen, the proletariat must reach a certain state of development, and for this state to be reached, a high stage in the development of productive forces is required. Thus, it is the productive forces that develop within bourgeois society that create the material conditions for the total revolution (Marx 1986, 264). Modernity, so vehemently depicted in the *Manifesto* – industry, commerce, navigation, railways, the rule of cities over the idiocy of village life, the constant revolutionizing of all instruments of production, the clearing of whole continents for cultivation, etc. (Marx and Engels 1986) – is

legitimized not by the fact that it mirrors the spirit but by the fact that it builds the way for a self-conscious proletariat who will abolish class antagonisms. Through the same gesture, an implicit matrix of progressed and “most backward” countries is produced, with regard to them standing further or closer to a state of development that can trigger the revolution. This is the very famous reason why the revolution should not have happened in the weakly industrialized Tsarist Russia.

But what did Marx himself think of the prospect of a revolution in Russia? An answer to this question leads toward the “archaic” aspect of his grand narrative. Once again, this narrative cannot function without a mythical, founding event: “The very moment civilization begins, production begins to be founded on the antagonism of orders, estates, classes, and finally on the antagonism of accumulated labour and immediate labour.” (Marx 1976, 132) As Marx sees it, the teleology is but a prolonged development of this first caesura: “This is the law that civilization has followed up to our days” (1976, 132).

Antagonisms thus mark the beginning of history, but on the other side of this history, there must stand an archaic pre-history. And if class antagonism is the fundamental property of history, this pre-history will presumably be devoid of class antagonisms. Here is where Russia finds its revolutionary chance. In their preface to the 1882 Russian translation of the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels articulate their hopes quite explicitly: although in Russia “the rapidly flowering capitalist swindle and bourgeois property” are “just beginning to develop”, which, as was noted, are no fruitful conditions for a revolution, Russia might not have to pass through the same evolutionary process as the West, for in Russia, “more than half the land is owned in common by the peasants.” (Marx and Engels 1986, 11–12) Therefore, a titillating question arises for Marx and Engels: can “a primeval form of common ownership of land pass directly to the higher form of Communist common ownership?” (1986, 12) Not surprisingly, the answer is positive, and the most archaic, “prehistoric” form of ownership becomes a possible beacon for the proletariat of the West: “If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development.” (1986, 12)<sup>1</sup> In a letter-draft to Vera Zasulich, Marx was even more explicit. He claimed that the Russian rural commune could become “the *direct starting point* of the economic system towards which modern society is tending.” (1983, 112, emphasis in the original). For this reason, “we must [...] not be too frightened by the word ‘archaic’.” (1983, 107) Sadly enough, Marx never sent his letter.

If one is to believe Friedrich Engels’ words (1990a, 131), death prevented Marx from fully developing his theory of prehistory, and it was bequeathed upon Engels to finish this task by following Marx’s notes. An exhaustive analysis of Marx’s and Engels’ views on the origins of class divisions cannot be undertaken here; however, what needs to be stressed is that the *topos* of archaic common property has changed place in Engels’ later take on the topic. “The South Slavic *Zadruga*” now provides the example of the most archaic communal organization: “It embraces several generations of the descendants of one father and their wives, who all live together

on one farm, till their fields in common, feed and clothe themselves from the common stock, and communally own all surplus yield.” (Engels 1990a, 167) The dream of communal ownership (the common stock), communal labour (the tilling of fields), and communal profit (the surplus) is now unequivocally projected onto the South Slavic space.<sup>2</sup>

As can be seen, the archaic acquires an ambivalent role once again. On the one hand, it is associated with the “most backward” countries, which stand the furthest removed from a total revolution. But on the other hand, it offers these countries a possibility to short-circuit the whole process and paradoxically acquire an avant-garde position. Although the vital element is no longer the nation standing close to its birth but a society where a division of labour and private property has not yet been fully established, the archaic once again discreetly shifts from a negative to a positive denominator. And the living remnant of the greatest backwardness – which could, nonetheless, turn into a revolutionary development – is the South Slavic space.

However, a fundamental difference separates the Marxist from the Hegelian paradigm. Although both narratives cannot dispense with the original event, this event has undergone a substantial change. From being the positive moment at which the Idea obtains self-reflectivity, it was turned into a moment of violence; for Marx, the inauguration into history is an inauguration to oppression. With Freud, the archaic founding event undergoes a further brutalization. Freud’s exemplary authoritative narrative is *Totem and Taboo*: first, it divides the totality of human history into three great stages (animistic – religious – scientific); second, it fashions “instinctual repression” as a universal “measure of the level of civilization that has been reached” (2001, 114). Once again, we are apparently faced with a rather Hegelian construct: world history unfolds as a gradual triumph of reason over instincts while the world is both spatially and temporally divided in accordance with the level attained within this process.

Nonetheless, two great changes have taken place. The origin has become exceedingly violent: it was the murder of the “primal horde’s” father (2001, 164) by his united sons that led to the prohibition of incest and initiated the endless process of increasingly refined repression. At the root of history stands “the criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion” (2001, 165). Furthermore, the goal of the process has been lost. Although Freud’s narrative relies on a rhetoric of humankind “growing up” through ever greater repression, it remains unclear when full maturity will be achieved. To make things worse, the process of maturation is not represented as unambiguously positive. Once ethics, social organization, and religion are stripped of their transcendental aspect, they cannot but perpetuate the first violent act. One must thus presuppose that prohibitions always need to be “impressed [...] violently by the previous generation” (2001, 36). The growing up of humanity is necessarily a process in which each generation exercises violence upon the following one.

The “scientific age” itself therefore acquires an ambiguous status. It has various positive aspects, since it “would have an exact counterpart in the stage at which an individual has reached maturity, has renounced the pleasure principle, adjusted

himself to reality, and turned to the external world for the object of his desires” (2001, 105). Here the progressivist model based on a parallel between individual and collective growing up is explicitly visible. And, as Freud shows in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, being grown up endows a “civilization” with a certain power, a “power over space and time”, which rests upon the “subjugation of the forces of nature” (1962, 34–35). Just like Marx and Hegel before him, Freud thus links his grand temporal scheme to a dense description of modernity; in a civilized country

rivers which threaten to flood the lands are regulated in their flow, and their water is directed through canals to places where there is shortage of it. The soil is carefully cultivated and planted with vegetation which it is suited to support; and the mineral wealth below the ground is assiduously brought to the surface and fashioned into the required implements and utensils. The means of communications are ample, rapid, and reliable. Wild and dangerous animals have been exterminated, the breeding of domesticated animals flourishes. [...] We expect besides to see signs of cleanliness and order. [...] Dirtiness of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization.

(1962, 39–40)

Grown-up civilization thus surpasses in omnipotence even the primal horde’s father. But, unlike Hegel or Marx, Freud explicitly states that “present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character.” (1962, 39) In the final analysis, “godlike” civilization requires too much sacrifice. By an ever-increasing pressure exercised upon the pleasure principle, civilization can achieve wonders, but it can never match the intense pleasure of yielding to a “wild instinctual impulse” (1962, 26).

Wild instinctual impulses are, quite expectedly, associated with “primitive men”, who knew “no restrictions of instincts” (1962, 62). However, a curious break appears in Freud’s writing at this point. Although he would like to preserve the mythological picture of the primitive, untamed man, which he needs in order to keep his progressivist scheme in place, he is compelled to renounce it: “Careful researches have shown that their [primitive men’s] instinctual life is by no means to be envied for its freedom. It is subject to restrictions of a different kind but perhaps of greater severity than those attaching to civilized man” (1962, 62). The course of history no longer appears to be a development of “instinctual repression”; it is merely a series of variations in the modes of repression.

But the system can remain functional if one retreats even further into the archaic. If the band of brothers who executed the father’s murder was already subject to repression, and if repression develops gradually, its source must simply be sought even further in the past. Thus, we encounter Freud’s other, quite bizarre, founding myth. The original *arche* is not the murder, it is the crude fact of human beings acquiring an upright posture: “The fateful process of civilization would thus have set in with man’s adoption of an erect posture.” (1962, 46) In Freud’s opinion, this change in posture was seminal in two regards: first, it exposed the genital area and consequently produced a primeval feeling of shame. Second,

by removing the face from the genital area, it replaced olfactory stimuli with visual stimuli and therefore made desire constant (1962, 46). The original break between animality and humanity – the source of civilization and discontent – is thus strongly tied to visibility. By becoming visible, the genitals at once produce constant desire and shame. The gesture of standing up therefore leads to a truly archaic, “organic repression”:

With the assumption of an erect posture by man and with the depreciation of the sense of smell it was not only his anal eroticism which threatened to fall a victim to organic repression, but the whole of his sexuality; so that since this, the sexual function has been accompanied by a repugnance which cannot further be accounted for, and which prevents its complete satisfaction and forces it away from the sexual aim into sublimations and libidinal displacements.

(1962, 53)

The paradise of untamed instincts was thus lost with desire becoming visual and displaced by the erection of man. However, Freud reminds us, even in Europe there are some who have not fully embraced the substitution of smell for sight:

Nor should we forget that, in spite of the undeniable depreciation of olfactory stimuli, there exist even in Europe peoples among whom the strong genital odours which are so repellent to us are highly prized as sexual stimulants and who refuse to give them up.

(1962, 53)

Freud does not name the “peoples” who refuse to renounce the odours so repellent to “us”, but he does give a cue to their identity: the reader should consult various folkloristic reports in the journal *Anthropophyteia*, edited by Friedrich S. Krauss. Not surprisingly, the reports in *Anthropophyteia* uniformly come from the South Slavic region, starting with the charming story entitled *Pussysmeller (Pizdonjušac)*, which was brought by the journal’s first issue as recounted to Krauss by a peasant from the surroundings of Dubrovnik (Krauss 1904, 224).

Hegel’s “barbarian remnant” is, therefore, radicalized in Freud’s writings: while the barbarian’s desire is already saturated with prohibitions, the South Slav has managed to preserve a trace of unmediated animality in his overestimation of olfactory stimuli. The scandal of this backwardness is all the more impressive since it takes place in Europe. But as has been shown, with Freud, this radical archaic takes on a deeply ambivalent character: despite its repulsiveness, it can produce pleasures unattainable within civilization.

There is another, rather implicit, aspect to Freud’s radical archaic. A strong philosophical tradition – that emerged already with Aristotle’s writings on sense perception – defines sight as the “noblest” sense, since it does not imply direct contact between the perceived object and the perceiving subject. Hans Jonas writes in his anthological essay “The Nobility of Sight”:

I have to do nothing but to look, and the object is not affected by that: and once there is light, the object has only to be there to be visible, and I am not affected by that: and yet it is apprehended in its self-containment from out of my own self-containment, it is present to me without drawing me into its presence.  
(1954, 515)

Building on Jonas' insights, Martin Jay claims that "the very distinction between subject and object and the belief in the neutral apprehension of the latter by the former" (1994, 25) is based in an "ocularcentrism". When Freud attributes an over-estimation of smell over sight to the South Slav's desire, he therefore implies that the very possibility of establishing a clearly distinguishable object of perception has been weakened. The most barbarous thus slides towards the third "figure" of the archaic: it becomes a crisis of object-articulation and, consequently, a crisis of representation. Within Nietzsche's writings, the possibility of this crisis enters the field of the visual itself.

In Nietzsche's view, every object of perception is established through a series of mediations: "The mysterious 'X' of the thing-in-itself appears first as a nervous stimulus, then as an image, and finally as an articulated sound." (1999, 145) None of these mediations preserves an essential relation to the "X"; they are but the "boldest of metaphors", encompassing "a complete leap from one sphere into the heart of another" (1999, 145). And the crucial leap – the one that establishes human history – is the third one, the one translating "original visual metaphors" into the sounds of language: "Everything which distinguishes human beings from animals depends on this ability to sublimate sensuous metaphors into a schema, in other words, *to dissolve an image into a concept*." (1999, 146, my emphasis, AP) Once this final translation has occurred, the original mode of visual perception must be forgotten, and a reversal of the process takes place: the "mass of images, which originally flowed in a hot, liquid stream" can from now on be perceived only as petrified into concepts. It is on this basis that the possibility of an "adequate expression of an object in the subject" (1999, 146) is created.

The field of the visual, therefore, receives a double articulation. First, there is the archaic flow of images that does not yet allow for clear subject-object distinctions. Then there is the field of visuality already cut through and pre-articulated by concepts. One no longer needs to substitute the sense of smell for the sense of sight in order to define an archaic, animal-like perception that establishes no clear distinctions between subject and object. It suffices to substitute one regime of visibility for another. In this way, the archaic does not only keep its disarticulating potential, but also it becomes a distinctive regime of visibility: the one in which images refuse to dissolve into concepts.

The substitution of one regime of visibility for another is central to Nietzsche's conception of world history: it is the moment when humanity breaks away from the animal. In Nietzsche's view, this break has a strictly pragmatic function; it is the first step towards societal organization and a means to neutralize "at least the crudest forms of the *bellum omnium contra omnes*" (1999, 143). But this initial

step in the “taming” of humanity already entails the establishment of hierarchies; it creates “a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, definitions of borders” (1999, 146). In this respect, a paragraph from the *Genealogy of Morals* is quite explicit: “The lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say ‘this *is* this and this’, they seal every thing and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it.” (Nietzsche 1989, 26) Preceding names – and, by the same token, all “lordly rights” – the original flow of images is therefore situated beyond the first hierarchies and subordinations.

This legacy of Nietzschean ideas entered aesthetics as well as political philosophy in the 20th century. In his book on a truly archaic subject – the alleged birth of art in the cave of Lascaux – Georges Bataille proposes the following line of argument: the role of artistic images is to transgress rationality. Their fundamental function is to introduce an “enduring animality” and “raw life [...] into the community” (Bataille 1955, 37); this “animality” is, once again, “unassimilable to the world of stable and distinct objects” (1955, 37). In Nietzschean terms, artistic images break with the regime of visibility dominated by concepts and foster a return to the original “hot, liquid [visual] stream”. This is a view that was endorsed by both Miroslav Krleža and Živojin Pavlović.

Within Bataille’s writings, the third figure of the archaic thus became the foundation of an articulate artistic program. And this program has important political implications. As noted above, Nietzsche associated the birth of language and common objects with power: power-relations, social organization, and object-definitions form an inseparable whole. In Jacques Rancière’s view, the moment when power defines objects is therefore fundamentally a political one; Rancière writes: “It [politics] is a partition of the sensible, of the visible and the sayable, which allows (or doesn’t allow) some specific data to appear.” (2004, 10) Consequently, the regime of images that breaks with the “world of stable and distinct objects” does not only bring aesthetic pleasure – it might not bring this kind of pleasure at all – it is also a political act, one that calls into question the very foundations of any political field.

At this point, I will try to undertake a brief synthesis. As was hopefully shown, the archaic is an essential part of grand narratives. Marx, Freud, and Hegel all operate with an opposition between the progressed and the backward; backwardness is thus established as a first figure of the archaic. Furthermore, all authors needed to position an originary event at the source of progress. This is Hegel’s founding of states and historical discourse, Marx’s inauguration into class antagonisms, Freud’s murder of the primal horde’s father, Nietzsche’s “lords” inventing language. Although the source can be violent, it endows the teleological process with energy; it is therefore a figure of vitality. This is the second figure of the archaic. Finally, Hegel, Freud, and Nietzsche invented an Other to the whole process, an Other that is almost without exception associated with “animality”. This Other stands for a state where no mediation is possible; it is therefore positioned outside language and representation. By the same token, it is subversive with regard to the power that

resides in discourse and representation; it calls into question any “lordly right” to appoint names. This is the third figure of the archaic.

#### **1.4 Into the Market-Town: Radomir Konstantinović’s**

##### ***Philosophy of Parochialism***

This rather wavering analysis attempted to show that the three figures of the archaic (backwardness, vitality, resistance to representation) are an indispensable part of grand narratives. It also suggested which motifs can be regarded as “archaic”: dirt, disorder, lack of control, etc. A certain vagueness of the concept has therefore hopefully been dispersed. A first hint can also be offered as to why the Yugoslav 1960s cinema had a distinct penchant towards archaic imagery. Already with Hegel, Marx, and Freud, the archaic establishes peculiar connections with the South Slavic space. On the one hand, a radical backwardness is projected on this space, which is regarded as liminal and almost excluded from European culture. This is Hegel’s barbarian remnant or Freud’s peoples who, even today, even in Europe, indulge in the sense of smell. Here, we are faced with well-known Balkanist tropes that, in Freud’s rendering, quite expectedly veer towards dreams of uninhibited pleasure. On the other hand, in Marx and Engels’ writings, a different connection is established: the archaic is to be overcome, surely, but it is also that which potentially ascribes the South Slavic space an avant-garde role in world history. Archaic forms of common ownership can short-circuit the lengthy process of gradual development and, in a modified but not entirely suppressed form, become beacons for the world revolution. The archaic paradoxically characterizes the most backward and the most progressed, those who are *at once* too far and too close to the universal *telos*; it is a strange crossroads where Balkanism meets Marxism.

A third aspect of the archaic makes things even more problematic. Not only is the line separating the archaic as “vitality” from the archaic as “backwardness” inherently unstable – the most backward can always unite into a young, potent nation, but the young nation can also fail at sublating its backward elements – but these two figures are also at risk of collapsing into the third figure, where “mere arbitrariness” reaches a completely disarticulated state. The shadow of this possibility became apparent with Freud’s substitution of smell for sight in the South Slavic region. However, the third figure of the archaic is a peculiar one: it has a paradoxical semantic value of not having a semantic value. It is images not dissolving into concepts, cries not forming words. Furthermore, it testifies to a power and violence inherent in the very process of forming concepts and articulations. If the first two figures of the archaic play a constitutive role in shaping the identity of the South Slavic (later Yugoslav) space, they must always manoeuvre in the proximity of a third figure. This figure, in turn, unmasks the violent character of identity-formation through grand narratives. The game of the archaic is thus a complex one, in which fundamental cultural representations transform into one another or are driven to a limit where they undergo desymbolization. This dense cluster of shifting positions is what made the archaic into a neuralgic point of the 1960s Yugoslav cinema.

But is this not stretching the argument a little too far? To repeat the initial question: can one really establish such strong ties between philosophical tropes largely appertaining to the 19th century and the Yugoslav culture of the 1960s? A brief analysis of Radomir Konstantinović's treatise *The Philosophy of Parochialism* will demonstrate that the three figures of the archaic were in fact very present in the Yugoslav philosophical discourse of the 1960s.

Konstantinović's *Philosophy of Parochialism (Filosofija palanke)* was first published in 1969, after which it received numerous further editions, becoming a "cult classic in Balkan studies" (Cox 2017, 60). Dušan Bjelić terms the book a "virtually unique example of indigenous Balkan discourse independent of European philosophy" and an "essential component for the new cultural studies of the region" (2002, 13).

Konstantinović's main aim is to establish the definition of a spirit of "parochialism". In his view, this spirit was "forgotten by history", it got stuck between the city and the village, between an ideally closed, "tribal" world and an ideally open, modern world (1981, 7). The spirit of parochialism therefore lingers in a bad neither-nor position: it has not exactly remained a child, it has become an *infantile* grown-up, unable to return to real childhood (the "tribe") but at the same time unable to fully grow up into the world (the "city" in Konstantinović's terminology). The diagnosis is clear: the spirit of parochialism or of the "market-town"<sup>3</sup> is a bad half-breed and a stain on the world's modernity; being neither city nor village, it is the backward figure of the archaic.

The question now arises of where the spirit of parochialism resides. In this respect, Konstantinović is ambiguous: based on the textual examples he analyses, one could conclude that the spirit of parochialism was predominantly present in Serbian national culture up until 1945. On other occasions, however, Konstantinović argues that this "infantile" spirit is characteristic of the entire Balkans and that it has persisted into "our most contemporary present" (the year 1969) (2021, 244). Finally, on other occasions still, Konstantinović insists that the spirit of parochialism is a "wandering spirit" (2021, 26); it does not belong to any single territory and there is no country where it cannot appear.

Furthermore, through a truly deconstructive gesture, the spirit of parochialism can usurp "history's" place. Konstantinović argues that the ideal "openness" of history is, in fact, a product of this very spirit: "It is evident that this world of absolute openness exists only in the spirit of parochialism" (1981, 8). Rather than being an independent entity, history's *telos* – ideal openness – thus becomes a dream (or nightmare) dreamt by the parochial spirit. And this changes the parochial spirit's role. No longer a bad, forgotten appendix, it becomes the very driving force of history: "There is no history through reconciliation with history [...]: *non-reconciliation* with history creates history." (1981, 193) The spirit of parochialism thus avenges itself: it imagines its others – the tribe as the radically closed and the city-world as the radically open – and with these others it *invents* history, which is an incessant transition from one to the other. As Konstantinović claims, the spirit of parochialism therefore appears "wherever there is creation and movement" (2021, 169).

The backward thus gets re-evaluated as the vital: although apparently forgotten by history, the spirit of parochialism – characteristic of Yugoslav culture in 1969 – becomes a dynamic principle, an agent of movement. It is not my aim to assess whether Konstantinović's diagnosis is "correct"; rather, what his treatise shows is a) that the archaic was a relevant part of Yugoslav cultural self-fashioning in 1969 and b) that this self-fashioning was grounded in a re-evaluative gesture that substitutes backwardness (the "bad" archaic) with vitality (the "good" archaic).

Finally, Konstantinović does not fail to introduce the third figure of the archaic into his system. A negative feature of the "market-town" is its insistence on representational clarity or "style" in Konstantinović's idiosyncratic terminology. The "market-town" is an "ensymbolized world" (2021, 62), a world of "given truths" (1981, 36). Within the market-town, "reality itself" is a norm with regard to which "everything contradictory [...] is rejected with irrepressible brutality" (2021, 35). While defining the market-town's "style", Konstantinović therefore reactivates two premises already encountered in this study. First, reality is created through "ensymbolization" (one would be tempted to say, through discourse). Second, ensymbolization is no innocent act, it is based in suppression and brutality.

A way out of "style's" discursive domination can once again be found in a dream of "animality". Animality is essentially tied to pure bodily presence; Konstantinović argues: "The body is the black privilege of the animal" (2021, 128). This bodily presence is then connected to a by-now well-known cluster of motifs: it is "beyond all power of suppression" (as in Hegel or Freud or Bataille), it is a pure lack of memory (as in Nietzsche), finally, it is a movement of *desymbolization* (*desimbolizacija*) (1981, 139–141) (as in Nietzsche or Bataille). The animal thus stands outside suppression, articulated language, and even time. It is for this reason that a reversal to animality offers an escape from the market-town's "style". Whether forgotten by history or producing history, it would seem that the "market-town's" "ensymbolization" is always a violent act. In *The Philosophy of Parochialism*, the only way out of this violence can be found in the third figure of the archaic: that which bears the paradoxical meaning of destroying meanings.

Through revisiting all three above-defined figures of the archaic, Konstantinović's *Philosophy of Parochialism* unambiguously proves that they were of high relevance for a "cult classic" of Yugoslav philosophy in the 1960s. His treatise also explores two fundamental possibilities offered by a discursive cluster revolving around the archaic: re-evaluation on the one hand and a dream of escaping discursivity all together on the other. But what about film? The next chapter will show how important motifs appertaining to the archaic were for the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. If Yugoslav philosophy had touched on the archaic during the 1960s, its cinema was saturated by it through and through.

## Notes

- 1 In his later writings, Engels systematically refuted the possibility hinted at in the *Manifesto* Foreword, namely that the Russian peasantry could somehow short-circuit the "normal" teleological trajectory. An exemplary text in this regard is his "Afterword (1894) to 'On

Social Relations in Russia” (1990b); curiously enough, in this short text, Engels himself cites the above-quoted fragment of the Foreword and evidently misinterprets it, as if in an attempt to exorcise the symbolic possibility he himself had opened.

- 2 The *zadruga* was a form of expanded family characteristic of the South Slavic space, where several generations (usually the parents, married sons and their children) shared both property and work. It usually comprised ten to 20 members (although there are records of larger *zadrugas*) and was led by a “starješina” (“elder”). The traditional *zadrugas* had almost fully disappeared by the 1950s.
- 3 A literal translation of the title *Filosofija palanke* would be “the spirit of the small town” or “the spirit of the market-town”; Konstantinović’s title denotes not only a state of mind, but also a space that is not exactly urban but no longer rural either.

## 2 The Yugoslav Celluloid Archaic

### A Panorama

#### 2.1 The “Third Way” and Yugoslav Cinema

Before I start with the description of films that make use of the “archaic”, a very brief introduction into Yugoslavia’s cultural and film history is needed. Yugoslavia was a rare example of a European country that liberated its territories by its own forces during the People’s Liberation Struggle (*narodnooslobodilačka borba*) in World War Two. Consequently, the Soviet influence in Yugoslavia was not felt as strongly as in those countries that were liberated by the Red Army. Nevertheless, right after the war’s end, Yugoslav cultural politics did rely on a Soviet cultural model. This holds true for its cinema as well: the first feature film that was made in Yugoslavia after 1945 bore the title *In the Mountains of Yugoslavia* (*V gorakh Jugoslavii*, 1946) and was directed by the Soviet director Abram Room. The making of this film served as a training ground for Yugoslav filmmakers. Room was assisted by Vjekoslav Afrić, who would direct the first Yugoslav feature film *Slavica* (1947) one year later. Nevertheless, Room’s feature also produced a certain malaise, if not discontent with the Yugoslav leadership and audiences. Nikica Gilić suggests that the earliest Yugoslav partisan films wanted to contest the way local partisans were depicted in Room’s *In the Mountains of Yugoslavia* (2011, 40), and Tanja Zimmermann offers some reasons for this dissatisfaction: in Room’s movie, Yugoslav fighters were depicted not only as heavily reliant on a “well-disciplined Red Army with planes, tanks, and cannons”, they were also represented as “simple, strong, and impulsive peasants, dressed in folk costumes and sheep skins.” (2014, 165)

Then came 1948 and the split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union; diplomatic relations between the two countries would not be re-established until after Stalin’s death in 1953. There are contesting theories as to what exactly caused the split. What is certain, however, is that the break with the USSR introduced a tectonic shift in Yugoslav cultural politics. The Soviet cultural model was now regarded as a dogmatic fallacy and was largely referred to pejoratively as “Zhdanovism”. A new cultural politics was therefore needed for non-aligned Yugoslavia, one which would comply with neither socialist realist nor with Western bourgeois models. But there was a problem: nobody was sure what this cultural politics should look like. In his famous address to the Yugoslav Writers’ Union in Ljubljana, Miroslav

Krleža thus stressed the fact that “prototypes” for “our situation” do not exist at all (1967, 13). As will be shown in Chapter Four, Krleža then tried to define a new cultural program for Yugoslavia’s “third-wayness”, and this program was centred on the archaic.

The split produced a further consequence: Yugoslavia opened toward Western cultural influences. One of the predominant techniques applied in Yugoslav cinema during the 1950s was therefore to graft Hollywood’s genre patterns upon local subjects, most notably the partisan struggle. As demonstrated by both Nikica Gilić (2015) and Radina Vučetić (2018), the uncontested master of this technique was Žika Mitrović; already his *Doctor M’s Echelon* (*Ešalon Doktora M.*, 1955) drew decisively on motivic and narrative patterns characteristic of Hollywood Western movies. Through this process, Yugoslav cinema was rapidly developing a genre system and mastering the techniques of classical narration.

Finally, the split brought about another change that heavily influenced Yugoslav society at large and its cinema in particular. After breaking with the USSR, Yugoslavia abandoned a centralized economic model and introduced workers’ self-management as a cornerstone of its economic system. Roughly speaking, this meant that workers’ councils within every company were endowed with the authority to sovereignly decide on the company’s economic strategy, investments, production plans, etc. Although there are claims that the Party continued to discreetly exercise a relatively high amount of control over the economy, self-management, combined with Yugoslavia’s decidedly federalist organization, produced a high degree of decentralization.

Accordingly, the Yugoslav film industry went through several reforms that fostered decentralization. Already during the 1940s, when its studio system was created, a film studio was founded in each republic: *Triglav Film* in Slovenia, *Jadran Film* in Croatia, *Avala Film* in Serbia, *Bosna Film* in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Vardar Film* in Macedonia, and *Lovćen Film* in Montenegro. In 1956, a new federal law on film was passed, which changed the way Yugoslav films were financed: instead of receiving financial means for single films directly from the state, production houses could now apply for subsidies with annual production plans to a State Film Fund which, in its turn, was filled through the taxation of revenues made by the annual sale of cinema tickets (Škrabalo 2008, 62). Being centralized in Belgrade at first, the Fund was distributed among the Republics in 1962, while another fundamental break took place in 1967: from that point on, filmmakers were allowed to apply to the Fund directly with their projects and search for producers only after having obtained a grant; authors thus gained a stronger position in relation to the producers (Škrabalo 2008, 88).

Furthermore, when a domestic film was deemed of high artistic value and awarded at festivals, the production company was awarded a financial bonus out of the Fund (Goulding 2002, 37). In the early 1960s, the growing liberalization and decentralization of film funding therefore allowed for aesthetic experiments. These are the conditions that allowed for a new wave to surface in Yugoslavia. The movement was first named “New Yugoslav Film” (*Novi jugoslovenski film*),

but toward the decade's end it became notorious under the label Black Wave (*Crni talas*).

As in other contexts, the movement "had to wrest control from the privileged producers of the national cinema, in an Oedipal struggle for succession." (Andrew 2009, 74) Yugoslav film critics saw the entire decade as one marked by this struggle. In 1968, Ranko Munitić described Yugoslav *auteur* film as an "*enfant terrible*", which developed despite "vigorous resistance" (1968a, 7). Mira Boglić did not hesitate to employ even more militant terms: "Barricades have been raised [...]. On the one side stand the avant-gardists, the modernists who have opened the door widely to new cinema [...]; on the other are the traditionalists who try to keep this door shut [...]." (1968, 48)

The "*enfant terrible*" standing on Yugoslav cinematic barricades developed through the following stages: the child was born in 1961 with *A Dance in the Rain* by Boštjan Hladnik and *And Love Has Vanished* by Aleksandar Petrović (Novaković 1967a, 99). After this turbulent birth, a battle for modernist cinema was fought up until 1963 (Novaković 1967a, 107), with Petrović's and Hladnik's films *Days* (*Dani*, 1963) and *A Sand Castle* (*Peščeni grad*, 1963) still receiving heavy criticism upon their appearance at the Pula Film Festival (the largest national film festival in Yugoslavia). However, in 1964, with films such as *The Man from the Oak Forest* (*Čovek iz hrastove šume*, Mića Popović, 1964) and *The Traitor* (*Izdajnik*, Živojin Pavlović, 1964), a victory was won for "the destruction of dominant codes and norms" (Novaković 1967a, 107). By 1967, the nonconformist trend had attained full consolidation, with Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Makavejev, and Zvonimir Berković achieving an international triumph at the Cannes Film Festival (Čolić 1967, 152). However, in 1972, the nonconformists suffered a series of blows: Lazar Stojanović was prosecuted for having directed his debut *Plastic Jesus*, and many renowned *auteurs* left the country amidst a witch hunt led against the Black Wave. For this reason, the Yugoslav cinematic 1960s are considered to last until 1972.

To a certain extent, the "barricades" model is correct: cinematic modernism did struggle for recognition in Yugoslavia during the 1960s. But this model also introduces the danger of simplification. It regards the "non-conformist" Yugoslav *auteurs* as heroic fighters against a purely conformist, mainstream, popular, sometimes also ideologically burdened, cinema. There are two problems with this perspective: first, many of the Yugoslav *auteurs* also directed films that were intended to be popular; Mića Popović's *Burduš* is a striking example in this regard. Second, in the 1960s, Yugoslav popular films were sometimes strikingly critical. At times, they were even critical with regard to Yugoslav "non-conformist" filmmaking. To take an example, Dragoslav Lazić's popular comedy *Poor Mary* represented some of the allegedly radical Black Wave topics as being quite *conformist* in 1968.

At the decade's beginning, however, New Yugoslav Film's topics seemed quite fresh. As Tomislav Šakić claims, Yugoslav *auteur* cinema did not only introduce new narrative and formal procedures, it also brought new thematic interests (Šakić 2016). At first, it turned toward contemporary and intimate subjects instead of collective and historical ones. Petrović's aforementioned *And Love Has Vanished* is an

example of one such film. As the decade advanced, however, marginalized, underdeveloped social settings started becoming a privileged subject. Furthermore, in accordance with a modernist aesthetic, quite a few filmmakers started exploring states that transgress rationality: the “instinctual” aspects of human existence, “deranged” mental conditions and similar. A radical and rightfully forgotten example of this trend is Kokan Rakonjac’s *Wild Seed* (*Divlje seme*, 1967). Although these topics were considered provocative in themselves, not all films that made use of them were critical; some were simply riding the wave of a new thematic fashion. Be this as it may, these developments pushed the archaic into the centre of Yugoslav cinema’s attention. In what follows, I will offer a brief overview of how it flooded the Yugoslav 1960s screen.

## 2.2 Mountains and Mud

The survey of archaisms in Yugoslav 1960s films can take the category of space as its point of departure. In his study of “socialist spaces” – or of their absence – in Black Wave films, Owen Hatherley proposes that “mud rather than concrete” (2012, 201) was the movement’s hallmark. He goes on to note that representations of “picturesque Balkan misery” might have contributed to the Black Wave’s success at international film festivals. As much as one can agree with this diagnosis, especially when having in mind such films as *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, Želimir Žilnik, 1969) or *It Rains in My Village* (*Biće skoro propast svijeta*, Aleksandar Petrović, 1968), there is another spatial denominator at least as characteristic for the period: the merciless mountain. Films as diverse as Krsto Paipć’s modernist, Black Wave *Handcuffs* (*Lisice*, 1969) and Radivoje Lola Đukić’s melodramatic, ideologically benign *Ballad of the Wicked One* (*Balada o svirepom*, 1971) made abundant use of a mountain space almost untouched by modernity.

It might be no coincidence that these two spaces – the space of the mountain and that of mud – both reverberate in etymologies of the very name Balkans. Maria Todorova writes: “The word balkan is linked to mountain: most Ottoman and Turkish dictionaries explain it as mountain or mountain range.” (2009, 26) Although the Turkish origin of the word is quite indisputable, Todorova mentions another possible etymology: the name can be derived from the Turkish word mud (*balk*) by adding to it the diminutive suffix *-an* (2009, 27). A lack of “socialist space” therefore does not only lead to representations of “picturesque” Balkan misery, it also rediscovers two fundamental tropes of a “Balkan” space: from interpretations of the region’s very name to Miroslav Krleža’s “Pannonian mud” or Alberto Fortis’ mountain-dwelling Morlachs, the mountain and mud have a rich and well-established history in the region’s (self)perception.

These spaces can be regarded as archaic for two reasons. First, they testify to a partial or full lack of “the taming of nature’s forces”. Freud had claimed that a civilized country is recognizable through “wild and dangerous animals” being exterminated. However, the protagonists of at least two Yugoslav films from the 1960s – *The Ballad of the Wicked One* and *The Event* (*Događaj*, Vatroslav Mimica, 1969) – are forced to fight with wolves in Yugoslavia’s mountains and forests.

But wolves are not the only predators that lurk in the wild mountain. In Vatroslav Mimica's *The Event*, the wolf is symbolically associated with the figure who shoots it: a forest ranger turned robber, who will accidentally beat his little daughter dead with an axe at the film's end. The mountain is thus saturated not only with dangerous animals, but also with murderers, man-beasts, and a fight for survival. Krsto Papić's *Handcuffs* adds sexual violence to this list. Furthermore, the mountain is not only represented as a space with archaic properties, it is also represented as immutable: one can either try to survive within its world or one can try to escape it.

Another film that heavily relies on archaic mountain life is *Downstream from the Sun* (*Nizvodno od sunca*, Fedor Škubonja, 1969). The film won the most prestigious film prize in Yugoslavia, the "Golden Arena", for best feature film at the Pula Film Festival in 1969. The same year, *The Event* came in second place, while the third prize was given to Aleksandar Petrović's *It Rains in My Village*. Škubonja's film is situated in a secluded mountain village where a young schoolteacher comes to supervise the building of a new school. The village is separated into two clans, each of which disposes of a certain territory. The clans practice initiation rituals – a boy must jump through a bonfire to prove his courage – and enter a conflict with the socialist authorities due to illegal woodchopping. There are almost no modern tools, means of communication or transport in the village, some characters wear sheep skins, and during the confrontation with the police, one officer explains to the gathered peasants: "If you draw your axes, we will draw our guns!" This difference in weaponry quite evidently marks a temporal difference: it is a modern weapon (the gun) facing a non-modern one (the axe). In other words, the Yugoslav authorities and the Yugoslav mountain dwellers do not share the same time. Finally, the film does not end with the enlightenment project represented by the school kicking off. It ends with a murder by knife out of revenge; one does not change the mountain's ways.

Since *The Event* has already been covered to some extent, our attention can now turn to *It Rains in My Village*, Petrović's feature that won the "Bronze Arena" at the Pula Film Festival in 1969. This time, the film's world is one of mud and dust. The plot is situated in a village in Srem (a province in the west of Serbia and east of Croatia) where the swineherd Triša – who is systematically compared to his pigs through *mise-en-scène* – decides to marry the mute "village idiot", who, in her turn, periodically gets raped by the village's other men. Triša makes this decision in order to spite his pious father and to prove his courage in front of his friends. Then an emancipated schoolteacher interested in naïve art comes to the village and starts using the swineherd for sexual amusement. Things go wrong when Triša cuts his wife's throat in order to be able to marry the schoolteacher, who has lost all interest in him.

In Petrović's feature, the village is a space where tradition establishes social roles (Triša is a swineherd because his father was one), where chariots and carts are the main means of transport, where there is not a trace of concrete, where many inhabitants do not wear shoes, where life still circles around religious rituals, where revolutionary zeal ends with the singing of *Slava Srbinu – Svetozare Miletiću*, a song written in World War One and dedicated to a 19th century Serbian politician.

This implies that the peasants' idea of revolution is lagging behind a couple of generations and invested with nationalism.

So the three most prized films at the Pula Film Festival of 1969 all represent worlds devoid of most of the key signifiers of modernity. One could suggest that 1969 is the year when the Black Wave movement is in full sway and that this is a trademark of the period's cinema's critical stance. It is easy to demonstrate that *Downstream from the Sun* and *It Rains in My Village* are critical films: the first one shows that mountain dwellers are forced into theft to survive in a socialist country; the second one demonstrates that Yugoslav peasants are utterly disconnected from their own times, so much so that their efforts at socialism end up in overt parody.

Nevertheless, this explanatory matrix runs into two problems. First, it would be difficult to detect overt criticism in *The Event*. The link between the archaic and criticism is therefore a possible, but not a mandatory one. Second, explicit critical messages cannot fully account for the symbolic excesses of the archaic. One could offer a criticism of peasant backwardness without pushing it all the way to the man-pig and to the sexual harassment of a mute woman. One could criticize the seclusion of mountain dwellers without bonfires and traditional tools facing guns. If the archaic is related to criticism, there is also a surplus attached to it, which is not exactly functional with regard to political messages. The sheer fact that in 1969 the three most prized films in Yugoslavia represent perfectly archaic worlds should therefore be considered in its own right, without it being decoded as encrypted political critique right away.

If one now returns to the mountain, further examples of its cruel filmic life can be enumerated. One of its great masters was the director Krsto Papić with not only the aforementioned *Handcuffs* but also his later *The Play Hamlet in the Village Mrduša Donja* (*Predstava Hamleta u selu Mrduša Donja*, 1973). Then there is the slightly less renowned *My Side of the World* (*Moja strana sveta*, Vlatko Filipović, 1969) and Mića Popović's films that partially rely on the mountain's wilderness: *The Tough Ones* (*Delije*, 1968) and *The Man from the Oak Forest* (*Čovek iz hrastove šume*, 1964). Boro Drašković's *Horoscope* (*Horoskop*, 1969) could be added to this list.

As for mud, further examples are not lacking. A radically muddy world is to be found in Aleksandar Petrović's most celebrated film *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (*Skupljači perja*, 1967) but also in Ante Babaja's *The Birch Tree* (*Breza*, 1967), in Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*, 1969), in Živojin Pavlović's *The Enemy* (*Neprijatelj*, 1965), and Miroslav Antić's *Breakfast with the Devil* (*Doručak sa đavolom*, 1971). Not only are the films' worlds muddy, it also seems that the characters cannot help but roll in this mud. Then there is the spatial scheme of leaving the mud for the city, only to find a space of neither city nor village. Such is the spatial scheme of Zdravko Randić's *The Bet* (*Oplada*, 1971). Or, the other way around, one can leave the city for the liminal semirural space, as beautifully represented in the opening sequence of Živojin Pavlović's segment of the omnibus *The City* (*Grad*, Kokan Rakonjac, Marko Babac, Živojin Pavlović, 1963).

Another example that merits attention with regard to its spatial scheme is the film *Shepherd* (*Ovčar*, Bakir Tanović, 1971). It follows the seasonal migration of three shepherds from a small Bosnian mountain village to the lowlands of Slavonija

and Vojvodina. The mountain village is shown only briefly at the film's very beginning but the setting is recognizably archaic: the mountain dwellers live in huts with open fires on the floor, they wear sheepskins, signs of piousness can be seen; it is a traditional community deprived of all signs of modernity. Then the journey begins: the shepherds descend the mountain and cross the river Sava only to find out that they are not welcome in the lowlands: local authorities as well as peasants chase them away while accusing their sheep of causing damage in the fields. This conflict ends with one of the shepherds being murdered, and the rest continuing their desperate wanderings.

Nebojša Jovanović claims that *Shepherd* is an exemplary critical film of the period and that it never received appropriate scholarly attention because it does not belong to the corpus of fetishized Black Wave *auteur* cinema (2016, 58). In Jovanović's view, the movie openly problematizes one of Yugoslavia's major socio-political problems of the period: the growing disparity between developed (north-western) and underdeveloped (south-eastern) regions. On a rhetorical level, this is by all means true: nobody in the Croatian lowland has any understanding for the neighbours from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, these seasonal migrants overtly state that the lowlanders live like gods while not letting them live at all; a claim that is no overstatement in the film, since the lowlanders do perpetually chase the shepherds away with guns.

However, on a visual level, the godlike life of the lowlands does not seem that glamorous. The lowland is represented as a space of mud and floods; most exterior scenes encompass either a body of overflowing water (starting with the river Sava) or puddles of water remaining from previous floods. To quote Freud once again: if "the course of rivers which threaten to overflow their banks is regulated" (Freud 1962, 39–40) in a developed country, the Croatian lowland as represented in *Shepherd* does not exactly qualify. Also, the lowland is represented as a space lacking in concrete, modern transportation, media, and communication while not lacking in heavy drinking, animal fairs, or, finally, a murder by axe. The film's spatial system is therefore one leading out of the mountain and into mud and not exactly one leading from an underdeveloped to a developed region: a descent from the mountain leads into barren, overflowed fields, endless frost, decaying village houses, mud, and violence.

Mud and the mountain, not development and underdevelopment, thus form a binary system in *Shepherd*. This purely negative system can be taken as a good starting point for a further methodological remark. As noted previously, Jovanović claims that *Shepherd's* critical stance was largely neglected by scholars because of a fetishization of the figure of the subversive *auteur* in Yugoslav cinema. Anikó Imre goes further still and claims that the general perception of Eastern European cinema has been determined by the double concept of "high (or *auteur*) film art and dissident defiance" (2012, xii), which, at least partially, blocked contemporary theoretical developments:

The *auteur*, larger than life and frozen in a romantic modernist gesture, functioned as a gatekeeper to guard against theoretical currents that were

concurrently transforming the study of film elsewhere, from semiotics to psychoanalysis, feminism to cultural studies, studies of identity and representation to theories of spectatorship.

(2012, xiv)

Lutz Haucke's study *Nouvelle Vague in Osteuropa* could be regarded as a prime example and synthesis of this approach. Its only analytical categories are the *auteur*-intellectual, aesthetic modernism, and political subversion (2009, 52). And since Bakir Tanović does not belong to the pantheon of Yugoslav *auteurs*, even his overt criticism could, in Jovanović's view, not be appreciated by scholars, even though it is in certain respects more straightforward than the one to be found in some of the notorious Black Wave films.

While I agree with Jovanović on the necessity to widen the field of analysis and not systematically privilege a very narrow corpus of canonized *auteur* films (rather, this corpus itself should be regarded as appertaining to a larger ensemble with which it shares important properties), the very concept of political criticism in Eastern European cinema should be rethought as well. To stick to the example of *Shepherd*: to a certain extent, Jovanović is certainly right, the film is critical in thematizing stratifications in the development of Yugoslav republics. But at the same time, the film's visual aspect does not exactly comply with the critical scheme: the Croatian lowland is *not* depicted as a space of abundant wealth and prosperity on a visual level. The film juxtaposes the "life of gods" described by its characters with images of this life that are quite far from godlike. The division is therefore more complex than a simple binary opposition between developed and underdeveloped provinces. On a verbal level, there are the developed and the underdeveloped; the visual level, however, is saturated by the archetypes of mountain and mud.

The complex interplay of these elements makes straightforward critical messages rather ambiguous. What could be regarded as the critique of a precisely defined socio-political problem (the uneven development strongly troubling Yugoslavia in 1971) also acquires contours of a Balkan archetype. As one of the "gazdas"<sup>1</sup> of the lowlands explains to the surviving shepherds after the murder by axe, they are forever cursed, forever destined to roam deserted spaces. Upon this short lecture, they disappear into the endless fog. A precisely defined social problem is thus being represented as an immutable, timeless archetype (or a Balkanist stereotype) on another level. To a certain extent, this goes against the current of the film's critical stance: if something is represented as a timeless curse, it is not exactly a result of particular conditions reigning in Yugoslavia at a precise time-point.

When dealing with criticism – and there is no doubt that some very critical films were shot in Yugoslavia during the 1960s – the methodology of discourse analysis should therefore be held in view perpetually. Instead of searching for one subversive or critical message that the intellectual-*auteur* tries to swindle around mechanisms of censorship, one should try to relate the code of criticism to as many other codes as possible. Criticism should not be regarded as a kernel of sense but as one among many elements taking part in the film's representational system.

### 2.3 Beasts, Revolutions, Tribes, and Rape

All grand narratives analysed in the previous chapter had to define a fundamental caesura: that between animality and humanity. With its four-legged posture, its unmediated instincts, its exclusion from language, its immediate perception of the original flow of images, the “animal” is the original, excluded symbol of the archaic. It therefore comes as no surprise that a cinema interested in the archaic will question the boundary between animality and humanity by creating ambiguous man-beast figures. Two of these have already been mentioned – the wolf-ranger of *The Event* and the man-pig of *It Rains in My Village*.

Although falling outside the set timeframe for a couple of years, the film that introduced the blueprint for the man-beast in Yugoslav cinema (to be found, once again, in the merciless mountain) is Krešo Golik’s *The Girl and the Oak* (*Djevojka i hrast*, 1955). The film’s rapist antagonist is unambiguously associated with a bull. Then there are films that take man-beast figures for their titles: Živojin Pavlović’s *The Rats Woke Up* (*Buđenje pacova*, 1967) and Gordan Mihić’s and Ljubiša Kozomara’s *Crows* (*Vrane*, 1969). But the master of beastly anthropology was undoubtedly Miodrag Mića Popović. Not only does his film *Swarm* (*Roj*, 1966) explain human social organization through the principles of a beehive, it is already in 1964 that he fashioned his most impressive man-beast in the movie *The Man from the Oak Forest* (*Čovek iz hrastove šume*). The film’s demonic hero Maksim – an executioner for the Chetniks in World War Two – refuses to ever leave his forest and enter the city, walks on all fours from time to time, cannot grasp the value of money, and must urinate after executing murders, as if marking his territory.

Maksim leads towards another aspect of “archaization” in Yugoslav cinema: that of articulating the revolution against the archaic. A clear-cut example of this trend can be found in Antun Vrdoljak’s *When You Hear the Bells* (*Kad čuješ zvona*, 1969): when a member of the Communist Party comes to a secluded partisan village to discipline its fighters, he finds out that the conflict is perceived there as an ethnic struggle between Orthodox Christian and Muslim parts of the population. Their Partisan and Ustasha uniforms are but a decorum for much older hatred. Another quite interesting way of “archaizing” the revolution can be found in the notorious *Role of My Family in the World Revolution* (*Uloga moje porodice u svetskoj revoluciji*, Bato Čengić, 1971). Here one is no longer faced with Balkan tribes shrouding their age-old conflicts with the veil of world history. Rather, the revolution itself is represented as an outburst of archaic energy. First, the revolutionaries are represented as knights riding through the streets of Belgrade on horses, with their banners fluttering in the wind. Then the revolution is represented as a setting free of wild animals: elephants, llamas, camels, ostriches, and a baby lion start roaming the streets of Belgrade. Given the scene’s symbolic charge, the animals can be regarded as a metaphor of the revolutionaries themselves. In another scene, the revolutionaries are no longer riding horses but elephants, as if they were Indian maharajas. A little later, a character takes on the role of Christ: he intersects a religious procession and starts healing the blind and the mute. This gallery of

archaisms receives its culmination in the staging of a totemic meal during which all the film's characters share a cake in the form of Stalin's head; in a fully Freudian manner, everybody must take a bite of the political father's body.

A close analysis of this dense cluster of motifs cannot be attempted at this point, but what should be clear already from this brief description is that the revolution – “the destruction of all that is old”, as one of the film's characters would have it – is coded as a game of very old, if not archaic forces: the revolution is animal energy, knightly adventure, messianic wonder-making, tribal meal.

Still other archaizations of the revolution and of the partisan struggle can be cited. Eduard Galić's *Black Birds* (*Crne ptice*, 1967) is a discomfiting example. In Galić's film, the conflict is related to the biblical verse “I sink into deep mire/ where there is no foothold” by an Ustascha lieutenant whose prophet's dedication survives even death. Then there are the notorious *Ambush* (*Zaseda*, 1969) by Živojin Pavlović and *Cause of Death Not to be Mentioned* (*Uzrok smrti ne pominjati*, Jovan Živanović, 1968). Bato Čengić's *Little Soldiers* (*Mali vojnici*, 1967) – a film in which post-liberatory zeal turns the hunt for a dog into the hunt for a boy – could be added to this list.

Another kind of archaization that appears in Yugoslav films can loosely be associated with ritualized, “tribal” patterns of behaviour. I have already mentioned the jumping through bonfires in *Downstream from the Sun*; a similar custom can be found in Miroslav Antić's *Breakfast with the Devil*. A further, curious example is offered by Boro Drašković's *Horoscope*: a group of youths organizes a dance in the local dancehall. The party then gets interrupted by another group: its members slowly gain territory in the dancehall by crawling on their knees and poking the floor with knives, thus suggesting that whoever's feet remain in their territory will get stabbed. The opposition between a dance party to rock and roll music and a gaining of territory by knife is strikingly pronounced and points to the fact that the film's world has only very superficially been modernized. To this line of archaisms, one should probably add the mute *kolo* dances that appear in *Shepherd, Handcuffs*, and Zdravko Randić's *Compatriots* (*Zemljaci*, 1963).

Although it means ending this panorama in a dark manner, one last motif should be considered: that of rape. Svetlana Slapšak notes that a strong misogyny was characteristic of the Black Wave movement, with rape scenes being “common-place” in the period's cinema (2007, 37). Vesi Vuković reinforces this claim by stating that “rape is a common motif in roughly one decade of Yugoslav cinema (1961–1972)” (2018, 133). Vuković also offers some statistical data: out of the 286 Yugoslav films shot between 1961 and 1972, at least 41 “feature the motif of explicit, implicit or attempted rape” (2018, 133). In comparison, it is estimated that only 0.21% of all films produced in the USA between 1903 and 1979 comprise rape scenes (2018, 133). The Yugoslav 15.24% in the period between 1961 and 1972 therefore seem to be soaring high. As Vuković is well aware, these numbers are not entirely precise, but even when considering possible imprecisions, the difference between the two film industries remains enormous.

For her analysis of *auteur* rape, Vuković chose three exemplary films: Papić's *Handcuffs*, Čengić's *The Role of My Family in the World Revolution*, and Antić's

*Breakfast with the Devil*. Her formal analysis of the chosen rape scenes, combined with feminist film theory, is quite brilliant. However, Vuković does not choose these three examples at random: all three films seem to prove that rape is a way of coding a clear political message. In Antić's film, the raped woman is a symbol of the peasants' land raped by a Stalinist communist party; in Papić's film, the raped bride once again serves as a symbol for Stalinist violence; and the exact same scheme can be applied to *The Role of My Family*. Briefly put, in the period's cinema, rape is a cypher for Stalinist violence. And once again, this claim is certainly true, all three rapists in the aforementioned films are Stalinists. But once again, the method of decoding an encrypted yet straightforward political message is partially troubling. In the case of Papić's and Antić's films, rape is also unambiguously tied to the deepest of Yugoslav mires and the cruellest of Yugoslav mountains. Rape is part of the "cruel" milieu at least as much as it is a cypher for Stalinism. This does not mean that it is not a cypher for Stalinism, but it does mean that its meanings cannot be exhausted through a simple formula of the type "rape equals Stalinism". Furthermore, the formula that turns rape into a cypher for political critique (one should add that it was not very subversive to criticize Stalinism in Yugoslavia after the break of 1948) can be established only through a careful choice of materials.<sup>2</sup> An overtly misogynous film like *Wild Seed*, which literally depicts Slavoj Žižek's famous ironic remark that the Balkans are a space where "women get raped and like it", could not fit this interpretative optics at all.

If Vuković's analysis is put against Imre's remarks, one can see how hard it is to fully depart from the dominant explanatory matrix for Eastern European cinema. Even when the focus does shift towards gender and feminist theory, the bigger-than-life *auteur*, though misogynous, remains the great coder of political messages. This interpretative matrix largely blocks the way for certain explanatory mechanisms. While in a post-Yugoslav setting the excessive use of rape scenes would probably be recognized as an aspect of Balkanism right away, in the Yugoslav context, this interpretative road remains closed. Yugoslav cinema cannot be about Balkanism; Yugoslav cinema is about authors' political messages. But this set of problems already leads out of the panorama and back to the three functions of the archaic.

## 2.4 Conclusions

This brief overview of certain motifs and films has hopefully shown that the archaic was widely present in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s, especially towards the end of the decade (one need only remember the laureates at the Pula Film Festival of 1969). This is not to say that the archaic was a dominant trait of Yugoslav cinema in a quantitative sense, but it certainly was an element of a large number of films and it appeared in some very renowned ones. Through the panorama, certain methodological problems have crystallized. Anikó Imre's critique of the dominant approach to Eastern European cinema is to be taken into account systematically: the decoding of films in the sense of *auteurs'* political messages should be avoided as much as possible. This is not to say that there were no coded political messages in the period's cinema; rather, it means that these messages should be

regarded as one among many symbolic systems in a film, and not necessarily the most important one.

To briefly resume: the contours of the Yugoslav cultural and cinematic context have been sketched out. The three figures of the archaic have been identified and defined through the analysis of exemplary grand narratives. It has been shown that the archaic flooded the Yugoslav 1960s screen. The analysis will now shift from the panoramic perspective to a functional one. In a first large step, the interplay between the archaic as backwardness and the archaic as vitality will be studied. In a second large step, the archaic as disarticulation and resistance to representation will become the object of analysis.

## Notes

- 1 The term can be translated as “bosses” or “landlords”, and in this context it refers to rich peasants and landowners.
- 2 Something similar happens in Anna Batori’s book *The Extreme Cinema of Eastern Europe: Rape, Art, (S)Exploitation* (2024). Batori revisits the rape scenes addressed by Vuković and adds further examples; she offers a nuanced analysis of rape scenes in Boro Drašković’s *Horoscope* and Miloš Radivojević’s *This Crazy World of Ours* (*Bube u glavi*, 1970). While paying attention to how the two scenes were staged, she concludes that one “invokes the metaphor of the eradication of the body of the nation” (2024, 24), while in the other “silence is strongly linked to the nation’s grief and trauma” (2024, 25). A problem lies therein, however, that neither of the two films deals with “national” grief and trauma, nor does Batori’s own analysis show how the raped women would invoke “the nation’s” grief. Rather, her conclusions point to the critic’s own expectations: even when the theme is obviously absent, (post)Yugoslav cinema – at least in its violent aspects – *must* be about the nation and its traumas. An otherwise brilliant piece of scholarship thus erases a whole series of concerns that are in fact present in the two films. For example, Milena, the heroine of *This Crazy World of Ours*, gets raped by older colleagues, with whom she is forced to go on a picnic in order to get a steady job. The film is not about the “nation’s grief and trauma”, but about sexual abuse in the workplace. Reducing the raped heroines to metaphors of the nation does not serve them justice, nor does it engage with strands of critique that are present in the films themselves.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## II

# **Setting the Figures in Motion**

The Game of the Archaic on the  
Yugoslav 1960s Screen



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## 3 Balkanism

### The Time-Lag of *Realia*

#### 3.1 Balkanism as Motif

In previous chapters, the term “Balkanism” appeared quite a few times. Hegel’s description of the South Slavs as a “scattered barbarian remnant”, Freud’s South Slavs overestimating the sense of smell, Konstantinović’s world behind the hill, all share in a rhetoric of Balkanism to a smaller or larger extent. It is therefore necessary at this point to offer a systematic definition of Balkanism and to show how it relates to the archaic. The dynamics of Balkanism cannot be grasped without taking the previously discussed mechanisms of authoritative narratives into account. It is these mechanisms that establish the functions of a Balkanist discourse and make Balkanism curiously resilient with regard to efforts at critique.

The term “Balkanism” was first introduced by Maria Todorova in her groundbreaking study *Imagining the Balkans* and was later developed by a wide array of scholars (Bjelić and Savić 2005; Fleming 2000; Mishkova 2018; Sawyer 2014; Zinaić 2019; etc.). In a most simple way, Balkanism can be described as a set of “cultural stereotypes” (Longinović 2011, 42), “clichés” (Žižek 2000, 3), or “unwelcome symbolic meanings” (Goldsworthy 1998, 4) associated with the Balkan region. In her study, Todorova showed how the name *Balkans* was gradually detached from its reference to a precisely defined geographic region, only to become a generalized *Schimpfwort* (2009, 186) which connotes characteristics not in accordance with “Western” norms of behaviour, political and social organization, or even etiquette.

Already at the level of cultural stereotypes, Balkanism is heavily reliant on the archaic: it posits an alleged asynchrony between a marginal European region and the continent’s core. For Slavoj Žižek, the leading cliché on the Balkans is that they are “haunted by the ghosts of the past” (2000, 3); Tomislav Longinović accentuates the alleged presence of “old centuries” in the Balkans (2011, 10); Milica Bakić Hayden argues that in relation to a cultured “Europe”, the Balkans are represented as “lagging behind” and historically isolated (2006, 27); Felicity Rosslyn claims that it was easier for “Western” travellers to “stop the clock in Yugoslavia than to listen to it ticking” (2017, 25).

Another semantic dimension is added to the trope of time-lag almost immediately. Since the Balkans do not fully participate in Europe’s modernity, they are,

to a certain extent, “primitive”. As can be remembered, Europe’s “growing up” was represented as a complex process encompassing several dimensions. From a Hegelian perspective it was the gradual development of nation-states and individual (work) ethics. From a Marxist perspective it was the submission of the forces of nature (industrialization) and the gradual sharpening of class conflict. From a Freudian perspective it was not only technical progress but also a growing, painful mastery over individual drives. Europe’s modernity is thus defined on at least three levels: on the level of political organization, on the level of technological development, and on the level of individual patterns of behaviour. In contrast, Balkanization “has become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backwards, the primitive, the barbarian” (Todorova 2009, 3). As early as 1906, Goldsworthy notes, the Balkans were described as not belonging to “real Europe” but to a “savage” one (1998, 8). They thus ended up among the “shadowed lands of backwardness” (Wolff 1994, 4) on the “wrong” side of the continent’s West-East divide. This backwardness encompasses all aforementioned dimensions. From a political perspective, it is a return to tribal conflicts often shrouded in a “pathological” variant of nationalism. From a technical perspective, it is weak industrialization and urbanization. From the perspective of individual patterns of behaviour, it is irresponsibility, laziness, unreliability, lack of control.

Žižek, however, claims that the negative stereotype is doubled by a positive one. Todorova argues that the Balkans are coded as a strongly male space and that their representative male is “uncivilized, crude, cruel, and, without exception, dishevelled” (2009, 14). But following a logic not distant from Freud’s – which, as was noted, suggests that civilization destroys immediate, wild pleasures – Žižek identifies another dimension to the uncivilized Balkanite. This alternative perspective celebrates “the exotic authenticity of the Balkan Other, as in the notion of Serbs who, in contrast to inhibited, anaemic Western Europeans, still exhibit a prodigious lust for life” (2000, 5). It is important to emphasize that this “positive” portrayal belongs to a mode of representation that Žižek describes as “reverse racism.”

Variants of this “reverse racism” were applied to entire countries, with Yugoslavia being no exception. Through an analysis of British and American travelogues depicting Yugoslavia after World War Two – most notably Anne Kindersley’s *The Mountains of Serbia: Travels Through Inland Yugoslavia* (1976) – Felicity Rosslyn concluded that the foreigner’s gaze was looking for “a vanishing pastoral, the home of primitive values lost to the West” (2017, 17). The visual signs of this disappearing world included “folk costumes, *bogomil* tombstones, peasants dancing the *kolo* and the architecture of a distant past: Dubrovnik, Split, Sarajevo, Ohrid.” (2017, 23) Tanja Zimmermann, in turn, showed that the very same assembly of signs played a crucial role in the *self*-presentation of socialist Yugoslavia in its early years. By re-evaluating Balkanist stereotypes, Yugoslav cultural politics hazarded a dangerous substitution: “The place of primitivism was now taken by an original-archaic people and a *terra vergine* – the new-born Yugoslavia as a ‘third world’ between East and West.” (Zimmermann 2014, 219)

It is thus quite evident that the rhetoric of Balkanism makes explicit use of the first two figures of the archaic. Crude primitiveness can always be reframed

as lust for life; backwardness can always be reevaluated as an idyllic pastoral or the strength of youth. However, one does not escape the normative mechanism of othering in this way: the distance from modernity remains intact. A related problem, to which I have hinted when introducing Zimmermann's quote, concerns the position of the "balkanizing" subject. While Balkanism is mainly defined as a set of stereotypes *imposed* on the region by a "Western" gaze, Zimmerman identifies a *self*-balkanization. This problematic interplay of positions leads to the next definition of Balkanism – no longer as a simple set of *clichés*, but as a discursive formation.

### 3.2 Balkanism as Discourse

If Balkanism is to be defined as a discursive formation, three essential points need stressing. First, discourse is never merely a set of representations or tropes; it takes part in power relations that often rely on institutional support. Second, if considered as discourse, Balkanism cannot be separated from its role of reinforcing the centre's identity through its "deviations". Third, discourse has the capacity to create its own objects; it is not a passive reflection but a productive mechanism.

In all these respects, Balkanism approaches Orientalism. As was the case with the Orient, it was the Balkans' economic inferiority that allowed the "centre" of Europe to create its image, to invent a Balkanized Balkans. According to Todorova, this process began already during the Renaissance and differed slightly from the way Orientalist knowledge was established: "The Balkanist discourse, rampant as it is, has not equally affected intellectual traditions or institutions. It is present primarily in journalistic and quasi-journalistic literary forms (travelogues, political essayism, and especially this unfortunate hybrid – academic journalism)." (2009, 19) However, the work of Diana Mishkova (2018) quite convincingly demonstrated that Balkanism in fact was strongly present within the European academia. Balkanism is therefore indistinguishable from the centre's power, from a will to dominate through semi-institutional and institutional knowledge.

Nonetheless, a perspective that privileges the "centre's" view turns the critique of Balkanism into a story with its own privileged moments. The Balkans' presence in Western media was most prominent during and in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, as well as during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Consequently, these two periods receive the greatest scholarly attention. For her vehement influence, Todorova's book can be taken as exemplary in this respect. Although Todorova reconstructs a centuries-long genealogy of Balkanism with great care, Balkanism has "crystallized in a specific discourse around the Balkan Wars and World War I." (2009, 19). This crystallized discourse then received its most widespread proliferation in the 1990s.

Although this time-scheme is largely valid, it carries some problematic presuppositions. The first implicit assumption is that the sole source of Balkanism is the "West": Balkanism has its glorious moments of falsification only when the "West" turns its gaze towards the Balkans – and this gaze is attracted mainly by

war. As will be discussed shortly, this claim depends on another assumption: that “insider” voices are not inclined toward Balkanism at all, or at least not as blatantly.

The time-structure has another significant consequence: socialist Yugoslavia remains fully or partially excluded from the picture, since it was not perceived as Balkan but rather as “the elite of the non-aligned world” (Todorova 2009, 53). Once again, it is indisputable that the period of socialist Yugoslavia generated proportionally fewer Balkanist stereotypes in the West than the decades after World War One or the 1990s. But what is problematic is the almost straightforward denigration of the entire socialist experience. As Todorova sees it, because this period was relatively short, its influence cannot compare to the significance of the Ottoman (or Byzantine, or Habsburg) imperial legacies (2009, 162). Not only is this purely quantitative approach problematic in itself (the sole duration of a phenomenon defines its importance), but also, it presupposes that the modernizing Marxist project could not have profoundly influenced the region. No matter the communists’ efforts at modernization, the “ontology” of the Balkans remained Ottoman (Todorova 2009, 184). One would be inclined to say that the “old centuries” thus remain in place. In this way, the narrative structure of a critique of Balkanism veers towards Balkanism.

A second key aspect of Balkanism as discourse is its role in reinforcing the identity of Europe’s “core”. Here Said’s reading lens is highly relevant. If “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said 1979, 1–2) and if this process was taking place between “opposites paired in a structure of domination and subordination” (Chakrabarty 2000, 27), then the role that the Orient played can to a large extent be ascribed to the Balkans as well. This “othering” function is once again closely related to the archaic. The normative, “full” identity of Europe was described by Dipesh Chakrabarty as the “scene of the birth of the modern” (2000, 28). The “primitiveness” of the Balkans is, therefore, not one stereotype among others; it is the fundamental symbolic position against which the birthplace of the modern must be articulated.

Since its publication in 1997, Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans* has been criticized for not drawing the final consequences from the above-described equation (Jusdanis 1998) and for refusing to identify Balkanism with a “nestling” variant of Orientalism, so much so that in the afterword to the book’s second edition, Todorova addressed this question herself while retaining her positions. With the debate wearing off and authors using the terms (nestling) Orientalism and Balkanism almost interchangeably – Rastko Močnik, for example, uses the expressions “Balkanism” and “Orientalist view of the Balkans” as synonyms (Močnik 2005, 86) – the question of whether Balkanism should be strictly separated from Orientalism now appears largely futile.

What is relevant, however, is that Todorova shares a methodological position with Said. This position touches upon the third characteristic of Balkanism as discourse: its propensity for object-creating. As has been noted, discourse theory does not presuppose a simple mirroring between discourse and reality, with regard to which discourse would be judged as true or falsifying. Rather, discourse creates

its own objects or “transactional” realities. This is a proposition that Todorova systematically rejects. Orientalism might be regarded as a discourse on a vaguely (if at all) defined geographic space lacking homogeneity or a shared history. But the Balkans are very real, both in the sense of geographic space and in the sense of a common cultural-historic legacy (2009, 194). This concreteness is so strongly felt that Todorova decides to take the Balkans as a perfect example of non-discursivity and entitles the last chapter of her study “Realia – *Qu’est-ce qu’il y a de hors texte*”.

Despite the Orient’s alleged “vagueness”, a similar reluctance can be found in Said’s *Orientalism* as well. Already in the opening passages of his book, Said claims that, due to Orientalism, “the Orient was (and is) not a free subject of thought or action” (1979, 3). Nonetheless, at numerous instances he does postulate the possibility of a “*real thing*”. Consider, for instance, the following passage:

The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little [...] on the *Orient as such*. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as “the Orient.”

(1979, 21, my emphasis, AP)

The paragraph discreetly postulates the existence of an “Orient as such”, despite its exclusion from orientalist discourse. Orientalism would therefore be a systematic Western falsification that should be dispersed through true knowledge. This claim has two significant implications. First, it places a high value on authentic voices as privileged sources of truth (as opposed to the foreign, dominating discourse). Second, it defines a position for the researcher: through “intelligent, rigorous scholarship” (Todorova 2009, 201), the researcher is obliged to reach the outside-text, the Orient/Balkans “as such” and replace dominating distortions with genuine truth.

My proposition, by contrast, is that even in Yugoslavia, the “elite of the non-aligned world,” and even for an indigenous subject with an exceptionally deep knowledge of their region, it is impossible to fully step outside the boundaries imposed by the dominating discourse of Balkanism. As will be demonstrated shortly, this was the case with Miroslav Krleža. Regardless of all the genuine honesty and goodwill in the world, the rules of a discursive formation remain binding for all participants within a discursive field. Whether the object is “invented” or “imagined”, this does not diminish the fact that the invention, once invested with power, exerts an authoritative influence on representations.

Whenever a proposition such as the one above is made, the researcher risks being accused of nihilism, relativism, or of ignoring “the complexities of real material processes” (Zinaić 2017, 21). The desire to replace lies with truth and to provide the voiceless with an opportunity to genuinely express themselves seems to always win the upper hand. As much as such intentions are praiseworthy, the problem lies therein that they do not always work. Many of the following chapters will examine “authentic” voices that cannot entirely escape the pitfalls of Balkanism. At the present moment, however, I will try to demonstrate how, despite all its honesty and rigor, the foundational text of Balkanist studies, Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans*,

deconstructs itself as soon as it attempts to reach a pure “*hors-texte*”. Although this demonstration may seem tedious, it is methodologically crucial for the analyses that follow in subsequent chapters.

### 3.3 The Outer Region: Maria Todorova’s *Hors-Texte*

Todorova’s claim that the Balkans have a very concrete existence was picked up quite often (Sawyer 2014, 115; Dix 2015, 975). Her insistence on “concreteness” also attracted criticism. Gregory Jusdanis, for instance, described her approach as that of a “meticulous historian” who nonetheless refuses to draw broader parallels, such as the one between colonial experiences in the Orient and the Balkans (Jusdanis 1998, 336)<sup>1</sup>. While I lack the historical training to engage in a discussion on whether the experiences of the subjects of “Turkey in Europe” and those in British or French colonies should be compared, I would like to simply demonstrate through close reading how Todorova’s book has to betray its own premises as soon as it attempts at a “*realia*”. Before starting the analysis, it needs to be noted that this is in no way a simple critique of *Imagining the Balkans*. Todorova’s book is a brilliant piece of scholarship, and the deconstructive movement within the text adds to its density.

I will start at the very end of this story – with the afterword to the second edition of Todorova’s book. In this afterword, Todorova offers a clear division of her object of study. The Balkans have four different “incarnations” (2009, 193): they are a) a name and the history of its semantic shifts; b) a pejorative metaphor; c) a concrete geographic region; and d) a historical (Ottoman) legacy. This four-partite division is itself divided: the first two categories (name and metaphor) pertain to the domain of discourse. The second pair – geographic region, historical legacy – pertain to the *realia*.

Right after the division was established, Todorova’s vocabulary slips – and this is not without importance – towards philosophical discourse. While there are notable similarities between Balkanism and Orientalism in the sense of them being “powerful metaphors” (2009, 194), Todorova emphasizes the “pull of other *essential* aspects of the Balkans, which challenge the scholar to deal with the *ontology* of the Balkans.” (2009, 194, my italics, AP) Instead of crying out against the blatant essentialism of this statement (one is never fully free of essentialism), it may be more productive to analyse the effects that it produces. What are the Balkans’ concreteness, essential aspects, *realia*, ontological properties? To quote Todorova’s question: “Qu’est-ce qu’il y a en dehors du texte?”

The fundamental concreteness of the Balkans is a geographic one: unlike the Orient, the Balkans constitute a clearly delineated, tangible space, independent of any discursive mechanisms. But how is this space defined? Here, another distinction arises. As Todorova argues, geographers employ two methods for defining a region: the first is a “*stricto sensu* physico-geographical definition”, while the other definition is one “employed for more practical purposes” (2009, 30). Once again, these two definitions suggest varying degrees of distance from textuality: while

the “more practical definition” may rely on symbolic procedures, the *stricto sensu* physical definition is rooted in the fundamental concreteness of space.

The concrete borders of the physical region are easily definable: the undisputed eastern, southern, and western borders are marked by the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean, Mediterranean, Ionian, and Adriatic seas (2009, 30). Then comes the northern border, which is “most often considered to begin at the mouth of the river Idria in the Gulf of Trieste, following the southeast foothills of the Julian Alps, and coinciding with the Sava and the Danube rivers.” (2009, 30)

The physical definition is thus established. But it would seem that despite its concreteness this definition is not exactly functional; in fact, Todorova does not apply it again until the end of the book. What is now required is a definition “for more practical purposes”. Now, this definition is in fact based on the question of which contemporary nation-states should be included in the region. The problem is not a simple one, since historians and geographers are “well aware that political-geographic and physical-geographic boundaries do not coincide” (2009, 30). Todorova is no exception, and her own “practical definition” does not align with the “physical” one. She will, for example, include the whole of Romania in the region regardless of the Danube as border. Another indicative case is that of Slovenia and Croatia. Regardless of the “real” physical borders, no part of Slovenia will be included in the region, while Croatia will be included in its entirety, “insofar as parts of Croat-populated territories were under Ottoman rule for considerable lengths of time.” (2009, 31)

In a “practical sense”, the region is therefore defined in accordance with contemporary national borders. However, as Todorova is well aware, nations are imagined communities, and the borders of their states lack lasting historical consistency. Another criterion is therefore called upon to help: the Ottoman legacy. Croatia will be included in the region because parts of its territory were under Ottoman rule. One would be inclined to pose several questions with regard to this logic. First, why not include only those territories that were under Ottoman rule, why include the whole state? A simple answer would probably be that the border with the Ottoman Empire was perpetually shifting and that one “concrete” border could not be defined at all. Second, to what extent can the people living in those territories be referred to as “Croats”, given that a modern nation did not exist at the time?

Not only is Todorova compelled to use two “imagined” criteria to define the region (national borders, Ottoman borders), but these criteria are also anachronistic in relation to one another. In the case of Croatia, this peculiar logic would approximately rely on the following syllogism: since today there exists a political entity named Croatia and since parts of this entity (which did not exist at the time) were included in another political entity – the Ottoman Empire – whose legacy defines the Balkans, Croatia – the contemporary entity – defines some of the *real* borders of the Balkans. My point is not at all to polemicize about Croatia being or not being a Balkan country. The point is that the “*hors-texte*” is in fact established through a double projection: through a projection of lost Ottoman borders and through a projection of the borders of contemporary nation-states. As demonstrated by the

anachronism that arises when these criteria are combined (Croatia is included as a whole because parts of it were under Ottoman rule, even though the whole did not exist at the time), both criteria are highly contingent and bear little connection to any “realia” in the sense of essential ontological properties.

For the reasons outlined above, one might argue that the process of defining the Balkans’ concreteness moves in precisely the opposite direction from what Todorova explicitly claims. In the introduction to her book, she offers the definition: “The Balkans are the Ottoman legacy.” (2009, 12) It is this definition – not rivers, mountains, or seas – that unifies the region into a “concrete space.” The fact that this legacy does not have sufficiently precise contours forces her to apply another criterion: that of national borders. National borders, in turn, do not exactly coincide with the legacy but they do preserve it in its entirety while even adding a little bit of space.

But all might not be lost for the “*hors-texte*”. While the geographic criteria that establish the region’s concreteness may be contingent, the Ottoman legacy itself has been defined as part of the Balkans’ “ontology”. The Ottoman legacy is real, and so is the Balkans’ essence. What is then the Ottoman legacy? Here another distinction emerges: the Ottoman legacy is defined as “continuity” and as “perception” (2009, 168). In terms of continuity, it encompasses “the survival (and gradual decline) of some of the characteristics” of the Ottoman period (2009, 198). As perception, the legacy refers to the “articulation and rearticulation of how the entity is thought about at different times by different individuals or groups” (2009, 198). In either case, the Ottoman legacy (which the Balkans are) is not to be confused with the Ottoman Empire. Rather, it consists solely of what had *remained* of the Ottoman period, and it surfaced “after the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist” (2009, 199).

The next question is: what is really left of the Ottoman legacy? Todorova argues that the legacy as “continuity” had almost entirely disappeared by the beginning of World War One (2009, 199). What remains is the legacy as perception: “The Ottoman legacy as perception is firmly built in the discourse of Balkan nationalism as one of its most important pillars.” (2009, 183) But does the legacy as perception truly belong to the *hors-texte*, to realia? In Todorova’s view, it is “not a reconstruction, but rather a construction of the past,” whose primary domain are “historiographical works, textbooks, *belles lettres*, journalistic pieces, and works of art” (2009, 182). To make things worse, this domain – which one would be very much inclined to call textual – rests on the premise that “the Ottomans have been [...] an essentially alien civilization.” (2009, 182)

How, then, should one read the statement “the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy”? Let us retrace Todorova’s argument: a) The Ottoman legacy is of seminal importance for the Balkans’ “ontology”; b) This legacy has survived only in the form of “perception”; c) The space of this perception consists of texts that refute the Ottoman legacy. One would therefore be forced to conclude that the essence, the *realia*, the being of the Balkans is a set of texts in which the Ottoman legacy is represented as essentially alien.

The Ottoman legacy, therefore, becomes the exact opposite of an *hors-texte*: it is explicitly defined by Todorova as utterly textual. Moreover, the Ottoman legacy

plays a central role in producing Balkanist stereotypes. Todorova writes: “The Ottoman elements – or those perceived as such – have contributed to most current Balkan stereotypes. In the narrow sense of the word, then, one can argue that the Balkans are, in fact, the Ottoman legacy.” (2009, 199) The ambiguity of this formulation is striking. On the one hand, the passage could be interpreted as follows: even before Balkanism crystallized as a discourse, there already existed a preestablished set of stereotypes about the Ottomans. The Ottoman elements in the Balkans then made possible the application of this same set of stereotypes to the region. In fighting Balkanism, one is therefore in reality fighting an older set of stereotypes pointed against the Ottomans. However, if the Balkans *are* the Ottoman legacy and if this legacy provides the main Balkanist stereotypes, one would be forced to conclude that – within this logic – the Balkans *are* their stereotypes. They are the Ottoman legacy because this legacy endows them with stereotypes. In other words, there are no “unbalkanized” Balkans.

Thus, a truly thorough attempt to dismantle the “cognitive straightjacket” (2009, 193) in which the Balkans find themselves ultimately falls back into the very same straightjacket: it is better to have the Balkans as a set of stereotypes than not to be sure whether the Balkans have a “concreteness” at all. This is how the Balkans’ “noumenon” (2009, 184), their “essence”, remains in place.

### **3.4 Conclusion: The Three Moves in the Game of the Archaic**

As I have noted, the analysis outlined above had a methodological purpose. The first point to be made is that a search for “concreteness” cannot tear through the cognitive straitjacket of Balkanism. Whenever a concrete definition appears, it will in all probability have to be followed by a “more practical” one. This “practical” definition already governs the concrete definition and operates within a discursive field. This is not to say that seas, mountains, and rivers do not exist; rather, it is to say that when they enter definitions, they are already being fashioned as discursive units.

The fact that “concreteness” cannot serve as a reliable watershed against Balkanism has an important consequence: it destroys the *a priori* privileges of the “native”, knowledgeable subject. This subject is supposed to have true experience and knowledge, in contrast to the ignorant dominating subject who works with stereotypes. However, as has been demonstrated with Todorova, even in the case of an author who is both biographically tied to the Balkan space and extremely knowledgeable, the straitjacket of Balkanism cannot be cast aside through a knowledge of the “concrete”.

The impossibility of simply renouncing discursivity brings us back to the archaic.<sup>2</sup> At this moment, two points need to be made: a) As demonstrated earlier, authoritative narratives rely on a semantics of the archaic, which they segment into three figures (the backward, the source of vitality, the border of signification and humanity); b) Balkanism can essentially be regarded as a problem of time-lag and, consequently, of the archaic. Since the three figures of the archaic appertain to a dominating discourse and could be avoided only by an engineer who would

“construct the totality of his language, syntax and lexicon” (Derrida 1972, 360), and since such an engineer is but a theoretical myth, the three figures of the archaic will necessarily dominate the discursive field of Balkanism. Almost in the sense of game theory, these three figures define the limited, possible moves within the formation. These moves can be systematized as follows: one can 1) reevaluate backwardness as strength and youth (“move 1”); 2) criticize backwardness in the name of normative progress, thereby trying to escape its destiny (“move 2”); 3) push backwardness to the outer limit of blurring the boundary between human and animal, subject and object, etc. (“move 3”). Whereas all three moves can be relatively emancipatory, none fully escape the dominating discourse.<sup>3</sup>

Since this scheme might seem somewhat abstract, let us return to Todorova’s book one final time. Although she never states it explicitly, Todorova effectively performs the “move 1”: she reevaluates backwardness as a specific kind of strength. Since the Balkans are defined by the Ottoman imperial legacy, they do not fully align with European progress, which heavily depends on the development of nation-states. However, after “two centuries of dubious performance of the nation-states” (Todorova 2009, 187), empires should no longer be viewed as “anomalies” (2009, 187). Nor should the process of social engineering that led to modern nation-states be considered “organic”. In reality, this process involved “ethnic and religious wars and expulsions (i.e., ethnic cleansing)” (2009, 187). Thus, the dominant narrative of progress gets displaced: the emergence of democratic nation-states was made possible only through a violent process of ethnic and religious homogenization (Todorova 2009, 175).

In Todorova’s view, the empire, by contrast, fostered a “relatively free peasant class”; this attributed “a certain commitment to egalitarianism” to the “Balkan experience” (Todorova 2009, 172). The Empire opened up borders and allowed for population movement (2009, 174); it did not pursue ethnic and religious homogenization (2009, 175). The “Balkan violence” of the 1990s can therefore be regarded as a final rejection of the Ottoman legacy. In Todorova’s view, it was a final “Europeanization of the Balkans” (2009, 13), rooted in the homogenous nation-state model and its capacity for terror.

The Ottoman legacy (which the Balkans are) thus discretely stands for a model of lesser violence; it might be a cure for the European teleology-gone-wrong. If there is to be a “liberal, tolerant, all-embracing identity celebrating ambiguity and a negation of essentialism” (Todorova 2009, 59) in the Balkans, it will not be grounded in nation-states but in the Ottoman legacy. In this way, the Ottoman legacy shifts away from its association with backwardness and emerges as a corrective mechanism for the nation-state model. No longer a bad remnant but rather an alternative to ethnic homogenization, it could lead to a positive future identity. The discursive movement is therefore a chiasmic one: the teleology of nation-building becomes associated with backward violence, while the backward element – the imperial legacy – becomes the symbolic bearer of a possibly more tolerant plurality. The allegedly backward legacy thus gets re-evaluated as a positive vitality, paving the way into a non-violent future.

The question is not whether this diagnosis is correct or incorrect (while I would fully agree on the violent character of nation-building, the Empire might not exactly be the most suitable counter-model). Rather, what should be emphasized is that Todorova's system relies on a movement that was made possible by the first two figures of the archaic: that of backwardness and that of vitality. It is the background of grand narratives, where this gesture had already been performed – with, for example, the greatest backwardness becoming a propensity for revolution – which allows Todorova to develop her strategy. In other words, the symbolic possibilities within the discursive field of Balkanism are strictly limited.

In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that the three “moves” I previously identified are central to the symbolic strategies employed on the Yugoslav 1960s screen. To reiterate, the game of the archaic fundamentally allows for three gestures: the re-evaluation of backwardness as strength and youth; the critique of backwardness in the name of normative progress; the transition from backwardness toward a state beyond representation. Each of these moves carries both an emancipatory potential and a risk of exoticization. Before I turn to cinema, I will examine how the game of the archaic entered a text that was fundamental to Yugoslav “third way” cultural self-fashioning: Miroslav Krleža's address to the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in Ljubljana in 1952. The analysis of this brief address will bring forth the political stakes of aesthetic strategies based in the archaic.

## Notes

- 1 The German historian Holm Sundhaussen took the exact opposite direction in his critique of Todorova and claimed that she overestimates the importance of a Western European discourse on the region, thus neglecting the Balkans as a space which needs to be scrutinized in its own right (1999, 628). Curiously enough, in insisting that the region's identity is a strictly relational one and that every historical region is a construct fashioned by the researcher (1999: 628–629), Sundhaussen uses a less essentialist discourse than Todorova, no matter his attempt at describing the region's extra-discursive specificities.
- 2 When trying to find refuge from stereotypes in the concrete, Todorova is at once forced to use the question-form “qu'est-ce que”, which is, in Derrida's opinion, anything but innocent (Derrida 1972, 15). With her answer that “the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy” she is therefore not stepping outside the borders of an authoritative Western discourse and into the concrete; to the contrary, she is making use of this discourse's fundamental formulations. As has been shown, the words “ontology” and “essence” will necessarily follow. In searching for corrective *realia*, Todorova thus firmly inscribes herself within the mechanisms of Western metaphysics: she is searching for the essential, present (if not ever-present) Balkans.
- 3 The “moves” differ from the “figures” in the sense that they set them in motion: the “move 1” thus *transforms* the “first figure” (bad backwardness) into the “second figure” (good vitality). To stick to the game metaphor: the three figures (as defined in Chapter One) are the “pawns” with which the moves play.

## 4 In the Future, in the Past, Under the False Appearance of a Present

### Miroslav Krleža's Timings of Yugoslav Culture

#### 4.1 The Victory of 1952

This chapter examines the strategies employed by Miroslav Krleža as he sought to define a cultural politics for socialist Yugoslavia in the early 1950s. A mainstream interpretation suggests that Krleža served as a personified watershed against socialist realism and, in doing so, became one of the most important defenders of artistic freedom in Yugoslavia (Hawkesworth 2016, 84). This interpretation is not wrong, but it does impose a reductionist lens on Krleža's positions. Rather than framing the issue through the binary opposition of "socialist realism" against "libertarian modernism," it may be more productive to explore the complex interplay of "asynchronies" that shape Krleža's argument. As will be demonstrated, the peculiarity of Yugoslavia's position – and its consequent need for a specific cultural politics – was defined by Krleža as a temporal problem, a problem produced by the collision of different temporalities within an (ex-)“semi-colonial” (Krleža 1967, 70) revolutionary space.

Among scholars examining various aspects of Yugoslav artistic production, there exists a near-unanimous consensus that one event decisively shaped socialist Yugoslavia's culture: Miroslav Krleža's address at the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in Ljubljana in 1952 (Petranović 1988; Wachtel 1998; Šuvaković 2008). This address is widely regarded as the breaking point at which socialist realism was definitely rejected, while the way was opened for modernist experiments. Ješa Denegri writes: “The point taken to be the definitive end of socialist realism is the Congress of the Yugoslav Writer's Union held in Ljubljana in 1952, with Miroslav Krleža's address.” (2003, 172). Davor Beganović goes even further in his estimation: “Krleža himself was *de facto* a person who issued the rules of poetics and dominated Yugoslav cultural life, at least following his legendary speech at the Congress of Yugoslav Writers in Ljubljana.” (2012, 136) To underline the importance of this event, I will begin the analysis with a brief overview of early Yugoslav cultural politics.

After the end of World War Two, Yugoslavia was influenced by the Soviet model of cultural and artistic production. In its initial years, Yugoslav culture therefore stood, to some extent, under the sign of socialist realism. However, Tito's break with Stalin and Yugoslavia's break with Soviet politics happened already

in 1948; one consequence of this rupture was the rejection of the Soviet cultural model (Šuvaković 2008). Thus began the search for a new cultural politics that would comply with Yugoslavia's autonomous way into socialism (Wachtel 1998, 142). The shift away from socialist realism was definitely accomplished during the early 1950s, with Krleža dealing a mortal blow to Zhdanovist concepts in 1952 and opening the way for modernist, or, in Sveta Lukić's terminology (1972), "socialist modernist" trends.

This very schematic outline requires a few refinements. First, the address delivered by Krleža in 1952 can be taken as a symbolic event, but the debate did not exactly end with it. Krleža continued to elaborate on the address's main theses in subsequent public lectures and essays, at least until 1954. Second, in his 1952 address, Krleža does not only polemicize with the Soviet cultural model; his arguments also strongly resonate with a debate he was leading during the 1930s with the proponents of Yugoslav "social literature" (*socijalna književnost*). This debate is usually referred to as "the conflict on the literary left" (*sukob na književnoj ljevici*). Third, one would have to be very cautious when describing Krleža's position through the monumental opposition between socialist realism and modernism.

Before outlining the determining role that the three figures of the archaic play in Krleža's program, the temporal frame needs further elaboration. As noted above, Krleža continued to emphasize some of the claims from his 1952 address in 1954. In fact, he was not happy with the reception of his theses on Yugoslav art: at the Plenum of the Writer's Union in 1954, he argued that "no one ever wanted to say a single word" (1967, 115) about his program in the two years that had elapsed. So he articulated it once again in a very specific manner: as proof of intellectual constancy as well as a program that needs to be fulfilled, he quoted at length (almost in its entirety) his notorious, early manifesto, *The Croatian Literary Lie* (*Hrvatska književna laž*). This text was first published in the literary journal *Flame* (*Plamen*), edited by August Cesarec and Krleža himself in 1919 and was, in Krleža's words, never republished until 1954 (Krleža 1967, 102). The 1952 address thus at once leads to further debates and to Krleža's earliest literary-political program, articulated right after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; this program now gets an opportunity at finally being realized in socialist Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup>

As for the debate with "social literature" and the "conflict on the literary left", Stanko Lasić – the most renowned historian of the conflict – defines the years between 1952 and 1954 as the time when the "social" or socialist realist school (Lasić 1970) definitely disintegrated. Since this debate is echoed in Krleža's famous 1952 address, its history warrants a brief elaboration. As early as the late 1920s, a group of writers who were members of, or closely associated with, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Otokar Keršovani, Stevan Galogaža, Ognjen Prica, Bogomir Herman, etc.) advocated for literature to assume a strong propagandistic role. Since the Communist Party was banned and working illegally at the time, it perceived literature as an important field of action where relative liberty was still possible (Brozović 2015, 136; Perica 2017, 250). However, this insistence on pragmatism soon led to a conflict with Krleža and the Belgrade

surrealist circle, most notably Marko Ristić. Although these writers were inclined to Marxism themselves, their aesthetic positions were largely incompatible with the propagandistic views of the “social literature” school. The polemical text that resumes the pre-World War Two debate, vehemently critiques the social school, and is clearly echoed in the 1952 address is Krleža’s *Dialectical Antibarbarus* (*Dijalektički antibarbarus*), published in 1939 in the journal *Pečat* (*Seal*). In this text, Krleža uses extensive quotes from his earlier essay *A Foreword to the Podravina Motifs by Krsto Hegedušić* (*Predgovor Podravskim motivima Krste Hegedušića*), first published in 1933.

This historical sketch demonstrates that Krleža’s polemical writings systematically rely on a self-quoting mechanism. A text from 1954 extensively quotes a text from 1919, while a text from 1939 extensively quotes a text from 1933, as if Krleža’s polemical activity consistently moved in smaller or larger loops. For this reason, Stanko Lasić described his polemical writings as “variations on a single theme” (1970, 7). It would seem that, even amidst the radical political changes in Yugoslavia between 1919 and 1954, Krleža’s aesthetic-political position remained remarkably consistent. This extraordinary persistence can be conceptualized through a widening of the analytical framework: Krleža’s position was not solely – or even primarily – defined by the opposition between socialist realism and modernism within the Yugoslav pre- or post-World War Two literary scene. It was defined through a far wider network of relations and experiences that Lasić, quite rightly, associated with Frantz Fanon’s vision of the wretched of the earth (1970, 58). This wider network of relations will lead straight back to the archaic.

#### 4.2 Yugoslavia: Under the False Appearance of a Present

In the opening passages of his 1952 address, Krleža defines the set of forces against which a position must be established. First, there is the “Stalinist violence” (1967, 11) that Yugoslavia refused to submit to. Second, there is the ghost of Yugoslav 19th-century bourgeois culture with its romanticism and provincialism (1967, 11). Third, there is Western elitist, decadent modernism. This triangulation of refusal – one’s own bourgeois cultural tradition needs to be discarded, while neither Eastern nor Western, neither capitalist nor communist models can be taken as guidelines – leads to a radically novel situation in Yugoslavia. Krleža writes: “In our literature and art, as in all other arts around the world, numerous foreign literary models are often being imitated; but how could we imitate some belletrist prototypes today, when for our situation they do not exist at all?” (1967, 13)

The almost total refusal of both indigenous and foreign traditions thus turns the Yugoslav cultural field into what Tanja Zimmermann termed a *terra vergine*: there are no models, no predecessors to the new state of Yugoslav reality. However, the radical novelty of Yugoslav reality – to which art should respond – is based in a peculiar asynchrony, and it is this asynchrony that cannot be found anywhere else in the world or in history:

How could we describe our reality when that which is happening here is happening nowhere else in the world; here, in the frame of every phenomenon, circles of six centuries synchronously permeate each other: between the Baroque, Morlachs, Turkish, and Austrian market-towns, there appear – within the frame of the dramatic fight with Kremlin for international principles of Leninism – the contours of the twenty second century!

(1967, 13–14)

The radically new aspect of Yugoslav reality is thus a unique time-structure. But at this point, some elements of this time-structure appear quite familiar: Yugoslavia is a space where the “old centuries” persist, exerting their influence on every phenomenon. And these old centuries are denoted by two common-place Balkanist tropes: the market-town (*palanka*) and the Morlachs. While Krleža employs these figures, he is not unaware of their balkanizing potential. Towards the end of his address, he states that the bourgeois West “has been denying us for centuries as a Balkan *raja*” (1967, 51). In his 1954 address, he is even more explicit on the topic of cultural domination: “Europe conceived of us as a counterrevolutionary people of Morlachs and rangers convicted to death.” (1967, 138)

The foreign gaze and its Balkanist perspective play a decisive role in Krleža's program. However, what makes the Yugoslav time-structure unique is not only the persistence of the “old centuries” but also the presence of centuries yet to come. In Yugoslavia, one can glimpse the first contours of the 22nd century. The logic that connects Yugoslavia to the 22nd century can be reconstructed quite easily. From a Marxist teleological perspective, countries where the proletarian revolution had taken place can view themselves as an *avant-garde*, in the original military-political sense of the term. Yet, since the USSR – along with its satellite states – has betrayed the revolution, Yugoslavia now stands alone as the leader of the international struggle for the true principles of Leninism. In other words, Yugoslavia is the *avant-garde* of the *avant-garde*; under the false appearance of a present, it is simultaneously the space of a radical past and a radical future.

And backwardness is a necessary precondition for assuming the radically *avant-garde* role. The total refusal of bourgeois tradition can and has to be performed because Yugoslav bourgeois culture was always anachronistic. Krleža explicitly stresses this point while giving another speech in 1952, this time at the Plenum of the Central Redaction of the Yugoslav Encyclopaedia. The Encyclopaedia's main purpose is to “free us from that negative, idealist, conservative ballast, which we inherited from the bourgeoisie and which [...] was an *anachronism* already at the time when our bourgeois consciousness started to develop in the second half of the 19th century.” (Krleža 1967, 221, emphasis mine, AP). Since Yugoslav bourgeois consciousness started developing in market-towns, not in real cities, since it was developing under semi-colonial domination, it never did follow the normative pattern of European progress; at the moment of its birth, it was already anachronistic.

So the Yugoslav bourgeoisie was always a backward one. But the non-bourgeois Yugoslav space gets described by Krleža as one contaminated by an even greater

backwardness. This space is characterized by “the mud of an archaic world where blood-revenge is being cultivated, where one believes in vampires, where the women of Morlachy are neglected beings, where physical strength with knife in hand is the only measure of resistance in our stinking inns when the lights get extinguished.” (Krlježa 1967, 104) Backwardness does not only encompass the anachronistic bourgeoisie and the burden of past centuries. It also entails an archaic world whose “primitiveness” is not measurable even by centuries. James Robertson described this world as the “chaotic, eternal repetition of rural ecology” (Robertson, 2019, 240). Against this doubly backward world stand the two imperial powers of the West and the USSR.

Within this symbolic structure, the only way out for Krlježa is to perform what I have provisionally termed the “move 1”: he needs to reevaluate primitiveness into vitality. The two imperialist models and the anachronistic indigenous bourgeoisie are useless. But the archaic world of “rural ecology” – which remained preserved because neither the bourgeoisie nor normative progress (or capitalism) has touched its essence – *can* be re-evaluated. In 1919 as well as in 1954, Krlježa therefore exclaims:

Are we some low-lives in tuxedos who got demoralized and lost in Vienna-Pest’s and Belin’s mental prostitution, or are we the young Balkan peasant race which, out of the ruins of historical ages, started its way towards freedom and progress?”<sup>2</sup>

(1967, 106)

It could be argued that this quote heavily relies on a specific historical context that does not fully apply to Yugoslavia in 1954. However, the very fact that Krlježa used it in the debate indicates that, in his view, it still held relevance. With one substitution, this relevance becomes clear: if the Vienna-Pest-Berlin complex is understood as a stand-in for “foreign dominating powers”, the scheme neatly falls into place. Since the Yugoslav bourgeoisie was always anachronistic and compliant to these powers, since an archaic backwardness shaped the country, since it never really took part in normative capitalist progress, the young peasant race survived intact and is now ready to leap straight into the 22nd century. In its final consequences, Krlježa’s triangulating mechanism thus reevaluates the “bad” archaic into the “good” archaic, the most backward into the most progressed, the past into the future.

Having outlined what Krlježa had to discard to articulate his position, the focus can now shift towards what he takes to be the elements of a new, positive cultural identity. Out of the blank position of refusal can now emerge a new tradition. This tradition is certainly linked to some names and phenomena (most notably the Bogumili-Križanić-Kranjčević triad), but its main purpose is not to serve as a gallery of masterpieces; rather, it should witness to the vitality of the “young peasant race”. Since Europe “convicted us to death”, the very fact of survival becomes the defining attribute of the young Yugoslav peoples.

As Krleža sees it, the mere fact that the Yugoslav peoples did not disappear entirely should be regarded as evidence of “a vitality, which to the present day is the only guarantee of our own life” (1967, 135). The “other” or reevaluated tradition is therefore systematically articulated against foreign essays at death and destruction. Its stage is the “eternal wreckage” left over by conquerors (1967, 229); it is “a perennial graveyard, but a graveyard where the life of civilization was not extinguished for a single moment” (1967, 228). And precisely for this reason, life’s remaining flickers attest to “our age-old tradition of proletarian peoples.” (1967, 140)

The new or redefined tradition is thus entirely shaped by a rhetoric of life and death: it serves as a testimony to indestructible vitality in the face of a death sentence. Ultimately, this struggle for survival produces whole peoples of proletarians; they are proletarian because their entire history is a history of extreme deprivation and perpetual struggle. And exactly for this reason, they are capable of radical revolutionary activity. The task at hand is therefore to reinvent a tradition that systematically attests not to accomplished masterworks but to unrealized potentials. This new tradition should identify the “anticipations” (1967, 135) of revolutions in Yugoslav culture – the prime example being the “Bogumil laic revolution” (1967, 135) – while bearing witness to the “resistant nonconformism of our own element”. And all these anticipations put into perspective the latest *anticipation*, namely the socialist revolution itself, which “anticipates the life of our future century” (1967, 231). This would be the system through which the backward become the young and the young leap into the 22nd century.

A final element of this system requires emphasis: the entire emancipatory operation is necessary only in relation to the gaze of the Other. The new Yugoslav socialist art, rooted in a perennial tradition of nonconformism, must function as “artistic propaganda abroad (where they have no idea about our literature and our art)” (1967, 51). Krleža is thus not at all denying any propagandistic purpose to literature. Rather, he insists that it must be the right kind of propaganda, one that witnesses to the essential, vital nonconformity of the Yugoslav peoples. In other words, art’s freedom (its non-conformism) should be the testimony to a cultural “essence”, as well as political propaganda.

So the 1952 program is all but a program of freedom. It is effectively a program of strict restraint: Yugoslav literature and art must be nonconformist in order to mirror the deepest nonconformist essence of the Yugoslav peoples. And it must do so for an Other. The goal is, in the final analysis, to prove to the Other that the rangers sentenced to death are in reality the young Balkan peasant race racing into the future.

To briefly summarize the analysis: for Krleža, Yugoslavia is essentially new because it is a space of radical asynchrony; it encompasses the radically backward as well as the radically progressed. But the backward itself (the first figure of the archaic) is split into two. On one hand, it is the anachronistic, market-town bourgeoisie, servile in relation to foreign domination. On the other hand, it is the archaic proletarian peoples who survived intact precisely because they were always

standing in a pronouncedly antagonistic relation towards dominating, semi-imperial powers (and consequently the bourgeoisie); they were always revolutionary. And therefore, this positive archaic is infested with revolutionary anticipations through and through: paradoxically, in its backwardness, it is an element of the future.

This is how Krleža performs the re-evaluative move: the negative, the most backwards, becomes the positive, the most progressed. The founding-event of Yugoslavia's third-way cultural politics cannot be reduced to a struggle for artistic freedom and against a Stalinist-Zhdanovist-soc-realist dogmatism. It does not simply advocate freedom for art: freedom should exist insofar as it reevaluates the fundamental trope of Balkanism – we are not backward, we are vitally nonconformist. And this re-evaluation should be performed for the Other while witnessing to the deep essence of the Yugoslav people's identity.

### 4.3 Materialism: Into the Cave

Up to this point, I have been following how the figure of backwardness gets transformed into a figure of vitality and youth. This process unfolded in two stages. First, a critique of the anachronistic Yugoslav bourgeoisie had to be undertaken. The Yugoslav bourgeoisie was always peripheral and could therefore never properly perform its role in the development of capital. This constitutes the “move 2”: backwardness criticized in relation to normative progress. But the bourgeoisie's “anachronistic” nature opened a space for the “move 1”: the re-evaluation of backwardness as vitality. Since the bourgeoisie was never fully developed and since the Yugoslav space was a semi-colonial margin in relation to the normative development of capitalism, its peoples were able to preserve their oppositional vitality: as peoples, they became revolutionary proletarians.

At this point, the following question arises: does the “move 3” – the archaic being pushed toward anti-discursivity – appear in Krleža's writings, and if so, what role does it play in his cultural-political system? A closer examination of how Krleža depicts his “enemies” will help answer this question. The entry point for this analysis is once again provided by the 1952 address. After having discussed the modes of Yugoslav asynchrony, Krleža boards the aesthetic-political debate in the following manner:

For over twenty years now, in our ranks there have been talks on whether our art should be subdued to a pure political tendency through a persistent, fanatic and one-sided form of political allegiance to the party which fights against the private-legal base of banks and industry; whether our art should break away from various religious, conservative, legitimist (in their essence capitalist and private-legal) tendencies which also preach a one-sided allegiance to a party, in a supra-naturalist and idealist sense; or should our art remain indifferent towards these questions in the guise of an apparently indifferent Western European decadent aestheticism, which lasts programmatically for over a hundred years now?

(1967, 16–17)

The first thing that can be noticed in this quote is the “echoing” mechanism: this is a set of questions over which a discussion has been going on for “over twenty years now”. Krleža therefore discreetly calls upon the positions which he discussed extensively in his major contribution to the “conflict on the literary left”, namely in his *Dialectical Antibarbarus* from 1939. In 1952, he is, to a certain extent, resuming his previous arguments.

The second important point concerns the equation which Krleža establishes between art that complies with the program of a communist party (fighting the private-legal base of banks and industry) and art that could be described as bourgeois (the supra-naturalist, idealist current). Krleža's hypothesis appears relatively straightforward: under the guise of idealism, the bourgeois current adheres to an ideological program just as much as art serving a communist party does. Krleža elaborates on this point toward the end of his address: “The sublimity of Western European spirit has been following like a shadow the bandit-like victories of certain imperialisms, and that magnificent building of Western European civilization was constructed on the bones of defeated and trampled peoples” (1967, 56). Western European idealism is therefore just a disguise for imperial violence, it serves as an excuse for such violence.

But if one focuses on the term “idealism”<sup>3</sup>, a more surprising equation arises: in Krleža's view, the Stalinist-Zhdanovist artistic program (which does not hide its political inclinations) can be charged with the same kind of *idealism* as bourgeois art. Krleža writes: “We wonder what these [...] Stalinist ‘engineers of the soul’ can accomplish when they should foremost negate philosophically the soul as an idealistic term.” (1967, 29) And when Louis Aragon propagates this “idealist” aesthetic in France, he is in fact witnessing to the fact that “the Western European gentlemen decadents are frantically panicking before the possibility of an arrival of the Kozaks.” (1967, 23) Stalinist idealism thus also comes with arms in hands.

This complex of idealism-imperialism allows Krleža to systematically apply a rhetorical strategy based in chiasm. Since Zhdanovism is idealist and imperialist, it can be re-semanticized as clerical; Krleža thus accuses it of producing a new array of altars and icons (1967, 68). But the strategy goes both ways: Aachen, Byzantium, Venice were “engineers of souls” when plotting to behead the Yugoslav peoples (1967, 137). There exists an essential link between idealism and imperialism, and this link provides the common ground for a double substitution: Stalinism is clerical inquisition; Western cultural models are “engineers of souls”.

If idealism serves as the common denominator of both Western and Eastern imperialism, the solution must lie in its opposite: materialism. What is required, then, is a radical materialism – a materialism entirely free from the idealist fallacy. Krleža outlines this kind of materialist aesthetic in his two earlier essays that subtly resonate within the debate of the 1950s: *The Dialectical Antibarbarus* (1939) and *A Foreword to the Podravina Motifs by Krsto Hegedušić* (1933).

In order to define a radically materialist (and therefore non-idealist-imperialist) aesthetic, Krleža needs to invent his own founding myth. More than 20 years before Georges Bataille took us there, we thus find ourselves in an “antediluvian”

cave, that of Altamira. Krleža writes: “The cave man, the cannibal, still hairy as a gorilla, ceased being an ape in the antediluvian cave of Altamira by stopping time on a stone, when for the first time he left an imprint of his from human blood still greasy hand on the rock of his beastly lodging.” (1963, 303) The history of art is in its entirety an endless repetition of this first, mythological event: “From this hand of Altamira, one single thread leads to all the antique, Gothic, and Renaissance geniuses, lasting from Egypt to the contemporary Surrealism of Paris.” (1963, 305)

A somewhat pacifying interpretation would have it that Krleža is describing art as having the capacity to render the time-bound timeless (Kalezić 1982, 103). And to a certain extent, this interpretation is correct; to continue the quote on the perennial law of art: “The eternally human is being halted in time by means of imprints and copies within materials more lasting than human flesh.” (Krleža 1963, 303) But two questions arise right away: what is the “eternally human”? And how does the preservation mechanism work?

A careful examination of Krleža’s rhetoric shows that the “eternally human” is in fact not human at all. It is explicitly connected to “animal drives” (*životinjski nagon*) (1963, 305), to “two-legged mammals” (*dvonožni sisavci*) (1963, 306), to “wolves dreaming of flesh” (*svi kurjaci sanjaju o mesu*) (1963, 304), to a “life’s arche-ground” (*životna prapodloga*) (1963, 306). When commenting on his own 1933 essay in 1939, Krleža further describes the “eternally human” as the “wild, animal, ape’s strength in man” (1983, 109). Humanity was thus paradoxically born in Altamira through the capacity to render timeless the *non*-human, animal aspect of its existence. This animality is radically materialist in the sense that it precedes rationality and, consequently, language and representation; it is the singularity of material existence that always escapes representation. In this capacity, it serves as the final watershed against the idealist-imperialist matrix.

But before proceeding with the troubling relation between the eternally human-animal and the cluster of idealism-imperialism, it is necessary to examine the process of commemoration in terms of its *technique*. What becomes immediately apparent is that the temporal is not made eternal through a copy that merely resembles it. What matters is the imprinting process – the relationship established between the hand and its bloody trace. In the terminology of Charles Sanders Peirce, the temporal-made-eternal would not be a simple iconic sign (signifying through its resemblance to the signified) nor a symbol (signifying through a conventional link). Rather, it would be an index, signifying through an existential relationship between signifier and signified.<sup>4</sup>

For Krleža, the radical archaic would therefore be an extremely complex regime of visibility. It would be a visual sign that marks the non-signifiable – the animal drive, the vital force, the arche-ground – through an indexical relationship. But this happens *within* a visual representation based in resemblance: the hand’s imprint also resembles the hand. In other words, the radical archaic denotes a regime of visibility where the materiality of the represented (its “having-been-there”) is attested to through an indexical link. This link does not enter the field of symbolization because it stands for the non-symbolic. Or, in Nietzschean terms: in its radical guise, the archaic is the regime of visibility in which the existential link to

the non-signifying prevents the visual representation from being fully mastered by concepts.

If the common denominator of all political (ab)uses of art is idealism, and if materialism is proposed as its cure, it might not be an overinterpretation to assert that within Krleža's system this element is political in the sense of it being radically materialist. Since it is firmly rooted in matter – and, consequently, in the singular – it challenges all forms of generalization, without which the idealist, imperial discursive machine cannot function. In Krleža's system, the third figure of the archaic is thus a final attempt to exit the deadlock of imperialism supported by discursive domination. It is a final attempt at staying faithful not to names but to matter – to the *hors-texte* in Todorova's phrasing. Nonetheless, during the 1952–1954 debate, this radical position is present only in scattered echoes, while the re-evaluation of backwardness has become the central program. As thorough an analysis of discursive domination through the archaic as the one attempted by Krleža necessarily calls for the radical “move 3”: the push towards the archaic as that which stands outside rationality and representation. This move contests the very possibility of establishing symbolic distributions; consequently, it challenges the power that always lurks behind such distributions.

If the fundamental driving force behind Krleža's polemical variations is an experience similar to that of the “wretched of the earth,” and if this experience creates the desire for an absolute artistic renouncement of colonizing cultures (Fanon 1991, 225–226), the third figure of the archaic would be the dream of such a renouncement driven to its extreme. However, when defining a program for socialist Yugoslav culture, Krleža chose to return to the “young Balkan peasant race” and its historic leap forward.

#### 4.4 Epilogue: The Pleasures and Pains of Marxism

In conclusion, let me return to Krleža's statement that “Europe conceived of us as a counter-revolutionary people of Morlachs and rangers convicted to death”. Krleža ascribes this verdict to a somewhat bleak “Europe”. However, its source can be identified quite easily. Already in 1921, the leader of the Yugoslav avant-garde movement *Zenitism* (*Zenitizam*), Ljubomir Micić, did not hesitate to exclaim ironically: “Marx did not lie when he wrote that Yugoslavs were incapable of Revolution!” (1921, 6) Micić was not lying; the verdict, in fact, has its source in Marx's writings. In a series of articles published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, he described the South Slavs as one of the counter-revolutionary peoples of Europe, worthy of contempt and doomed to be trampled under the wheel of history. To quote one lengthier passage from the article “The Magyar Struggle”:

There is no country in Europe which does not have in some corner or other one or several ruined fragments of peoples, the remnant of a former population that was suppressed and held in bondage by the nation which later became the main vehicle of historical development. These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled underfoot in the course of history, as Hegel says, these *residual fragments of*

peoples always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution.

(Marx 1977a, 234)

Not to confuse being “mercilessly trampled” with sympathy, Marx attributes its causes to “whole centuries of infamy and cowardice” (1977b, 373). As for the “rangers”, Marx defined Bulgarians and Croats – who serve as a metonymy for South Slavs in his article – as examples of “almost nomadic barbarism” (1977a, 233). The Czechs, Illyrians, and Serbs display, in turn, a “total neglect of all literature and the lack of culture” (1977a, 233).

Krleža, therefore, had to attempt an appropriation of Marxism for those whom Marx himself excluded from the movement of progress. Krleža’s program is, by all means, one that defines a cultural politics for Yugoslavia. At the same time, however, it addresses a much broader question: what symbolic strategy stands at the disposal of those who were marginalized by an emancipatory narrative? In Krleža’s view, Marx’s theory was absolutely necessary for the emancipation of the Yugoslav space. Yet, this theory could not be applied mechanically to the “barbarians” of Europe. It was first necessary to open a symbolic space for them – to reinscribe them into the grand narrative while revaluing their presumed “backwardness.”<sup>5</sup>

And Krleža executed this gesture by using the model that can be found in Marx’s own writings. If the underdeveloped peasantry of Russia can become a propeller for the revolution *due to its underdevelopment*, then the Yugoslav counterrevolutionary, trampled peoples can become “proletarian peoples”, perennially in search of revolution. The margin of the grand narrative – those who are defined as not appertaining to the “main vehicle of historical development” – can thus be reinterpreted by means of the archaic. The “move 1” transforms the “barbarians’” backwardness into revolutionary vitality. However, this quite clearly makes the terrain of self-definition volatile: one is never safe to assume that the reverse move will not take place, i.e., that self-ascribed symbolic vitality will not fall back into stereotypes of backwardness.

This hazardous flexibility of the first two moves in the game of the archaic became a widespread preoccupation in Yugoslav cinema during the 1960s. The theoretical framework developed thus far now enables an in-depth study of the interplay between the moves 1 and 2 on the Yugoslav screen. I will consider six exemplary films grouped into pairs: the first pair is formed by Trajče Popov’s *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* and Antun Vrdoljak’s *When You Hear the Bells*, the second by Ante Babaja’s *The Birch Tree* and Dragoslav Lazić’s *Poor Mary*, the third by Miodrag Popović’s *Burduš* and Aleksandar Petrović’s *It Rains in My Village*.

## Notes

- 1 Predrag Brebanović warns that Krleža offered a somewhat censored or at least tempered version of the original 1919 text, thus pacifying its aggressive avant-garde manifesto style (2016, 64).

- 2 In reference to Brebanović's observation that Krleža partially rewrote his original text for the 1954 address, one should note that this passage indeed has been changed. In the original 1919 *Plamen* version it reads: "Does the lust of a Balkan race, young and eager for unknown efforts not boil in us, or are we just some lowlifes in tuxedos who spent all their forces on mental prostitution in Vienna, Berlin and Pest?" (1919, 35) (*Vrije li u nama požuda balkanske rase, mlade i žedne napona neobretih ili smo mi neka bagra u fraku, što je svu svoju snagu istrošila na bečku i berlinsku i peštansku prostituciju?*) It can be noticed that Krleža not only preserved the "young Balkan race" in the rewritten 1954 version, but also, this "historic subject" actually receives even *more* emphasis in the later text. It would therefore be wrong to simply discard it as a remnant of avant-garde or expressionist rhetoric.
- 3 In this context, idealism should not be understood in its everyday meaning, but rather in a stricter, philosophical sense. The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* offers the following definition of idealism: "Any doctrine holding that reality is fundamentally mental in nature." (Blackburn 2005, 177) The entry offers another relevant remark: "The most common modern manifestation of idealism is the view called linguistic idealism, that we 'create' the world we inhabit by employing mind-dependent linguistic and social categories." (2005, 177) If idealism is understood in the latter sense, it could be claimed that anti-idealism is directed at least partially against discursive formations, against a shaping of the world through "mind-dependent linguistic and social categories" ridden with power.
- 4 The most renowned example of an indexical sign is another "cannibal's" imprint – this time of his foot in the sand – as discovered by Robinson Crusoe.
- 5 This complex set of positions was hinted at by Zoran Samardžija. In Samardžija's view, the "allure of communism" resides foremost "in its promise for people to become universal and more modern" (2020, 6). However, this promised universality unfolds in the shadow of orientalism; Samardžija writes: "Marx's writings on Asia and India reflect a deeply ingrained orientalist world view." (2020, 6) To make things more complicated, in Eastern Europe, Marxism was endorsed precisely in order to counter a dominating, "Western" gaze: "East Europeans participated in a universal political project in which they imagined themselves to be superior to the capitalist West precisely because they wished to escape from its dehumanizing gaze." (2020, 9) What Samardžija does not engage with, however, is the fact that the appropriation of the "universal political project" was not a simple, mechanical one; rather, as Krleža's program suggests, it was a complex negotiation that discreetly addressed exactly the universalist narrative's dominating aspects.

## 5 Bloody Weddings and Funeral Bells

### Representations of History in Trajče Popov's *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* and Antun Vrdoljak's *When You Hear the Bells*

#### 5.1 Screening History in Miroslav Krleža's Shadow

This chapter will explore how filmic representations of history were influenced by the structural matrix proposed by Miroslav Krleža. As described in the previous chapter, Krleža presented Yugoslav history as one that stands at odds with normative modernity. This diagnosis gave rise to two opposite interpretations. On one hand, a lack of modernity suggests a relative absence of stately, institutional, and class dominance. Consequently, the subjects of Yugoslav history were able to retain a strong revolutionary propensity within their seclusion. On the other hand, this time-lag threatened to trap Yugoslav history in a pattern of circular repetitions, where the “circles of six centuries synchronously permeate each other”. Within the game of the archaic, the symbolic strategy that defines time-lag as good revolutionary vitality was called the “move 1”. The symbolic strategy that interprets it as a bad repetition that needs to be surpassed was called the “move 2”.

Two films are exemplary of executing the two “moves” on the Yugoslav 1960s screen: *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* (*Makedonska krvava svadba*, Trajče Popov, 1967) and *When You Hear the Bells* (*Kad čuješ zvona*, Antun Vrdoljak, 1969). The two films treat different segments of Yugoslav history: *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*'s plot is set in the days preceding the Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia in 1903, while Vrdoljak's *When You Hear the Bells* presents a story from the People's Liberation Struggle during World War Two. The films are also quite different stylistically: while *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* relies on a melodramatic plot, action sequences, and large collective scenes, Vrdoljak's film focuses on a small group of protagonists and has a relatively loose narrative structure. Most importantly, the two films execute the exact opposite “moves” with relation to Yugoslav history: one masterfully presents this history as a series of revolutionary anticipations. The other relativizes the possibility of any kind of revolution within a circular pattern of centuries.

#### 5.2 The Revolution Rediscovered: The Cultural Context of *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*

Trajče Popov's *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* is an almost literal cinematic illustration of Krleža's claims about South Slavic history. According to Krleža, the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003705208-8

This Chapter has been made available under a CC BY license.

history of Yugoslavia's peoples was characterized by popular revolts against foreign oppression in a space where the "flame of civilization" is secretly being kept alive, and even religious traditions play an egalitarian rather than intoxicating role. In *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*, this narrative comes to life on the silver screen.

What immediately strikes the viewer's eye is that *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* heavily relies on folklore. The film's "proletarian", revolted people are represented almost exclusively through folkloristic codes. Immediately after its appearance, Bogdan Kalafatović praised the film for its authentic "epic-folkloristic pathos" (1968, 6). Somewhat less impressed, Slobodan Novaković stated that "folkloristic spectacles" of the sort of *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* are a recognizable but rather undesirable aspect of Macedonian cinema (1968b, 77).

*Macedonian Bloody Wedding* was not the first production by Vardar Film (Macedonia's largest film studio) to explore the period of pre-World War One Macedonian revolutionary struggle through action scenes and folklore. Trajče Popov himself wrote the script for an earlier film of this kind titled *Miss Stone* (1958), and a similar approach was followed in *The Salonika Terrorists (Solunski atentatori, Žika Mitrović, 1961)*. *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* was, therefore, a further variation within the tradition of Macedonian historical films. However, in one sense, the film is unique: it is an adaptation of a classic work of Macedonian literature, the play of the same title by Vojdan Černodrinski, first published in 1900.

In the film, the play's backbone has been preserved: the Ottoman lord Osman-Beg abducts the peasant girl Cveta during a harvest and locks her into his seraglio. The peasant community – led by Cveta's parents, brother Duko, and lover Spase – then struggles to get her back. The peasants finally succeed through an intervention of the Vali and of the Russian consul. After returning to the village, Cveta is supposed to marry Spase, but Osman-Beg interrupts the wedding ceremony. A fight breaks out, in which Cveta, her brother, as well as Osman-Beg get killed. To this main narrative line, the film adds numerous action sequences that are not to be found in the play: three attempts to abduct Cveta from the seraglio, an ambush on the Beg's chariot, the brother of another of Osman-Beg's wives trying to murder him, etc. However, discussing the film's (un)faithfulness to the source text is likely not the most productive approach. Instead, it is more useful to consider the context and symbolic meanings that the play sets into motion, as well as how the film appropriates and redefines them.

*Macedonian Bloody Wedding*, the play, was and still is often regarded as the very birth of modern Macedonian national drama (Sazdov et al. 1988, 89; Warner 2020, 375). This claim is supported by several of the play's characteristics: it was written in Černodrinski's native dialect, which could be considered Macedonian. In 1900, Macedonian was still largely perceived as a variant of Bulgarian, while after 1918 it was proclaimed to be a Serbian dialect. To write in 1900 in what could be considered Macedonian was therefore retrospectively interpreted as a gesture towards the emancipation of national literature. Furthermore, the play heavily relies on folklore; as Dimitar Mitrev put it, *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* is "a folklore spectacle which furnishes proof of the richness of the Macedonian language and also includes folk song and dance" (1966, 372). In the vein of

romanticist nationalism, an accent on folklore can be regarded as another way of stressing a people's deep-rooted tradition, which would then provide a basis for the nation-building process. Finally, the play heavily relies on a fundamental distinction between "us" and "them", the good peasants and the evil Ottoman occupiers (Warner 2020, 379). At the moment when it was written, the play had a pronounced propagandistic role: already in 1893, the MRO (Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, later to become notorious under the name IMRO/VMRO, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) was established, and by 1900, the anti-Ottoman struggle in Macedonia was in full sway. Originally, Černodrinski's play was intended as propaganda against oppressive Ottoman rule; it was his contribution to the fight for Macedonian autonomy or independence.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, it is evident why Černodrinski's play was incorporated into a Macedonian national narrative. It is slightly surprising, though, that the text would enjoy popularity in socialist Yugoslavia, since many of its elements did not comply with its ideological framework. A romanticist, aggressive nationalism stressing ethnic differences – if not hatred – between "us" and "them" was quite at odds with the Yugoslav ideological dominant.

Nevertheless, Vessela Warner claims that the play received full recognition only in socialist Yugoslavia (2020, 378). A contextual explanation might claim that Macedonian nationalism was fashioned in socialist Yugoslavia as proof of the country's federal ideology, which implied a high degree of autonomy and self-determination for its constitutive peoples. Since in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia Macedonians were denied the right to existence, the support for Macedonian national sentiments would prove that socialist Yugoslavia is based on entirely different premises. But it is of crucial importance that these national sentiments had to be inscribed within a specific logic of historical interpretation.

The Macedonian nation-building process was extremely complex, and its nuances cannot be fully reconstructed here. In the early 20th century, it was shaped by competing aspirations: a union with Bulgaria, autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, full independence, the integration into a larger Balkan federation (Heraclides 2020, 42). Amid this complex array of positions, one thing is certain: the Ilinden Uprising did take place. It was a revolt against Ottoman rule led by the IMRO, which took place in 1903 and resulted in the formation of the "Kruševo Republic" (named after the town of Kruševo) – the first Balkan "socialist" republic – which survived for only ten days before being crushed by Ottoman forces (Heraclides 2020, 44).

My intention is not to debate the character of the Ilinden Uprising. What is relevant in the context of this study is how socialist Yugoslavia established symbolic connections with it. When the People's Republic of Macedonia was founded in 1944, its establishment was declared on 2 August, the anniversary of the original Ilinden Uprising (Heraclides 2020, 92). Upon this, further continuities were established: Keith Brown reports that "between 1948 and 1956, the new Yugoslav Macedonian government invited elderly men and women who had participated in the work of the organization in the Ilinden period to apply for pensions as veterans of the (proto)national struggle." (2013, 8) As Brown further reports, to honour these "proto"-partisans, a medal was created, and the conditions for receiving it

were published in the *Service Newspaper of the Republic of Macedonia* in 1950. Notably, in the newspaper, the Ilinden Uprising is systematically referred to as “narodnooslobodilačka borba” (NOB), a term typically reserved for the partisan struggle of 1941–1945 (Brown 2003, 132).

What was therefore created through a system of pensions and medals is quite literally the Krležian model of historic continuity. By giving the Ilinden Uprising the name of the 1941–1945 struggle, a system of “anticipations” was set in place: after the genuine NOB had taken place, one can recognize that an uprising in 1903 was also a case of NOB, a revolutionary anticipation of the ripe revolution to come. When *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* performed a similar interpretative gesture, it therefore aligned with a broader political context. In other words, the search for revolutionary “anticipations” was by no means confined to the silver screen. Nonetheless, *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* might be its most impressive filmic realization.

### **5.3 Shooting Černodrinski: From Nationalism to Popular Revolt**

*Macedonian Bloody Wedding*'s opening scenes illustrate elegantly the above-mentioned folkloristic national struggle. The film begins with a sequence showing three plot lines in parallel: a man escaping an Ottoman pursuit through a swamp; a community of harvesters (to which Cveta belongs); and Cveta's lover Spase enjoying his shepherd's idleness. The sequence is accompanied by a symphonic score, while from time to time a male choir sings one single word: “Macedonia!” In relation to its musical accompaniment, this elaborate sequence could be regarded as an illustration of what Macedonia “is”: it is a space of conflict and violence; it is a space of traditional work on a fertile land; and it is a space of the pastoral. These three elements come together when the escaping man reaches the harvesters, and Spase joins them as well, in search for Cveta. The escaping man asks the peasants for water and observes the calm reigning over the harvest, only to remark that a submissive head does not get struck by the sabre.

Spase then decides to help him and the two exit the scene. On the harvest, the peasants resume their work and begin singing a song; a baby starts crying, and its mother goes to breastfeed it. The fertility of both the land and its inhabitants is thus linked to folkloristic motifs (the song, the peasants' attire) and hard work (the harvesters are repeatedly shown wiping sweat from their brows). In their secluded rural world, these hard-working, folkloristic people are quite literally associated with vitality. But they are still asleep; although inherently strong, they are still submissive. Osman-Beg then comes to the harvest and sets the village community on a long journey of revolt, violence, and fire.

If one lingers a little longer on the opening sequence and its musical score – which suggests that the viewer is faced with the “essence” of Macedonia – it is easy to see that this essence relies on two opposite stereotypes. As Todorova notes, already in the wake of the “Macedonian question”, the clashes it produced served to establish “the reputation of [...] Macedonia as ‘the land of terror, fire and sword’” (2009, 117). When the film's initial violence is accompanied by the cry

“Macedonia!”, it is exactly this set of representations that is called into play. This is the bad side of Macedonia’s Balkanness. But there is a “good” side to this Balkanness as well: as Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska notes, in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, Macedonia had the reputation of being the “republic where they sing and dance the best” (2020, 85). Macedonia was therefore perceived as a sort of folkloristic paradise. Although the peasants only sing in the film’s opening sequences, there is going to be plenty of dancing at Cveta’s wedding ceremony (another ritual commemorating the community and its fertility). The film’s “Macedonia” is thus strung between violence and a folkloristic vitality. In the previously established terminology, these two aspects would correspond to the first and the second figures of the archaic.

But the task is not to suppress the bad, violent archaic; rather, violence must become the right kind of violence: that of the good, vital people united in a revolutionary effort. This is what happens when the villagers unite after Cveta’s murder: they kill Osman-Beg, as well as his thugs, with folkloristic dance and song pouring straight into popular revolt. Once the fight is over, the villagers are shown leaving for the mountain, presumably to become resistance fighters. But in 1967, the flight of rebels to the hills also evokes the well-known trope of partisans hiding in the mountains. The link is thus unambiguously established: the proto-NOB can begin. And *vice versa* – NOB is a lasting attribute of the history of the proletarian people. In Macedonia – the home of the most folkloristic Yugoslav nation – it was in full swing already in 1900.

This symbolic construct is rather problematic from a Marxist perspective: the revolution is not triggered by the living conditions of the working class or the mechanisms of capital but by folkloristic vitality and honour. It would not be an overstatement to say that the very concept of revolution becomes “balkanized” in *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*. In the film, the revolution emerges as the immediate result of a clash between irrational Balkan violence, embodied by Osman-Beg, and exotic folkloric vitality, embodied by Cveta and the peasants.

However, through a double gesture, the film does attempt to accentuate the economic aspect of the conflict and to temper the play’s original ethnic nationalism. In the play, the Macedonian people are separated from the “Turk” by a hard border. Time and again, the abducted Cveta expresses her fundamental horror of being forced to become “Turkish”. This is accentuated in the play’s last sentence, Cveta’s dying stutter: “I am dying, bu-u-ut...T-u-r-k-i-s-h I h-a-v-e n-o-t b-e-c-o-m-e!” (Černodrinski 1928, 80) This element is fully erased from the film. In *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* the movie, Cveta’s refusal of Osman-Beg is fashioned as a class conflict. Already during their first encounter, Osman-Beg offers Cveta an escape from a life of hard agricultural work and to rather come enjoy his riches. She refuses and replies that she and her people are used to hard work. In the seraglio, she is once again not refusing “Turkishness”, as was the case in the play. When the Beg approaches her, he offers her jewellery and silken robes; Cveta replies that she is a peasant, daughter of the poor, and that she intends to remain this even under the threat of death. The conflict is therefore no longer one between “us” and the “Turk”, it is a conflict between the exploiting and the exploited, the poor and

the rich. In other words, the vital, folkloristic people are predominantly defined by their economic disadvantages, not by ethnicity or religion.

This gets further thematized through several of the film's other elements. Osman-Beg's accomplice, Selim, warns him that the villagers are planning an uprising and emphasizes that "our poor" (the Muslim poor) will join the revolt. The film also introduces the character of Orhan, a ragged Muslim who is integrated into the village community, is friends with the revolutionary Orthodox priest Damjan, and is ultimately killed by the Beg (instead of Cveta's brother Duko, as in Černodrinski's play). As a result, the line separating "us" from the "Turk" is completely erased in the film. At the same time, however, the conflict between rich and poor is expressed through distinctly Balkanist surrogates for the working class and the bourgeoisie: the working class is substituted by the "good archaic" of the exotic peasants, while the bourgeoisie is substituted by the "bad archaic" of the Beg, consumed by lust and violence. Through this double gesture, Balkanist tropes and revolutionary tropes become inextricably intertwined in *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*.

Furthermore, it has been noted that Orhan is friends with the priest Damjan. Religion is another element of Černodrinski's play which might seem problematic from a Marxist perspective: Černodrinski's characters are perpetually calling to the Lord for help. The movie does not try to censor this code. Instead, it introduces two characters who do not appear in the play: Damjan the priest and Josif, the painter of icons who is going blind. Josif is losing his sight because he secretly paints in the dim back room of his hut, illuminated only by weak candlelight. Rather than a propagator of religion, he is quite literally an embodiment of the "flickering" of indigenous civilization, surviving in the face of perpetual destruction. Furthermore, he explains to the conspiring villagers that one can notice, if one puts an effort into it, that all saints have workers' and peasants' faces. Religious iconography therefore does not exactly signify religion: on the one hand, it is a sign of the proletarian peoples' resilience, and on the other hand, it signifies their wish for egalitarianism.

Damjan, in his turn, is not only tolerant (he is good friends with Orhan) but is also the most zealous revolutionary in the village. After Cveta gets killed by the Beg, he undergoes a fundamental transformation: he covers her corpse with his priest's robe, attaches a gun and a knife to his belt, and leads the villagers into the mountain. The religious code is therefore reinterpreted as a code of revolution: once the priest's cloak is dropped, the true revolutionary character of the proletarian people's religion gets unveiled.

Finally, to complete the historical picture presented by *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*, the roles of the Vali and the foreign diplomats warrant consideration. After the peasants' attack on the seraglio fails, they file a complaint to the Vali in Thessaloniki and ask the Russian consul for help. The Russian consul then calls upon his colleagues, the French and British consuls, and together they force the Vali to determine whether Cveta was abducted or has joined Osman-Beg of her own free will. The Vali summons Cveta, who proclaims that she was taken by force and is then released to rejoin her village community. It would therefore seem that international diplomacy plays an unambiguously positive role in the film.

However, as the Vali explains to Osman-Beg, Cveta must be released because she is a stake in the game of international reputations and influences; she is nothing but a pawn in the diplomatic game of prestige. Furthermore, the diplomatic and governmental staff are fundamentally estranged from their subjects. Osman-Beg will not be constrained by law and order, and the only justice the proletarian people will receive must be gained by their own forces. If not in overt conflict with the ruling elite, the proletarian people are at least thoroughly estranged from it; abandoned by state apparatuses, they have to rely on themselves, their own revolutionary strength.

Krleža's interpretative lens is thus consistently applied throughout the film: a vital, proletarian people is pushed towards a revolutionary "anticipation" by the oppressive occupier; the flicker of their civilization has survived in dark back rooms no matter the sacrifices (of Josif's sight in this case); although apparently religious, the surviving tradition is unambiguously egalitarian and revolutionary; the elites being estranged from the popular element, this element did not get corrupted and has preserved its strength.

*Macedonian Bloody Wedding* therefore executes the "move 1" in the game of the archaic: it reevaluates backwardness as vitality. The film's protagonists are distinctly premodern, folkloristic, imbued with religious traditions, and tied to pastoral surroundings. On first glance, nothing seems further removed from the ideal subject of a socialist revolution. Yet motif after motif, these properties are reevaluated as revolutionary: they witness to inherent strength, estrangement from state apparatuses, cultural survival rooted in an egalitarian impulse, and, ultimately, a high propensity for revolt.

The film thus entails an emancipatory dimension: it appropriates the revolution for those who are, at first glance, very far from being its most likely subjects. *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* subtly asserts that its folkloristic peasants are just as revolutionary as any industrial, urban proletariat. The problematic aspect of this emancipatory re-evaluation is, however, that the revolution itself becomes balkanized. Although based in economic inequalities that bridge ethnic and religious divides, the revolution is firmly embedded between two stereotypes, with "sword, fire, and terror" (Osman-Beg) standing on the one side and those "who sing and dance the best" (the peasants) on the other.

The "move 1" is therefore a risky one. On one hand, it makes the revolutionary narrative accessible to those who are, at least partially, excluded from normative progress. On the other hand, in doing so, it cannot fully dismantle certain exoticizing stereotypes. An interesting remark in this regard comes from the critic Nikola Stojanović. Upon seeing *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* at the Pula Film Festival in 1968, Stojanović was revolted by the film's ending. After killing Cveta, Osman-Beg tries to escape while Spase pursues him. When he finally catches him, Spase bashes Osman-Beg's head in with a rock. This way of execution was not at all to Stojanović's liking; he remarked: "It has a defeating effect on the viewer when [...] the film's hero performs the execution of the tyrant in a most sloppy and non-heroic way: by an unfortunate hit on the head with a rock!" (1968, 22) Stojanović's disappointment aside, this method of execution aligns with the film's symbolic framework: the tyrant is killed by raw strength that finds its means in its very

natural surroundings. The fact that the revolution ends in this almost “natural” outburst of violence can be regarded as the defeating element of the “move 1”: in its framework, good vitality can always slip back towards primitive violence.

#### **5.4 *When You Hear the Bells: Village Wars***

*Macedonian Bloody Wedding* discovered partisans before the time of actual partisans. The *komiti*, the early 20th century Macedonian resistance fighters – the movie would suggest – are forbears of the revolutionary fighters of the NOB. In other words, the revolution had begun long before the actual revolution started. *When You Hear the Bells*, in its turn, establishes exactly the opposite interpretative matrix: the partisans, the actual fighters of the NOB, are in fact remnants of pre-revolutionary village rebels. Even with the revolution in full swing, it is these bearers of pre-revolutionary tribal conflicts that have the main say.

The film’s plot is fragmentary and based on a relatively large number of anecdotes that are only loosely tied together. Quite a few critics identified this narrative strategy as one of the movie’s moderately modernist features (Kragić 2006; Šakić 2016). Furthermore, Vrdoljak based his script on Ivan Šibl’s war diaries, which are, in accordance with the genre, structured through almost daily entries that do not follow a clear-cut narrative pattern. However, a general outline can be traced: a political commissar named Vjeko is sent to a partisan unit in Banija (a province of Croatia) in early 1942 to oversee its activities and provide the fighters with political education. With his help, they should grasp their role in the world revolution. But the commissar, the “politički”, as he is referred to by the fighters, encounters quite a few difficulties in executing his task. At the same time, he is becoming emerged in the daily activities of the partisan unit: he goes to their watchpost at the edge of the village, where they exchange insults and bullets with a nearby enemy village; he takes part in two of their operations led against Ustasha forces; he becomes the protector of a Muslim prisoner of war; he orchestrates the saving of a child gone missing behind enemy lines; he is reunited with his wife and child through the efforts of the local partisan/village leader. The film ends with a daring mission by the village fighters to destroy a German artillery nest. Kubura, the village’s best fighter and Vjeko’s friend, gets mortally wounded during the mission, while Vjeko himself gets transferred to a larger unit.

These episodes are tied together by ellipses of not always precisely determinable duration. A consequence of this fragmentary narrative strategy is that the viewer is presented with a panoramic overview of what could be described as “rural Balkan warfare”. This kind of warfare is, once again, somewhat at odds with modernity. The lack of asphalted roads is not only complete in the film but also accentuated as a virtue by Gara, the village leader. Gara claims that roads bring nothing but misfortunes: “armies, diseases, and all kinds of trouble”. Electricity is also lacking, which gets accentuated through dialogue in a peculiar way. When approaching the troop’s village, Vjeko notices a burned-down haystack and asks his guide, Kubura, whether the Germans or the Ustasha were responsible. Vjeko clearly assumes the arson was part of the war’s devastation. However, Kubura informs him that this is

not the case: the haystack burned down before the war. Since there is no electricity in these parts, drunken peasants often “light their way” at night by setting fire to the property of hated neighbours.

The dialogue then reveals another premodern aspect of the Banija space. After being informed of this custom, Vjeko asks in astonishment: “And there are no consequences?” He is implying that arson is a crime and should be punished. But once again, he does not receive the answer he expected. Kubura replies: “Of course there are consequences, next time they burn the others’ down.” The space Vjeko has entered is not governed by law; it is a space where justice is firmly associated with revenge.

From a conversation that Vjeko leads with the village’s elder Gara, it also becomes evident that the peasant partisans refuse to identify with any kind of state. When Vjeko reproaches Gara that the troop does not look like a real army because of its lack of discipline, Gara answers: “I want no army here! We are not a state at war, my brother, but a village that has been attacked.” The refusal to identify with a state can be regarded as another sign of non-modernity. As Slavoj Žižek poignantly pointed out, identity, in relation to political formations, should follow a trajectory where the individual “tears himself away from his primordial ‘organic’ community” and starts to “recognize the substance of his being in another, secondary community which is universal and, simultaneously, ‘artificial’” (1997, 41). In other words, the progressive trajectory would substitute an identification with the “local community” for an identification with the state/nation. This kind of identification is entirely absent among the villagers. Their loyalty lies solely with their “organic community,” their village, where – as Gara explains – their grandfathers and great-grandfathers were born.

Absence of asphalt and electricity, of law and state are therefore conditions under which the Banija troop operates. And the fighters’ full identification with the “organic community” has a further consequence: it turns the partisan struggle of World War Two into an ethnic-religious conflict. The critic Mira Boglić claimed that *When You Hear the Bells* was the first Yugoslav film that dared to broach this theme (1988, 80). In the film, the problem is rendered quite explicit. When they see the troop’s village on a distant slope for the first time, Kubura explains to Vjeko that what he is looking at is Kladare Gornje (“gornje” meaning upper). Kubura then points to another cluster of houses a little lower on the slope and explains that this is the village of Kladare Donje (“donje” meaning lower). Surprised, Vjeko asks how come all those houses are not part of the same village, only to receive the answer that the difference between the two is evident: in one village, there is a church tower while the other has a minaret.

It will soon become evident that under these conditions the conflict between partisans and Ustasha is not what it might seem. It is not rooted in a deep ideological bias between fascism and socialism; rather, it is a rearticulation of old village/tribal/ethnic hatreds. As Vjeko gets told, the Muslims of Kladare Donje seized the opportunity, put on Ustasha uniforms, and began to plunder. But the reverse also becomes apparent through the film’s developments: the Orthodox/Serbs from Kladare Gornje put on partisan uniforms not out of political conviction (they are

very far from being Marxist), but to respond to Kladare Donje's allegiance to the Ustasha (which was, once again, not motivated by them being Fascist, but by them being offered an alibi to plunder within the archaic village world).

The revolution thus once again becomes Balkanized, though in a manner entirely different from that in *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*. As Tomislav Šakić claims, "the war develops here in accordance with eternal Western European notions on Europe's periphery": it is a rural, senseless, and endless fight between neighbours (2006). This representation of war can be regarded as the bad archaic: it translates the movement of history – the revolution – into a pre-modern Balkan stasis. And the pointlessness of the "fratricidal" war is accentuated in the film by a recurring motif: the ritual of shouting insults at enemy lines. Each morning, the "partisan" troop from Kladare Gornje gathers at their watchpost and shouts into the fog, only to be shot at and insulted by the "Ustasha" troop from Kladare Donje. This ritual has been taken over directly from Šibl's diary, including the very insults being shouted.

The pointlessness of the whole affair is accentuated by the fact that those shouting cannot see the enemy; they therefore seem to be shouting at the ever-present fog itself. Due to this visual strategy, the enemy's responses seem almost an echo of one's own shouts. This is best exemplified by the most recurrent pair of insults. Since the leader of Kladare Gornje is called Gara, while the leader of Kladare Donje is called Zara, the two groups perpetually exchange the following lines: "Better Gara than Zara!", answered with "Better Zara than Gara!" The difference required to trigger the shooting is withheld in one single consonant (G/Z), while the groups almost perfectly echo each other.

It is unsettling that the very same ritual of exchanging insults became a prominent motif in depictions of the 1990s Yugoslav civil wars, both in film and in reporting. In a famous article entitled "Nationalism and the Narcissism of Minor Differences", Michael Ignatieff reported: "This is a village war. Everyone knows everyone else [...]. Each night they call each other up on the CB radio and exchange insults – by name. Then they go back to trying to kill each other." (1999, 91) Another notable instance of exchanging insults with an invisible, "brotherly" enemy appears in *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (*Lepa sela lepo gore*, Srđan Dragojević, 1996). The motif's success does by all means *not* mean that in a fit of clairvoyance Vrdoljak anticipated the events of the 1990s. Rather, one should question what gives exactly this motif a lasting appeal in representations of "Balkan" warfare.<sup>1</sup>

### **5.5 The Bad Education: Narcissism of Minor Differences Revisited**

As the Gara/Zara couplet demonstrates, the conflict in *When You Hear the Bells* is largely represented as one fuelled by a "narcissism of minor differences". In its contemporary meaning, this concept was developed in response to Samuel Huntington's claims on the "clash of civilizations". The hypothesis is a simple one: war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing are not necessarily caused by major differences between "civilizations". On the contrary, it is exactly minor differences (often invisible to the outsider) that can lead to extreme atrocities (cases in point would be the

Rwanda genocide or the 1990s wars in Yugoslavia) (Blok 1998; Ignatieff 1999; Kolstø 2007). However, the theory of a “narcissism of minor differences” soon ran into problems almost as severe as those encountered by the “clash of civilizations” hypothesis. The main difficulty lay in the inability to establish clear criteria for distinguishing “minor” from “major” differences (Kolstø 2007, 168). As it turns out, the difference between “minor” and “major” hopelessly depends on the perceiving subject’s point of view (Kolstø 2007, 169).

It is beyond my competence to argue whether the concept of a “narcissism of minor differences” is a valid explanatory matrix in historical research. It is evident, however, that Vrdoljak explicitly used it to structure his film even before it became an established theoretical concept. The Gara/Zara couplet is not the only motif in the film that suggests that the conflict is fuelled by minor differences. There are also the names of the villages at war, the only difference being in “upper”/“lower”. Furthermore, when sentinels report to Gara that they have arrested an Ustasha patrol, they at once explain that these were actually the villagers Suljica and Meho. This shows the conflict’s personal aspect (Ignatieff’s “they call each other by name”). However, as if he had anticipated the major theoretical problem of “minor” differences, Vrdoljak needs the outsider’s perspective to set their mechanism in motion. This position is occupied by Vjeko, who comes from the city – Zagreb – and is not able to see the differences.

Vjeko is therefore systematically fashioned as an outsider to a world whose inhabitants – though they are at war – understand each other perfectly well. To take an example: after Meho, a Muslim from Kladare Donje, gets arrested, Vjeko manages to convince Gara not to execute him right away, for Meho proves that his rifle had never been used. Meho is taken to Kubura’s house where Vjeko, Kubura, and Meho have dinner together: they all eat gruel out of a single bowl. While Kubura and Meho master a technique of eating the gruel with small spoons, Vjeko systematically spills his meal on the table. Paradoxically, the excluded one is not the enemy Meho, but the “city boy”. This gets further accentuated in the continuation of the same sequence: once in bed, Vjeko hears a howling through the window and asks Kubura whether wolves often attack the village. At first, Kubura is confused, but then he realizes that Vjeko mistook the villagers’ nighttime singing for the howling of wolves. Meho simply comments: “You have beautiful songs.” Once again, Meho and Kubura understand their surroundings perfectly well, while the confused Vjeko perceives them as inherently threatening. The world of warring villages is thus articulated through what would be minor differences from Vjeko’s perspective. In this world, the real Other is not the Muslim village hidden in the fog – the enemy village is in fact an echo of oneself – but Vjeko.

This has a major consequence: it splits the film’s “educational” narrative in two. Being a political commissar, Vjeko is supposed to provide the peasant partisans with a political education. Ivo Škrabalo claims that the main axis of the educational process indeed goes from Vjeko to the villagers: “For them [the villagers], the grand ideas of the revolution are at first pretty incomprehensible echoes of far-away urban musings [...] which only gradually acquire the shape of truth” (1998, 346). For Mira Boglić, however, the process has another direction. In her view, the

new commander will have to “learn a lot himself” (1988, 80); he will have to learn the rules of the world of minor differences he has entered.

The educational process therefore goes both ways: Vjeko was sent to explain the revolution to the villagers, but at the same time, he himself receives lessons, whose main source is Gara, with Kubura sometimes helping along. And the process is not exactly symmetrical: in terms of verbalization, Vjeko never really gets the opportunity to develop his beliefs, while Gara’s lectures are given abundant space. The film’s ending could in fact be interpreted as a surprising triumph of one educational model over the other. After Kubura dies in his arms, Vjeko participates in the ritual of shouting into the fog for the first time. It is not the transformation of traditional village warfare into a socialist revolution that takes place at the film’s end. To the contrary, it is the assimilation of a political commissar into the rituals of the warring villages.

Vjeko, the representative of the revolution, therefore at least partially fails in his enlightenment mission and is compelled to learn the rules of the warring village world. Here a short detour is needed. There is an almost unanimous critical consensus on *When You Hear the Bells*: the film’s major merit lies in that it is non-ideological in its representation of the Yugoslav revolutionary struggle. In opposition to what one might expect from partisan films (which are often quite crudely, if not wrongly, defined as the Yugoslav ideological genre *par excellence*)<sup>2</sup>, Vrdoljak offered a non-schematic, “true” representation of people struggling in the war. Ivo Škrabalo writes: “*When You Hear the Bells* is [...] a non-mythological film on the People’s Liberation Struggle (and maybe the first of this kind)” (1998, 346). Mira Boglić insisted that the film is “devoid of all pathetic elements, which are supplanted by the authenticity and the immediacy of different, surprisingly vivacious and picturesque characters” (1988, 80). Milutin Čolić argued that Vrdoljak’s “vision of those times is not defined by *a priori* notions and fashions, nor is it burdened by pretensions towards final definitions” (1984, 448). In 2006, Miljenko Jergović offered a synthesis of this position, which he regarded as a widespread consensus within Croatian culture: “Vrdoljak, they say, represented the war in a way that was different from partisan epics. He had understanding, he did not paint interhuman relations as black and white but attempted to see through the many layers of a terrible time.” (2006) That these notions overstepped the Croatian national border in the meantime can be seen from a short text announcing the film as part of a retrospective at the Viennale festival in 2019:

The complexity of history and war has rarely been handled with such humanism and lucidity as in *Kad čuješ zvona*. The film and its twin feature, *U gori raste zelen bor*, are distinguished by a genre-bending approach that takes several great, almost mythical subjects, transforming them into a subtle existential tap-estry with characters as perfectly flawed and intricate as imaginable.<sup>3</sup>

In opposition to “mythical” partisan films, to *a priori* notions, to pathetic exaggerations stand authenticity, manifoldness, complex people, lucidity, and humanism. In other words, the film does not follow an ideological (schematic,

dogmatic, fake) agenda, it represents the war as it really “was”, or at least could have been.

This widely accepted critical notion is directly reinforced by the failure of Vjeko’s enlightenment mission. Being a political commissar, he would be the one to impose *a priori* definitions on the village war, thus moulding it into the ideological frame of a communist revolution. Instead, Vrdoljak demonstrates that such moulding is impossible: neither does the threatening world of minor differences want to have an overreaching narrative imposed on its conflicts, nor does Vjeko have the strength to exercise such a gesture of domination. Vjeko illustrates how ideological domination fails when faced with a “concrete” space, people, and period.

Here, however, it is worth remembering a fundamental lesson about ideology offered by Slavoj Žižek. There is no ideology “which does not assert itself by means of delimiting itself from another ‘mere ideology’.” (1994, 19) In other words, the tendency to represent oneself as non-ideological by pointing to an Other as the embodiment of ideology is the ideological gesture *par excellence*. Since Vjeko is a failed missionary, he acquires exactly this function of alibi. His project’s failure is not at all Vrdoljak’s route out of ideology. To the contrary, it establishes an ideology whose strength lies in it being fashioned as non-ideology, as the nuanced “true” or “real” that appears at the expense of the representative of “ideology”. Paradoxically, through its dismissal of ideology, *When You Hear the Bells* might be *more* ideological than spectacles which are usually recognized as overtly ideological.

In order to fully grasp this mechanism, it is important to emphasize another fundamental aspect of Žižek’s theory of ideology: ideology operates through a constant tension between the universal and the particular. While presenting itself as inherently universal, ideology cannot function without relying on particular examples (Žižek 1997). If one follows this game of universals and particulars, a peculiar pattern appears in *When You Hear the Bells*.

To start with Vjeko once again: he is the prime representative of a Marxist, universalist perspective. The struggle he encounters should be interpreted as part of a larger, universal struggle against fascism and capitalism that leads to the emancipation of the proletariat and humankind respectively. However, his example refuses to obey, to leave behind its narcissism of minor differences and join in on the universal historical movement. It thus exposes the universalist position as ideology. Yet this “reality” is fashioned through its structural resistance not to Marxism but to modernity itself: it is a space where law (universal justice against particular revenge), the state (secondary identification against the “organic” community), even asphalt and electricity are lacking. If the Yugoslav village cannot “really” be part of a Marxist revolution, it cannot be part of full-fledged modernity either. “Non-ideological” reality thus serves to represent any universalist position (Marxist or other) as inappropriate for the Yugoslav space. Even when joining in on a wide historical movement, the Yugoslav peoples “in fact” lead their own, age-old tribal conflicts. This does not mean that modernity is in itself flawed; there are states, laws, roads, and electricity somewhere else. Rather, it is inapplicable to a very clearly defined space. Universality is therefore not denied through the

exception, while the exception is not at all “non-ideological”. On the contrary, the exception serves the fundamental purpose of exemplifying a state of insurmountable backwardness. In the final analysis, “minor differences” are not an index of reality but a means of excluding a certain space from the narrative of progress.

And this is exactly the gesture that Michael Ignatieff’s text performs some 30 years later. Seemingly a vehement refutation of the war, the text has a highly exemplary structure. First, what happened with Yugoslavia’s dissolution was the return to a thoroughly archaic state:

In the space of three years, he [the Yugoslav citizen] has been delivered from the nation-state, back 400 years to the late feudal world before European nation-states began. In three years, he has been delivered from civilization – from interethnic tolerance and accommodation – to barbarism. He has been returned to a war of all against all: the Hobbesian world.

(Ignatieff 1999, 93)

Ignatieff’s justified moral outrage aside, there are some evident inconsistencies in this paragraph. Even if his time-traveling diagnosis were correct, it is not at all clear how the “late feudal world” would be interchangeable with a “Hobbesian world”, which is usually associated with fully pre-social conditions. But the paragraph’s middle term, the “nation-state”, might offer an answer to this problematic equation: everything that is not in accordance with the European nation-state is utterly archaic. A framing of the European nation-state by the Middle Ages and the “Hobbesian world” does not serve to explain either of these two rather distant diagnostic terms; it serves to position the nation-state at the centre of normative modernity.

The temporal matrix is thus set: modernity equals the European nation-state, while the narcissism of minor differences is an inherently archaic behavioural pattern. But why can this archaic pattern burst out exactly in Yugoslavia? The answer is clear-cut and simple: because of communism. How does the reversal to the archaic happen? Through the death of Josip Broz Tito:

Then Tito dies. The state begins to fall apart. Why? Because states whose legitimacy depends on the personal charisma of individuals can only fall apart with their deaths. Because communist regimes everywhere have shown no capacity to sustain electoral or political legitimacy once they lose the capacity to intimidate their population. What other principle of legitimacy is there in the post-communist world except for nationalism?

(Ignatieff 1999, 92)

It could be argued that this description of the Yugoslav system of sovereignty is extremely reductionist. What is even more striking, however, is the seamless accumulation of contradictions within a single paragraph. The paragraph’s first presupposition is that Tito’s death is the death of Yugoslavia’s legitimacy. The second presupposition is that communist regimes cannot sustain legitimacy except through intimidation. But this would imply that they *can* sustain legitimacy exactly through intimidation.

The logical conclusion would then be that Tito's death also signified an utter loss of the Yugoslav authorities' capacity for intimidation (for if that capacity had remained in place, the country would not have fallen apart). What the paragraph would thus suggest by piling up its hypotheses is that Tito was supernaturally intimidating.

This reading is somewhat stretched, but the point to be taken very seriously is that these contradictions can appear because the text's main gage is *not* to explain the Yugoslav conflict; its main objective is to position the European nation-state as a pacifist, liberal, and progressed norm through inventing a system of its Others. The descriptions of these Others can be rather imprecise because the hegemony of the middle term – the nation-state – is in fact predetermined. As Ernesto Laclau argued (1997, 305), when inserted within an ideological mechanism, terms tend to be emptied out of their original semantic content: the Middle Ages and a war of all against all, Tito and intimidation become interchangeable because they do not signify concrete phenomena, they simply appertain to the paradigm of Others to the European, liberal, progressed (and implicitly capitalist) nation-state. Their original semantics is therefore partially erased and rendered into a simple “non-European-liberal-capitalist-nation-state”. In Ignatieff's article, the insistence on a narcissism of minor differences does not lead to a rediscovery of non-ideological “reality” and its manifold nuances. Rather, it reinforces the norm by making its Others lose their particularity as they become inserted into a paradigm of the “non-norm”.

And Vrdoljak's particularities also follow a single pattern. This pattern leads back to the interplay between the “good” and the “bad” archaic and to a peculiar version of humanism. If any identification with law, the state, and modernity is lacking, loyalty fundamentally lies with the “organic” community, the village, the kin. When pushed a little further, such loyalty easily becomes an extreme attachment to family. This attachment to family can then be fashioned as the undisputed “level zero” of ideology, a base-feature of humanity.

The episode with Vjeko's wife is highly exemplary in this regard. Since he is a subversive known to the government, the Ustasha forces have taken Vjeko's wife and new-born child (whom he has never seen) hostage. Knowing that they will probably be killed, Vjeko suffers, but he does not inform his village hosts of his family situation. However, the village leader Gara overhears his conversation with another city subversive in which the wife and child are mentioned. Gara cannot accept that the familial bond must be sacrificed and acts: he takes three German soldiers prisoner, takes them to the nearby partisan command, and (“realistically”) forces the commander to exchange them for Vjeko's family (the commander would rather exchange the captured soldiers for other political prisoners who could pick up the fight).

The pattern is clear: Vjeko, the representative of a universal narrative, is willing to sacrifice his personal interests for the sake of his historic mission. This would be the idealist, if not ideological, perspective. But Gara cannot allow for the extreme sacrifice to take place. This might be regarded as the minimal “humanist” principle: no human is strong enough, or should be strong enough, to fully suppress his individual emotional life to the benefit of a universal narrative. In other words, unquestioned loyalty to one's family is the minimal property of humanity. The “good” side of the archaic village world is that it never forgets this principle.

Furthermore, it is disobedient and strong enough to enforce it: Gara is so ferocious that the partisan commander simply gives in to his unorthodox request.

However, this is where a twist occurs within Vrdoljak's ideological mechanism. Just before Vjeko's wife's arrival is announced in the village, Gara gives him a final lesson. The dialogue is highly symptomatic: after having saved a child, Meho the Muslim is accepted into partisan ranks by Vjeko. The next day, he appears with a red star sewn onto his hat. When asked where he got the star, he replies that a girl had sewed it on for him and leaves. Vjeko is then left alone with Gara. Gara tells Vjeko that he would very much like to know which girl sewed the star. Since Vjeko does not understand the significance of the question, Gara explains that there was only one village girl who once tried to get married in the Muslim village; she was cut down "like a bitch" by her brothers on her wedding night. Since the act of sewing is evidently interpreted as a romantic gesture by Gara, he is worried that the same thing might have to be done again. Vjeko is scandalized by this line of argumentation. He tries to convince Gara that he is saying such things out of grief for his son, who died in the last partisan action. To this, Gara responds: "My son is dead [...]. But if he were alive and if I had another three hundred sons, he [Meho] would be a *Balija* to me!" "*Balija*" is in this context a pejorative term for a Muslim of Slavic origin. Revolted, Vjeko informs Gara that he should be put in front of a firing squad for what he said, to which Gara responds: "I know that one day you could have me shot, I thought about that. But fuck a man who allows himself to be shot!" At that moment, they receive news that Vjeko's wife and child have arrived.

This scene has been recounted at length for several reasons. First, one can notice how heavily it relies on tropes of familial allegiance: the integration of Meho happens because he saved a *child*; Gara grieves because his *son* is dead, at the end, Vjeko's *wife* arrives. During their conversation, it is in fact Vjeko who takes over the rhetoric of minimal humanism based in familial loyalty when he tells Gara that he understands him as "a *father* and a *man*". But at the same time, the "humanist" approach gets heavily subverted. In the heart of unconditional allegiance to kin lies its dark double: interethnic hatred. An unconditional loyalty to the "organic" community, a refusal to enter the universal narrative, upholds the tribal conflict, no matter Vjeko's efforts at Meho's integration, no matter Meho's merits in the context of the family code. And this problem is directly connected with an estrangement from state apparatuses as well as inherent strength. Gara has no respect for a man who lets himself be judged and executed, he belongs to no army and is strong enough to intimidate a partisan commander. The proletarian people, left to struggle for centuries on the outskirts of law and order, therefore keep their inherent strength, but this strength is now reevaluated as an obstacle that does not allow them to ever truly enter the machine of history; it keeps them firmly inscribed in their perennial world of tribal conflict.

## **5.6 Conclusion: The Balkan Revolution and Its Discontents**

In *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* and *When You Hear the Bells*, the vicissitudes of the archaic with regard to representations of history become apparent. The first film

discreetly claimed that a pre-modern uprising is a form of revolution. Inversely, the second film suggested that the partisan struggle itself was a pre-modern uprising. Somewhat simplified, the notion of “we were actually always revolutionary” can without difficulty be inverted into its exact opposite, namely “we were never really revolutionary”. Archaic strength caused by an estrangement from state apparatuses can *at once* be interpreted as a perpetual revolution and as a perpetual impossibility of revolution.

Relying on Miroslav Krleža’s views on South Slavic history, *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* performed an emancipatory gesture: it turned its folkloristic peasants into a “proletarian” people. In this way, it made the revolution accessible to those who apparently did not reach the state of development that would entitle them to revolutionary activity. *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* turned backwardness into revolutionary vitality. As was shown, however, the revolution itself got balkanized through this gesture. It therefore comes as no surprise that *When You Hear the Bells* was capable of doing the exact opposite: it fashioned the actual revolution as an age-old Balkan conflict. *When You Hear the Bells* turned revolutionary vitality back into static backwardness.

One can thus see how two adverse “moves” provided by the game of the archaic shaped these two representations of history. And the stakes of this confrontation are extremely high. On one hand, a symbolic space must be opened in which the “barbarians” of Europe can transform into revolutionaries. On the other hand, this symbolic space risks collapsing back into what it attempted to contest: senseless repetitions instead of revolutionary anticipations. The political-ideological consequences of this uncertainty should not be underestimated. Although it inscribes the Yugoslav peoples into a revolutionary narrative, the archaic left a space open for doubts on whether a revolution could ever have really happened in Yugoslavia. It is somewhat unsettling that the second perspective was regarded as “non-ideological” realism by Yugoslav film critics in the 1960s. As my analysis hopefully showed, there is nothing “realistic” about this second perspective; it is but one possibility produced by the game of the archaic, and in being denaturalized it hopefully loses at least some of its appeal.

## Notes

- 1 The question of whether it is true that such exchanges were taking place might also not be the most fruitful one. Šibl’s diary or Ignatieff’s report might be taken as evidence of them in fact happening repeatedly, which is not my intention to deny. However, this does not answer the question of why they were chosen as something *representative*, or what they were representative of.
- 2 For a discussion of the partisan genre, ideology and “socialist realism” see Jovanović 2011a, 2015.
- 3 [www.viennale.at/de/film/kad-cujes-zvona](http://www.viennale.at/de/film/kad-cujes-zvona), accessed on the 14.01.2022.

## 6 Parody and Naiveté

### Ante Babaja's *The Birch Tree* and Dragoslav Lazić's *Poor Mary*

#### 6.1 Things Past and Present

The analysis of revolutions in *Macedonian Bloody Wedding* and *When You Hear the Bells* demonstrated that the archaic can shape competing yet compatible representations of history. However, the archaic is in no way limited to historical representations. Not only can it serve as an interpretative model for the present, but also, it can introduce certain elements of the past into this present. This peculiar intertwining of things past and present will be scrutinized through an analysis of two seemingly very different films: the modernist classic *Birch Tree* (*Breza*, Ante Babaja, 1967) and a comedy almost in the style of trash film entitled *Poor Mary* (*Sirota Marija*, Dragoslav Lazić, 1968). A comparison between these two films will disclose the archaic as a “timeless” representational strategy while examining a dense net of intertextual relations that undermine the previously described “barricades” scheme of Yugoslav film history.

#### 6.2 Two Weddings and a Funeral

From the moment of its release to the present day, Ante Babaja's *Birch Tree* enjoys the reputation of a masterpiece of modernist cinema. After its screening at the Pula Film Festival, Ranko Munitić described the film as appertaining to “real, modern cinematic expression” (1967, 30); Bogdan Kalafatović deemed it worthy of “all honours and prizes” (1967, 6); Tomislav Šakić included it among Croatian “modernist classics” (2016, 112); and in Nikica Gilić's words, the film was a “ground-breaking success” (2011, 85). Several features of Babaja's film get accentuated time and again as key elements of its high aesthetic value. First, the film is praised for its “folkloristic modernism”, which could be compared to that of Sergei Parajanov (Gilić 2011). Second, the film is praised for its narrative inventiveness and precision (Šakić 2016). Third, the film is praised for its visual allusions to Yugoslav naïve painting (Krelja 2010). Finally, the film is praised for relying on an existentialist philosophical perspective, with its central theme being death (Krelja 2010).

*The Birch Tree* is based on a short story by the Croatian writer Slavko Kolar. The plot is situated in a village in the Croatian province of Zagorje prior to World War Two and runs as follows: a forest ranger named Marko is the village's seducer

and thug. At a village festivity, his boss points out to him the beauty of Janica. Janica is a local girl who, in the boss's opinion, stands out among the other peasant women as if she were a birch among beeches and oaks. Janica is slim and fragile and therefore does not really fit the village's beauty standards. But Marko is servile and something of a snob; he therefore decides to trust his boss's taste and marries Janica. After the wedding, Janica moves into Marko's house and gives birth to a child, which dies ten days later. Once the child is dead, Janica's mother-in-law forces her to go back to hard physical labour: she has to watch over cattle under pouring autumn rain. Janica then gets sick and dies, after Marko systematically refuses to visit her deathbed. Right after a wake – which turns into a monstrous party – and Janica's funeral, Marko accepts to be the flagman (*barjaktar*) at another peasant's wedding. At the wedding party, he attempts to seduce a woman whose jealous husband gets suspicious and beats Marko up with the help of a gang of friends. Drunk and hurt, Marko escapes into the forest and the night. At dawn, he stumbles upon a lone birch tree. In a fit of wild rage, Marko attempts to cut the tree down with an axe but cannot bring himself to deliver the first blow. Finally, he hugs the tree and breaks down crying for his slender, dead wife.

In the film, this simple story is rendered through a complex system of analepses, which are tied together by the leitmotif of a popular rhyme whose verses turn out to encompass all of the plot's narrative sequences.

Since Kolar's story takes place before 1941, *The Birch Tree* represents a slice of Yugoslav village history. And this village does not only belong to a pre-revolutionary period, it is archaic even by the norms of the old, pre-revolutionary world. In Kolar's story, the peasants get warned systematically by the village's "intellectuals" – the doctor, the notary, the teacher – that they "are one hundred years behind the rest of the world" (Kolar 1971). This bad time-lag introduces a set of "archaic" motifs into the film: terrible housing conditions where whole families and animals share one living space, endless mud, superstitions, and a higher trust in witches than in doctors. Also, the village community is heavily reliant on rituals – foremost weddings and funerals – which systematically turn into festivities of heavy drinking, feasting, and violence. As Petar Krelja put it, the film's fictional world "resembles forgotten, far-away ambiances of primary communities" and is saturated "with a shocking amount of raw passions that, always supported by liquor, choose neither the moment nor the person upon which they are going to burst out" (2010, 14).

In Krelja's view, even this world of village gore was made photogenic through Ante Babaja's collaboration with the renowned cameraman, Tomislav Pinter (2010, 13). The two wanted to make the film's visual texture evocative of naïve painting. On one hand, this was accomplished through the choice of motifs. Thematically, Yugoslav naïve painting often applied the same motivic set as Babaja's film: decaying houses, funerals, weddings, and village feasts, drunks and marginals, mud and dirt. On the other hand, Babaja and Pinter used telephoto lenses that reduce the depth of field and flatten out the film's space (Novaković 1967b, 9).

Naïve painting is thus the film's explicit intertext. The naïve painting trend surfaced in Yugoslavia during the interwar period, with the painter Krsto Hegedušić

organizing workshops in the village of Hlebine. Already in 1931, two of his students who had no prior painterly education – Ivan Generalić and Franjo Mraz – exhibited their first works as part of a collective exhibition organized by the artistic group *Zemlja* (Zimmermann 2019, 178).<sup>1</sup> At the moment of the current's founding, the “naïve” denominator signified a lack of formal education. Furthermore, naïve painting was part of Hegedušić's search for an artistic form that would be popular in expression while resisting academic conventions (Vuković 2019, 12). In other words, it was part of a program that aimed at the democratization of culture. However, naïve painting soon became associated with labels such as “originary” and “primitive” (Vrkljan-Križić 1991, 7).<sup>2</sup>

After the war, naïve painting became an important part of the Yugoslav cultural mainstream. As Tanja Zimmermann notes, Josip Broz Tito's cabinet was decorated with a painting by Hegedušić already in 1949 (2014, 231). This was a clear sign that naïve painting had become a current overtly advocated by the regime. During the 1950s, Yugoslavia therefore started fashioning itself as a world leader in naïve painting.<sup>3</sup> In 1952, a permanent exhibition of “painter-peasants” was established in Zagreb; this can be regarded as the first museum in the world specialized in naïve art (Kelemen and Križić 1991, 93). Reception abroad followed with Generalić exhibiting in Paris in 1953, the Hlebine School exhibiting at the biennale in São Paulo in 1955, etc. Although they are probably exaggerated, there are reports on Yugoslav naïve art producing a true “craze” at the international gallerist market during the 1950s and 1960s, so much so that Yugoslav customs officers often discovered trucks full of paintings being smuggled out of the country (Vrkljan-Križić 1991, 8).<sup>4</sup>

By the 1960s, naïve painting was thus an important element of Yugoslav cultural self-fashioning. And once again, naïve painting testifies to a double relation with the archaic. On one hand, it was supposed to be a form of artistic expression that is not burdened by the elitist traditions of Western fine arts. As such, it was supposed to be both a popular and a critical form. Slightly exaggerated, naïve painting was the art form through which the Yugoslav proletarian peoples could express their non-conformism. On the other hand, however, naïve painting was also a mode of representation that was discursively associated with the “primitive”, the “spontaneous”, the unspoiled by civilization. In the words of Oto Bihalji-Merin, Yugoslavia's most renowned theoretician of naïve art, naïve painters “rediscover the instincts that lie buried under the accretions of civilization.” (Bihalji-Merin 1961, 18) Naïve painting's good, critical nonconformism thus slides towards exoticizations.

By the same token, Babaja's film is not only a representation of history. Through its references to naïve painting, it engages in an intense dialogue with the Yugoslav cultural context of the 1960s. Furthermore, it participates in a broader search for an exotic premodern within the modern. And this premodern is not necessarily bound to the living conditions in a Croatian village prior to World War Two. The historical distance might be a mere pretext for introducing a set of representations tied to a *present* process of cultural self-fashioning. This is exactly what *Poor Mary*, an overt parody of *The Birch Tree*, suggests. By leading *The Birch Tree*'s set of motifs to full hypertrophy and by situating them in the present, *Poor Mary* reveals that

during the late 1960s the archaic was viewed as a crucial – and rather ridiculous – aspect of Yugoslav cinema’s symbolic strategies.

### 6.3 The National Bias

Before turning our gaze to *Poor Mary*, another contextual aspect deserves attention. *The Birch Tree* won the third prize at the Pula Film Festival in 1967. That same year, the main prize went to *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* by Aleksandar Petrović. As this is one of the best-known films in the entire history of Yugoslav cinema, I will not analyse in detail how it projects archaic properties upon the Roma community that it depicts. Nevena Daković quite aptly described the film as a prime example of “Balkan exotics”, relying on “codified ‘ethno’ populism” (2003, 103).

It is noteworthy, however, that the two films were compared in a specific way. As Vlastimir Sudar reports, a debate about national “anatomies” in Yugoslav cinema emerged around *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. Upon its appearance, the Croatian newspaper *Večernji list* published a series of articles attempting to devalue Petrović’s highly successful film. Additionally, it featured an interview with Ante Babaja, in which he dismissed *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* as a popular piece lacking artistic value (Sudar 2013, 147). According to Sudar, this reflected “Serbian and Croatian competing views on the cultural representation of Yugoslavia” (2013, 148).

At the same time, a heated debate was developing among film critics – most notably on the pages of the journal *Filmska kultura (Film Culture)* – on whether Yugoslav cinema was a single entity or rather a conglomerate of specific national schools. A representative critic advocating the position that Yugoslav cinema developed into several distinct national schools was Slobodan Novaković. In an article on the Pula Film Festival of 1967, he claimed that Yugoslav films have started expressing not only the author’s personal but also “national sensibilities” (1967b, 9). However, according to Novaković, only the Croatian and Serbian schools were developed enough to be recognizable (1968a, 5). These two “schools” or “sensibilities” are distinguished by several fundamental characteristics: whereas the Croatian school is rational, calculated, and intellectual, the Serbian school is emotional, lively, and free (1968a, 7–10).

Novaković’s views were disputed by quite a few critics. Ranko Munitić argued that “national sensibilities” are mere mystifications and that one can easily find examples of the “Serbian sensibility” in Croatian films, and *vice versa* (1968b). Rudolf Sremec pointed to the fact that almost all directors and actors worked across their republics’ borders (1968). Mirko Bošnjak put forward the proposition that Yugoslav film is one entity because it is – or at least should always be – socialist in spirit (1968).

These critics’ positions lead straight back to the relation between the *Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. In Novaković’s view, Babaja’s and Petrović’s films are prime representatives of different national sensibilities: one intellectually and formally polished, the other robust and free (1968b). However, as Sudar rightly notices, the problem lies in the fact that the two films are strikingly *similar*. Both

star Velimir Bata Živojinović and both were shot by Tomislav Pinter. This is a prime example of Sremec's observation regarding the mobility of Yugoslav film workers. More importantly, both make extensive use of *milieus* characterized by torn-down architecture and excessive mud, and both rely on depictions of frenzied states produced by a mixture of sexuality, violence, and alcohol. Both make reference to visual codes that connote non-modernity: naïve painting in the case of *The Birch Tree* and the tradition of icon painting in the case of *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*.

Novaković cites the popular rhyme uniting all elements of Babaja's film as a prime feature of Croatian "intellectualness". But an almost exact counterpart can be found in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. The film begins with a quote from The Gospel of Luke (8:32):

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

This quote is no simple ornament: in the film's closing sequence, the protagonist Bora drags his arch-enemy Mirta to a frozen lake, where he drowns his body. This act serves as an almost literal illustration of the demons being drowned in the lake. To a certain extent, the film can thus be interpreted as a prolonged allegory based in the opening quote, which, in turn, connects the diegetic world of mud, decay, and frenzy with non-diegetic shots of icons that interrupt the narration.

To be sure, the two structuring mechanisms – that of the popular rhyme and of the opening quote – are not exactly the same. However, when considered alongside all the other enumerated similarities, they make it difficult to understand how the two films could be seen as representing two incommensurable sensibilities. If a debate on autonomous national cultures was taking sway in Yugoslavia during the late 1960s and if cinema was not left out of it, this had little to do with the properties of films themselves, so much so that two evidently similar films could be chosen as examples of competing cultural principles. One can therefore conclude with Munitić that "national sensibilities" were and remain a mystification.

Nonetheless, if one returns for a moment to the two "non-modern" visual codes applied in *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, an interesting pattern becomes apparent. These codes could be regarded as markers of relative cultural specificity. Yugoslav naïve painting did originate in Croatia and could therefore be regarded as a Croatian tradition of visual expression. The icons used by Petrović are tied to a visuality characteristic of Orthodoxy and would be relatively foreign to the visual traditions of the predominately Catholic republics. Although such interpretations are rather problematic, it could be claimed that the two codes were chosen in order to discreetly connote cultural difference. However, one can at once notice the overarching structure enveloping both of them: that of the archaic. In both films, representations of an ecstatic sensibility, whose cornerstones are sex,

death, violence, and intoxication, are paired with visual codes that are at odds with modern, industrial culture.

The two films, therefore, do not present “competing views on the cultural representation of Yugoslavia.” Instead, they offer the same vision of a space where a terrifying lust for life has not yet disappeared. Surely, both representations rely on pretexts: one is sheltered by the historical distance of its plot while the other capitalizes on the presumed exoticism of Yugoslavia’s Roma. *Poor Mary* – a cheap comedy released one year after these two renowned classics – can be seen as their monstrous synthesis. Through a system of ironic re-evaluations, it sought to dismantle the cluster of representations on which both *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* are based. Through the same gesture, *Poor Mary* stripped these representations of their historical and “exotic” pretexts.

#### 6.4 Three Funerals and a Wedding

*Poor Mary* is a comedy that deliberately pushes bad taste to its limits. This can be exemplified by three of the film’s many “funny” scenes. At the film’s very beginning, a group of friends is heavily drunk in a local bar. Since they have no more money but want to continue drinking, they beg the barkeeper to give them another “kilo” of liquor on credit. When the barkeeper refuses, the oldest among them pawns his dental prosthesis to get the drinks; the prosthesis lands in a bowl with several others, demonstrating that in the bar this is a common practice. Midway through the film, Marija, the heroine, takes a ride with a local photographer who has promised to take some pictures of her. When she asks if he is now going to photograph her, he replies, “Wait till I get the machine out!” and begins unzipping his pants. In another scene, Marija and the protagonist, Vojo, celebrate their engagement, once again in the local bar. During the celebration, one of Vojo’s two friends hits the other on the back of the head. This results in the beaten man’s eye falling out and landing in a plate full of soup. All guests then search for the missing eye. The high point is reached when Vojo finds an eye in the soup and asks whether that is the one they had been looking for, only to receive the answer: “No, that’s a lamb’s eye!” He then happily eats the lamb’s eye while the others manage to retrieve the human eye and return it to its rightful owner.

As these three examples show, *Poor Mary*’s humour is based on (sexist) physical jokes verging on the abject. Not surprisingly, the film never made it into the pantheon of Yugoslav *auteur* cinema. Nonetheless, it was made by an almost “all stars” crew from the late 1960s *auteur* scene. The director, Dragoslav Lazić, had gained the reputation of a promising young filmmaker with his debut, *Hot Years* (*Tople godine*, 1966), which Bogdan Kalafatović (1967, 6) described as a brilliant example of verism. Within the framework of the national debate, Novaković included Dragoslav Lazić among the most prominent directors exemplifying the Serbian sensibility (1968a). This was before *Poor Mary* had premiered. The screenplay for *Poor Mary* was written by the tandem Gordan Mihić and Ljubiša Kozomara, who authored the script for another film in 1968, namely the Black Wave classic *When I’m Dead and Gone* (*Kad budem mrtav i beo*, Živojin Pavlović). The leading roles

in *Poor Mary* were played by Milena Dravić and Ljubiša Samardžić, both genuine stars of the Yugoslav screen by 1968.

Although the film remains fully marginal to the present day, it can be regarded as a specific moment of self-reflexivity, produced by some of those who had taken part in giving Yugoslav *auteur* cinema many of its characteristic traits. Furthermore, *Poor Mary* was genuinely popular. In 1969, a review in the newspaper *Vjesnik u srijedu*, signed by the initials G.P., mentioned that *Poor Mary* “achieved an extraordinary commercial success” (1969, 13).<sup>5</sup> Although the film was popular among Yugoslav audiences, it certainly was not popular among critics. No longer impressed by Lazić’s talents, Slobodan Novaković described *Poor Mary* as an “incongruent and distasteful little story” based on a “superfluous and infantile script” (1968b, 80). But, Novaković continues, the film is reminiscent of “some very good films”:

Without having a real support in the scenario, Lazić searched for inspiration at several other sources: his film is full of banal references to Petrović’s *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (muddy village ambiances and drunken bar atmospheres were used here without any measure, and the parallel between real village life and popular (*narodno*) painting has only an illustrative and no deeper metaphoric significance). This film is also an almost overt parody of Babaja’s *The Birch Tree* (it plays with the death of a beautiful village girl and with inserting elements of a popular (*narodne*) operetta into the film!).

(1968b, 81)

Novaković is quite correct in his enumeration of Lazić’s “sources of inspiration”. His hypothesis could even be expanded: all the elements he enumerates are part of a parody not only of *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* and *The Birch Tree*, but also of a broader trend of exploiting the archaic in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s.

To provide orientation within the film’s parodying mechanisms, I will begin the analysis with a brief recounting of its “superfluous and infantile” plot. Marija lives with Vojo in a small town in the vicinity of the city of Šabac. Vojo and Marija had been living together for two years, but Vojo still refuses to marry her, which leads Marija into a state of acute distress. Consequently, she commits suicide; the film begins with Vojo informing his friends in the local bar that Marija had poisoned herself. However, Marija resurrects and appears at the bar’s window, accompanied by an old woman she calls “aunt” (*tetka*). The aunt and Marija then return home, and Vojo joins them a little later, as if nothing had happened. The following sequences show Vojo at work: he is a house-painter (*moler*) with an artistic penchant. But when he takes Marija along to help him, he decides to sell her to a restaurant-keeper. Upon this development, Marija drowns herself in a nearby river. An elaborate sequence of her funeral is then shown, but during the procession, she resurrects once again and goes home with Vojo. Then the aunt takes matters into her own hands: she brews a love potion and makes Vojo drink it. Upon taking the potion, Vojo gets engaged to Marija.

After the engagement party, Vojo, the aunt, Marija, and Vojo’s friends decide to visit a local fair. There, they plan to take a group photograph, but Vojo escapes

and becomes infatuated with an overly sexualized pub singer. While the others pursue him, Marija is left alone with the photographer. He then takes her for a ride in his truck, during which he attempts to rape her. But Vojo becomes aware of her absence, so he, the aunt, and a local policeman start pursuing the photographer. When Marija realizes that Vojo can see them, she begins kissing the photographer to provoke Vojo's jealousy, which leads to a car crash in which she dies once again. Upon her third death, there is another funeral procession, and Marija is put into a grave. The members of the procession then organize a little feast on the graveyard. Finally, Marija resurrects for a third time and climbs out of her open grave. After this, Vojo definitely agrees to marry her, and the last scene shows their wedding. However, in a long sequence preceding the wedding, Vojo departs from his bachelorhood by having an excessive party with the pub singer.

At first sight, *Poor Mary's* plot shows little similarities with Petrović or Babaja's films. Nevertheless, if one focuses on its fundamental narrative mechanism – that of Marija dying and resurrecting – a major common property becomes apparent. Both *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* heavily rely on the opposition between “love” and “death”; moreover, this opposition enables them to present elaborate depictions of rituals associated with the two. In *The Birch Tree*, this mechanism is explicit: the film opens with Janica's death and a wake (the ritual accompanying death) and proceeds with her funeral. Through a series of analepses, the funeral is then interrupted by scenes of Janica and Marko's wedding. After the funeral, Marko attends another wedding, but since it takes place in the only village church, he must pass by Janica's grave during this new celebration of “love”. The film's finale then takes place during a wedding feast. The rhythm of *The Birch Tree's* plot is established through an almost perfectly regular alternation between “love” and “death”, accompanied by several corresponding rituals (wake, wedding, funeral, wedding feast).

In *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, the rhythm of “love” and “death” plays a similarly prominent role. At the beginning of the movie, the baby of Bora's friend dies (presumably Bora's child, as he is having an affair with his friend's wife). Bora then carries the corpse to the local church to be baptized and given a wake simultaneously. Contrasting rituals reappear in the film's middle section as well: from an elaborate sequence showing a wedding, Petrović cuts to a sequence depicting a funeral procession. In the film's last part, another wedding takes place: Bora marries his love, Tisa. The wedding is now contrasted with Bora's murder of Mirta, Tisa's incestuous, rapist stepfather. The fundamental categories of life, love, and death therefore play an important part in Petrović's film as well.

Marija's relentless dying and resurrecting is a narrative procedure that pushes this device to its extremes. Her resurrections appertain to the “fantastic” in Tzvetan Todorov's (1973) sense of the term. Although they are marvellous, they are not only at odds with the film's imaginary universe – which is fashioned as one where the rules of empirical reality apply – but also, other characters do not react to them in a way appropriate for miracles. Vojo is almost irritated and not at all impressed by his girlfriend's perpetual dying and resurrecting. The viewer therefore does not know whether to regard these returns to life as instances of the marvellous or of the

uncanny. Paired with naturalist depictions of life in the province, the resurrections therefore appear to be an incongruent, unmotivated element. Nevertheless, the motivation for Marija's resurrections can be found on an intertextual level: the cycles of Marija dying, resurrecting, and attempting to get married are an overt parody of the profound themes of life, love, and death exploited by *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. Furthermore, these cycles allow for a parody of the rituals accompanying life and death: funerals, weddings, wakes, and celebrations with a folkloristic flare to them.

As Petar Krelja had noted, the world of *The Birch Tree* is one dominated by "a shocking amount of raw passions" (2010, 14). These raw passions are almost without exception tied to the above-enumerated rituals. The first outburst of demonic drinking frenzy occurs during Janica's wake, while the violent finale takes place at a wedding celebration. Furthermore, rituals of life and death are tied to elements that are completely at odds with modernity. Janica dies because her family does not believe in doctors; they call a village witch to help her instead. When the witch's help proves ineffective, they call for a priest. Finally, funeral processions in both *The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* need to struggle through the ever-present tons of sticky mud.

The cluster of raw passions, rituals, superstitions, and mud therefore forms a single system of representations. *Poor Mary* parodies the elements of this system one by one. A good example of how "raw passions" get parodied is the aforementioned scene with the lost eye: in it, an outburst of violence triggered by a drunken celebration is pushed to the absurd. Superstitions are mocked by a scene of village witchery (probably in overt reference to Babaja's film) in which Marija is washed in a wooden tub and rubbed with various herbs, after which the "aunt" cooks a love potion by boiling a frog.

When read against *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Marija's triple resurrection is another case of discreet parody. The name Marija (Mary), the number three, as well as the resurrection point to a religious intertext. Petrović, in turn, introduced a religious intertext into his film not only through the aforementioned use of icons and quotes but also through certain characteristic motifs. He thus claimed that the film's depiction of drunken Roma, carried home by a donkey, was an allusion to Christ-like figures (1988, 145).<sup>6</sup> This sort of religious intertext is made fully incongruous in *Poor Mary*: the film piles up its references (Virgin Mary, mystical number three, resurrection) without them ever forming a decipherable system.

As for mud, *Poor Mary* pushes this motif to the extreme, while once again establishing an intertext to *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. In this regard, the film's closing sequence is particularly illustrative. In it, the pub singer is shown riding Vojo through thick layers of mud. The pub singer had already been established as an unattainable sexual object in an earlier scene at the local fair, where her display of sexual attributes (breasts, crotch), accompanied by a lascivious song about a Gypsy girl bathing, drove Vojo into a frenzy, causing him to break every glass he could get his hands on (this is an almost overt reference to the very famous scene from *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* in which Bora cuts his hand on broken glass, frenzied by the pub singer Lenče).

The pub singer then stays out of sight until the film's finale; in it, Vojo is celebrating Marija's final resurrection. In his overexcitement, he had forced the singer and the accompanying band to play for him for three days and three nights without a break. As a punishment for this, he agrees to be ridden by the singer for five minutes, and the viewer finds him attempting to carry her on all fours through thick mud in front of the bar. Eventually, Vojo cannot bear his load anymore and falls face-down into the mud; then two of the band members have a sort of "snowball" fight by thrusting handfuls of mud at each other; one of them turns straight into the camera, breaks the fourth wall, and shows his toothless face, fully covered in mud. Vojo finally regains his strength and starts dancing frantically to a tune played by the accordion player, the band's only member left on his feet.

In its finale, *Poor Mary* takes the motif of mud to the point of full hypertrophy. Moreover, it ties this motif to other elements of the previously described representational system: over-accentuated sexuality, heavy intoxication, and a complete frenzy of the senses. By pushing all these elements to their extremes, *Poor Mary* overtly mocks the two most successful Yugoslav *auteur* films of 1967. In doing so, it also mocks a general trend of exploiting the archaic in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. If one remembers the examples listed in Chapter Two, it is easy to see that Babaja's and Petrović's films were not the only ones that relied on a combination of brutal passions and muddy brawls. Just like genre tropes tend to become parodied once a genre is fully established, the motifs employed in *Poor Mary* demonstrate that a symbolic strategy based in the archaic was perceived as a fully developed system in Yugoslav cinema by the second half of the 1960s. And a problematic system at that.

For the parodying system to be complete, a final element needed to be appropriated by *Poor Mary*, namely that of the "naïve" visual code. This code's representative is Vojo, the housepainter: not only does he paint walls, he also does sketches on them, and, since he fully lacks artistic qualifications, he would qualify as a naïve painter. His artistic activities are best demonstrated by a scene depicting him at work for a local restaurant. This restaurant is named "Krauts and Devils" ("Švabe i đavoli") and Vojo is commissioned to paint two murals as part of its decorations: one depicting a German World War Two soldier carrying a red devil on his back and another depicting a red devil carrying a German World War Two soldier on his back.

Vojo brings Marija along as his assistant. Their collaboration makes the artistic act overtly ridiculous: to take an example, Vojo orders Marija to paint the sky blue, but she replies that they are out of blue paint, so the sky gets painted yellow. The motifs they paint are a discreet parody as well: although the restaurant's name might seem a random absurdity or provocation, it in fact encompasses a discreet intertextual reference. When his film *It Rains in My Village* was attacked for its international marketing strategy in 1969, Aleksandar Petrović replied by furnishing proof that the Partisan epic film *Kozara* (Veljko Bulajić, 1962)<sup>7</sup> was distributed in France under the title *Les diables rouges contre les SS* (*Red Devils Against the SS*) (Petrović 1988, 253). With this, Petrović wanted to demonstrate that Yugoslav critics are selective in their attacks while they ignore certain phenomena that should

be considered scandalous from the perspective of orthodox socialist ideology. But Petrović's remark might also explain the name of the restaurant in *Poor Mary*. Although Petrović published his polemics only in 1969 (one year after *Poor Mary* had premiered), it is quite likely that already before this time he knew what the French title of *Kozara* was. And if he disposed of this information, which was not really hidden at the time, one could presuppose that Lazić, Kozomara, and Mihić did as well.

*Krauts and Devils* is therefore not random nonsense but a discreet joke on how Yugoslav cinema fashions itself internationally. *Kozara*'s title was allegedly changed in France to better attract viewers; consequently, Yugoslav partisans had to become "red devils". It is this context within which the act of naïve painting is situated. The sequence is thus a multilayered parody: on one level, it parodies the act of "naïve" painting itself (the random choice of colours). On another, intertextual level, it parodies how Yugoslav cinema represents itself on foreign markets (the red devils and the SS). Finally, as naïve painting was an important part of Yugoslavia's international cultural branding and since it was closely associated with the archaic, *Poor Mary* incorporates this artistic current into its critical framework.

## 6.5 Conclusion

*Poor Mary* demonstrates that a code of the archaic was fully established in Yugoslav cinema by 1968. As Boris Tomashevsky claimed, for parody to work, the elements that it parodies must be recognizable as typical components of an artistic tradition (1985, 229). The hypertrophy of mud, rituals, superstitions, living spaces shared with animals, drunken frenzies, abject violence, and naïve painting in *Poor Mary* suggest that the film's creators relied on an audience capable of recognizing these elements as part of a well-established code.

This code once again relies on an interplay between the first and the second figures of the archaic: on one hand, it offers representations of marginality, extreme poverty, and violence. This would be the archaic as backwardness. On the other hand, it portrays "ecstatic" states in which life is stretched between the extremes of love and death, untempered by the layers of repression characteristic of modern culture. This would be the archaic as vitality. To abuse Freudian terminology, this aspect of the archaic relies on representations of untamed desire, on a pure clash between Eros and Thanatos.

As the debate around national schools demonstrates, the code of raw passions was not part of a particular "national sensibility"; the debate was fuelled at least partially by the uncanny *similarities* between Babaja's and Petrović's films. Furthermore, as *Poor Mary*'s intervention shows, even when shrouding itself in historical distance or representations of "exotic" groups, the archaic was perceived as a project of mainstream cultural self-fashioning. In the case of *auteur* cinema, this project was always carried out with an eye toward international reception.

Although Babaja's and Petrović's films are refined, formally challenging works, the archaic appears in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* and *The Birch Tree* in a much cruder form than it did in the context of historical representations. Both films

construct thoroughly exoticized depictions of almost barbaric, yet uninhibited and seductive *milieus*. *Poor Mary* is not a refined, modernist, formally challenging work. Nonetheless, it launches a valid critique of the two modernist classics. And these two classics are treated as symptoms of a broader trend: that of exploiting the archaic in Yugoslav *auteur* film. To make things even more complicated, *Poor Mary* was made by some of the key figures of Yugoslav *auteur* film. In other words, *Poor Mary* blows up the “barricades” model of Yugoslav film history.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this model supposes that the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s evolved through a Manichean conflict between provocative modernists and mainstream conformists. The “barricades” model remains widely used, and it serves as a key tool for perpetuating the myth of the “larger-than-life *auteur*”, which, in turn, obstructs contemporary approaches to Eastern European cinema (Imre 2012, xiv). *Poor Mary* decisively challenges this framework. First, it demonstrates that some *auteurs* had no difficulty crossing the barricades to work on popular films. More significantly, it quite rightly criticizes two modernist classics for being conformist in their pursuit of international recognition through exoticized, Balkanist representations. In other words, *Poor Mary* reveals that the boundary between critical and conformist filmmaking does not necessarily align with the “barricade” separating modernist and popular films. *Poor Mary* thus highlights the importance of looking beyond the narrow canon of “subversive” modernist films. Popular films from the 1960s should not be regarded as a passive backdrop against which radical nonconformists had to define themselves; on the contrary, these films have the potential to cast modernist classics in an entirely new light.

Finally, the discussion of *Poor Mary*, *The Birch Tree*, and naïve painting demonstrated that the archaic is not only associated with a set of motifs but also with specific modes of representation – the “naïve” one in this case. Slightly simplified, the archaic is not only a “what” but also a “how”. The next chapter will therefore trace out a correlation between the archaic as desired cultural property and the archaic as mode of representation in relation to two films: Mića Popović’s *Burduš* (1970) and Aleksandar Petrović’s *It Rains in My Village (Biće skoro propast sveta)*, 1968).

## Notes

- 1 The group *Zemlja* was active between 1929 and 1935. It was socially critical in its orientation and part of its program was to bring art closer to wide popular classes. Other members included Drago Ibler, Antun Augustinčić, and Frano Kršinić.
- 2 Hegedušić himself did dispose of a formal education; he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb.
- 3 This is not to say that naïve painting was simply part of some kind of communist artistic propaganda; the regime’s support is only one aspect of the phenomenon.
- 4 A further example of the discourse on Yugoslav naïve painting is Nebojša Tomašević’s introduction to the German-written monograph *Naïve Mahler Jugoslawiens*. Tomašević refers to naïve art as “The Yugoslav wonder” (1978).
- 5 In his study *Društvena kritika u savremenom jugoslovenskom igranom filmu (Social Critique in Contemporary Yugoslav Cinema)*, Milan Ranković noted that *Poor Mary* had

more than 100 000 views in Yugoslavia during 1968 (a very high number for the period). For Ranković, this is proof of the fact that popularity has nothing to do with a film's (in this case bad) quality (1970, 18).

- 6 A non-diegetic shot of a fresco representing the entry of Christ into Jerusalem on a donkey makes this intertext explicit.
- 7 Kozara is a mountain in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the location of the famous Battle of Kozara that took place in 1942. On Kozara, a relatively small number of Yugoslav partisan units fought a combined force of Nazi troops and local fascists. In doing so, they were trying to defend a civilian population that had taken refuge in the mountain. The Battle of Kozara therefore became a symbol of Yugoslav (civilian) suffering during World War Two.

## 7 Two or Three Things I Know About Burduš

Mića Popović's *Burduš* and Aleksandar Petrović's *It Rains in My Village*

### 7.1 Gypsies Like Us

In previous chapters, it was demonstrated that the interplay between the archaic as vitality and the archaic as backwardness played a crucial role in Yugoslav cultural politics. The archaic shaped representations of history and created an emancipatory space for the “proletarian” people; it fuelled exoticizations based in “untamed” passions and was subject to ridicule already in 1968. Another key aspect of the archaic’s discursive deadlock is the figure of the Gypsy. This chapter will therefore focus on an iconic character of Yugoslav 1960s popular culture, namely the Gypsy bass player Burduš. Through Burduš, the archaic was not only presented as a desired cultural property, it was also associated with specific modes of representation.

Before starting the analysis, a remark on terminology is necessary. As can be seen, this chapter will make use of the controversial denominator “Gypsy”, burdened with its discriminatory and racist heritage. The term is used for strategic reasons: while the Roma are a minority group facing very real forms of discrimination, the Gypsy is a character appertaining to the imagination of dominant social groups. Following Sean Homer’s line of argument, one might claim that the Gypsy “does not exist” (2006); she belongs entirely to the realm of the imaginary.

This point can be further elaborated through a short overview of writings on Balkan cinematic representations of Gypsies. Although film was not his primary focus, Mattijs van de Port’s study *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild* laid the foundation for reflections on cinematic representations of Gypsies. While researching the culture of Gypsy bars in Novi Sad, van de Port reached the conclusion that the Gypsy figure serves as a projection screen for the city’s bourgeoisie, a projection screen on which a fictional world, both “strange” and “own”, can unfold (1998, 148). Dina Iordanova regards this mechanism as a case of “projective identification” (2001, 215) that produces a radical exoticization of the Roma (2003, 8). In the context of film studies, Anikó Imre therefore coined the term “Screen Gypsies” for these exotic characters who are “quite alike all over the world – in contrast with real ones, who are extremely diverse in their languages, lifestyles and values” (2003, 15). The screen Gypsy thus belongs to the realm of both a dominant and a dominating imagination: as soon as there are screen Gypsies (in Imre’s sense of the term), authenticity is lost, and the power games of representation set in.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003705208-10

This Chapter has been made available under a CC BY license.

Two further questions arise regarding the screen Gypsy: a) what is the content of the projective identification (what characterizes the fictional world both “foreign” and “own”)? and b) What is the relation between these contents and the Yugoslav cinematic/cultural context?

The projection largely relies on the double logic of the archaic. As Paloma Gay y Blasco claims, Gypsies are often represented as “uncivilized, animal-like and predatory” (2008, 298). Gay y Blasco associates this set of stereotypes with a presumed nomadism: since the imaginary Gypsy is essentially a being “trapped in an eternal and timeless journey towards nowhere” (2008, 299), she is an outsider and potential threat to all forms of sedentary, orderly society. Not surprisingly, in Blasco’s view, there is a very specific temporal dimension to this nomadism: “Unlike primitive, rural or working-class Others, Gypsies are not imagined as ancestors or placed within the same evolutionary scale as Gadge. Their purpose is to allow Gadge to consider themselves, not as they once were, but as they could and perhaps even should be.” (2008, 300) Gypsies are therefore not merely subjects belonging to an archaic past (like the “primitives”); rather, they are those who did not follow the same evolutionary pattern as the dominant society. But since this pattern is *evolutionary* and therefore based in the concept of progress, Gypsies, although not even ancestors, are an element standing outside the patterns of teleological time. Somewhat impressionistically, one could claim that they belong to a both spatially and temporally non-situated archaic.

However, as the end of Blasco’s argument demonstrates, non-situatedness is endowed with at least a shadow of positive traits. The wandering Gypsy is not only what the dominant culture could have been, but also what it maybe *should* be. Here, the positive side of the “Gypsy archaic” comes into play. Since they did not follow the normative, evolutionary pattern, Gypsies were able to preserve some aspects of a “joyful alternative to the settled modes of life” (Gay y Blasco 2008, 299). The Gypsy is the imaginary locus of “all-consuming passion” (Iordanova 2003, 8); s/he is the owner of “‘natural’ musical abilities” (Gay y Blasco 2008, 299); even Gypsy poverty is “picturesque and photogenic” (Imre 2003, 16). In Blasco’s words, the figure of the Gypsy answers a “bacchanalian need” (2008, 300) of the dominant culture.

The Gypsy, therefore, becomes another imaginary object that compensates for the discontents produced by modern civilization. S/he is the imaginary bearer of “wild” desire, lost to those who underwent civilization’s drills. The figure of the Gypsy is one within which the bad archaic is hopelessly entangled with the good archaic: while refusing to comply with normative progress, the Gypsy is at the same time “uncivilized, animal-like and predatory” and “bacchanalian” – passionate, unrestrained, endowed with “natural” musical talent. It is possibly this interplay that made Gypsy films prominent in Yugoslav cinema.

As Sean Homer claims, “representations of the Roma are ubiquitous in the history of Balkan cinema” (2006, 183). The first Balkan film distributed abroad was *In Serbia: A Gypsy Marriage* (*Ciganska svadba*, Ilija Stanojević, 1911) (2006, 183), and other examples include *Sofka* (Radoš Novaković, 1948), *A Gypsy* (*Ciganka*, Vojislav Nanović, 1953) and *Hanka* (Slavko Vorkapić, 1955). The two undisputed

masters of the Gypsy genre are quite evidently Aleksandar Petrović and Emir Kusturica. Dina Iordanova provided a clear-cut explanation for Balkan cinema's widespread interest in Gypsies, encapsulated in the formula: "Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us" (2001, 216). In other words, in its positive aspects, the image of the Gypsy points to "how the Balkans would like to be viewed by Europe" (Rucker-Chang 2018, 856). In Balkan Gypsy films, the main stake is not to truthfully represent a minority. Rather, these films use imaginary Gypsies to construct an identity for a culture that is discursively dominant with regard to the Roma but at the same time discursively dominated by the "European" standard: "This trend is intricately linked with the problematic positioning of the Balkans in Europe [...]: as the Roma appear to mainstream society – marginal and poorly adept but likable for their vigour and non-traditional exuberant attitude – so the Balkans (would like to) appear to Europe." (Iordanova 2001, 214)

In the following analysis of Burduš's incarnations, I will examine how the Gypsy musician came to serve as a cipher for a positive Yugoslav identity. But his appearances also reveal the limits of this projective identification: Burduš was not only employed to mediate an identity but also to reflect on the very mechanisms of this mediation.

## 7.2 Don't Stab the Bass Player

Burduš made his first appearance in 1969, in the hit TV series *The Musicians* (*Muzikanti*). The series was directed by Dragoslav Lazić, with Jovan Janićijević playing Burduš. The role was so successful that "Burduš" almost fully usurped Janićijević's identity; the *Lexicon of YU Mythology* claims: "Burduš wiped out all his [Janićijević's] former and later roles. Many spectators never learned the actor's real name, he remained Burduš forever."<sup>1</sup>

Like *Poor Mary*, *The Musicians* are a peculiar mix of popular entertainment and Black Wave tendencies. The series follows the band La Campanella – composed of the bass player (and manager) Burduš, the violinist Rajko, and the accordion player Lepi Cane – in its exploits through rural and semi-rural Serbia. *The Musicians'* humour is based in situations that ensue from the band members' rural, "bohemian" lifestyle. For example, in the last episode, at dawn, the band is returning drunk from a gig in a local bar and comes across a roundabout on a meadow. The musicians discover that the owner, who is sleeping in his car nearby, is an old friend of theirs. They wake him up and persuade him to give them a ride on the roundabout. However, due to the early hour, he falls asleep during the ride, and the musicians' shouting cannot wake him. Finally, the owner's wife arrives and stops the roundabout on which the musicians had fainted after a two-hour ride.

The musicians then sue the owner for attempted murder, but the trial turns into a charade with the judge letting the band play songs in the courthouse and obviously enjoying himself. The musicians and the roundabout owner then reconcile, return to the pub and get drunk. At dawn, they reach the roundabout once again: the musicians pretend that they want to have another ride together with the roundabout

owner, but at the last moment they jump off and leave him turning around helplessly. Satisfied with their revenge, they make their way to a nearby train station, where they once again meet the wife. They inform her of their prank, but she turns out to be thankful: the roundabout owner usually sobers up by taking long rides on the roundabout, and now she is not going to be the one who has to turn the machine on.

This kind of humour made *The Musicians* into an immensely popular show. However, as can be glimpsed at already from the above-described humorous situation, the series' setting is not very different from that of Black Wave films: the world that the musicians roam is an amorphous periphery where most places remain nameless and transitory (bleak provincial railway stations, fairs that the roundabout owner follows, roadside bars, etc.), while the characters themselves incessantly engage in activities characteristic of this space – excessive drinking, drunken brawls, the auditioning of over-sexualized singers, flights from fits of irrational violence directed at the band (at one point La Campanella is forced at gunpoint to play in a tree while it is being chopped down; on another occasion Burduš almost gets stabbed because he refuses to sing).

By the late 1960s, a heated debate had developed about why Yugoslav films were losing their audience, with one of the main arguments being that nobody wanted to watch Black Wave films (Tović 1969, 3). However, it would seem that on the TV screen, the world of the margin – usually associated with subversive, high-modernist art – was quite capable of attracting broad spectatorship. Consequently, Black Wave motifs (radical poverty, marginality, even explicit political provocations) should not be regarded as a code reserved for a narrow circle of dissidents and their initiated adherents.<sup>2</sup> As *The Musicians* shows, these elements were perfectly capable of entering Yugoslav mainstream popular culture.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the movie *Burduš* (1970) was directed by one of the most controversial directors of the period, Miodrag Mića Popović. By 1970, Popović had directed four feature films – *The Man from the Oak Forest* (*Čovek iz hrastove šume*, 1964), *Swarm* (*Roj*, 1966), *Hasanaginica* (1967), and *The Tough Ones* (*Delije*, 1968) – and all four were met with overt shock. To take but two examples: *The Man from the Oak Forest*, a film depicting the life and death of an animal-like assassin working for the Chetniks during World War Two, was described by Milutin Čolić in the following manner: “If we care about our basic moral and human principles, a film like *The Man from the Oak Forest* must never be made again.” (1964, 81) Čolić's was a sympathetic review.

*The Tough Ones* depicts two partisans returning to their home village after the war's end, both suffering from PTSD. They engage in a manhunt and end up shooting each other in a frenzy of violence. Ranko Munitić noted that the film did not make it into the official selection of the Pula Film Festival, probably due to its controversial theme (1968c, 63), but he himself was fascinated by the “bizarre inner rage which howls from [the film's] torn, nightmarish, schizophrenic [...] tissue” (1968c, 66).

As can be seen from these fragments, Popović was able to shock even critics sympathetic to modernist trends. By 1970, he had established his director's

handwriting as one relying on naturalism, violence, and madness. The fact that he was the one commissioned to direct *Burduš*, a film clearly intended to be a popular comedy, once again testifies to the porousness of the lines separating Yugoslav high-modernist and popular cinema in the late 1960s.

### 7.3 The Sky over Munich: Bread, Love and Freedom

The movie *Burduš* is a direct sequel to *The Musicians*: the film's plot takes off where the series had ended and offers an epilogue to La Campanella's adventures. As suggested already by the title, the film's focus now lies on Burduš, the band's Gypsy bass player. Burduš is not only the film's central figure; he also becomes the exemplary bearer of a cultural identity: *Burduš* thus overtly reflects on a mode of cultural self-fashioning executed through the Gypsy figure. For this process to become intelligible, I will briefly recount *Burduš*'s narrative.

As already mentioned, *Burduš* follows its protagonist's exploits after the end of *The Musicians* series. In an opening monologue proffered by Burduš himself, the viewer is informed that La Campanella became famous after the show had aired. This had rather unexpected consequences: enjoying their newly acquired fame and prosperity, Rajko and Cane moved to Belgrade to take part in its cultural scene. Burduš, who refused to join them, feels betrayed and decides to migrate to Munich, where he will start a new life. But before leaving, he travels to Belgrade to say goodbye to his ex-colleagues and friends. After several meetings and conflicts, Rajko and Cane come around, pick up Rajka – Burduš's wife who had left him for an aggressive tinsmith and now decides to return to him – and arrive at the train station in time to stop Burduš from leaving. In a final scene, a delighted crowd watches Burduš descend the train and stay within his cultural context. This very simple plot is cross-cut by analepses that depict key episodes of Burduš's biography as well as the Belgrade cultural scene to which Burduš remains a foreigner.

*Burduš* therefore relies on a metalepsis: the fictional series *The Musicians* becomes not only part of the movie's "reality" but also, it strongly influences this reality, thereby explicitly reflecting on processes of mediatization. This blurring of the dividing line between fiction and reality could be regarded as a discreet aspect of Popović's modernist handwriting in *Burduš*. Another such aspect are several hallucinatory sequences that represent Burduš's stream of consciousness. These sequences, in turn, can be contextualized only within the framework of a broader question, namely, who is Burduš?

Burduš's identity relies on several key traits. He is a typical bearer of the positive Gypsy stereotype: endowed with "natural" musical talent, he is a hopeless drifter, he is prone to excessive alcohol consumption, and he sticks to peripheral milieus of "picturesque" poverty even when disposing over fame and fortune. But he is also fashioned as a representative subject of the Yugoslav historic trauma of World War Two: his children were executed by the Nazis, upon which he joined the partisan forces; this experience is represented through his oneiric flashbacks. Furthermore, Burduš is a simpleton of a positive kind: when riding in a taxi that should take him to the train for Munich, he asks the driver to teach him only three

words in German: bread, love, and freedom. This points to the very few needs Burduš has: to eat, to love, and to be free.

In accordance with the projective identification, Burduš's "positive" Gypsy identity thus acquires traits of ever greater generality. On a first level, he embodies a distinct "Gypsy" bacchanalian lifestyle. On a second level, however, he is portrayed as the subject of a fundamental historical trauma and struggle. Finally, on a third and most universal level, he is depicted as the bearer of an exemplary positive "mentality": he cares only about the "essentials" of life. Through these three layers, one can observe how the "Gypsy" figure is transformed into the carrier of a generalized positive identity, how a projection in the vein of "this is how we all should be" becomes grafted upon his "Gypsiness".

The next question to consider is how Burduš, the wise simpleton, is framed within the film. First, Burduš is contrasted to Rajko and Cane, the other two members of La Campanella. This contrast relies on a combination of general modernity and artistic modernism. Several scenes are exemplary in this respect. Towards the film's middle Burduš is staying at an inn at the outskirts of Belgrade. Rajko calls on the telephone and offers him to join a gig. The acting clearly suggests that Burduš is not sure how to use this "modern" means of communication, which was not modern at all by 1970; he even asks Rajko, "When did they teach you to use those phones?" This is followed by a sequence of parallel montage that depicts the two characters speaking: Burduš in the inn, where an old drifter is playing tunes on his double bass which is missing two strings, and Rajko in the lobby of the Hotel Jugoslavija. Jugoslavija was opened in 1969 and was a prime luxury hotel built in a distinctly modernist architectural style. In Rajko's background, one can hear soft jazz music while he is sipping on his cognac. Rajko's new lifestyle is therefore articulated against Burduš's through several intertwined elements: modernity (in relation to Burduš, the telephone is coded as distinctly modern), luxury (the hotel was a trademark of the country's economic prosperity), and modernism (Rajko is seen in a lobby characterized by minimalist, modern architecture; jazz is contrasted to the sounds of Burduš's broken-down bass in the pub). Naturally, Burduš refuses Rajko's job offer.

However, Burduš does agree to come to the theatre where Rajko and Cane are supposed to play. There, he sees a performance resembling the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*. Burduš's ironic voice-over comments: "Pretty Cane, happening, Yugoslavia, that's it! No more, Cane how about playing in Mića Belotrebac's pub. Happening, all right, theatre, art, yes please, that's what we fought for. Here you go comrade Cane, Pretty Cane." If artistic modernism was only a background trait of hotel Jugoslavija's luxury, it is now being contrasted overtly to Burduš's worldview.

Between the pub scene and the theatre scene, a sequence resembling Burduš's stream-of-consciousness and commemorating his war experiences is inserted. It begins with shots of a group of children running through a sandy landscape, cuts to scenes of advancing German soldiers and tanks, then to partisans being shelled on a hillside, and finally to the execution of a Wehrmacht officer in which Burduš takes part.<sup>3</sup> The contrast between the war sequence and the theatrical "happening"<sup>4</sup>

further underlines Burduš's irony: it implies that this kind of modernism is at odds with the Yugoslav historic experience and is certainly *not* what was fought for.

The modernity/modernism complex is thus one fundamental obstacle to Burduš's staying in Yugoslavia. The other such obstacle is the bad archaic. In this regard, the love triangle formed by Burduš, Rajka, and the tinsmith is essential. As another of Burduš's flashbacks shows, Rajka saw the tinsmith for the first time in a bar where Burduš was playing. He came in dead drunk and scared away all other customers. A professional boxer did try to confront him but got beaten up: the disciplined, sporty body could not handle the tinsmith's raw, alcohol-crazed violence. After winning the fight, the tinsmith forced Rajka to sing for him alone, upon which she decided to leave with him. Later, Rajka meets Burduš to ask for some money and explain her choice: "I loved you, Burduš, while I loved you, but you were too weak to keep me, not to give me away."

The film's world is thus one where the strongest man gets the woman; almost as in an animal pack, the weak yield to the strong and the female is instinctively drawn to raw strength. However, in the film, this raw strength is firmly associated with cruelty and violence. As it turns out, Rajka herself becomes an object of the tinsmith's aggression: towards the film's end, when Burduš's former band comes looking for her, they find the tinsmith beating her with a stick. They manage to knock him out with a hammer, escape, and reunite Rajka with Burduš.

Once again, the Burduš/tinsmith opposition thematizes the opposition between the good and the bad archaic: Burduš, the hater of modernity and lover of the simple life, is the cipher for a good, moderately archaic identity. The tinsmith, the bearer of untamed destructive instincts, is the representative of the bad archaic. The movie therefore executes a variation of the "move 1": the bad archaic (tinsmith) has to be eliminated in order for the good archaic to prosper.

Two further aspects of this negotiation process need mentioning. The film's end explicitly suggests that the danger of losing the good archaic – as incorporated by Burduš – is a collective concern. Not only Rajko, Cane, and Rajka are relieved when Burduš decides to descend the train he had boarded, but also a huge crowd that has assembled on the platform. To lose Burduš is never simply a question of losing Burduš, it becomes the symbol of losing a positive collective identity. Furthermore, it is important to consider where Burduš is heading – namely to Munich. On one hand, Burduš has second thoughts concerning his decision to become a *Gastarbeiter*; he reminds himself that he is now going to be working in Germany although the Krauts (*Švabe*) had murdered his children. The movie therefore depicts the labour migration as another betrayal of historical experience. In the same monologue, however, Burduš explains to himself that those were fascists and proceeds to claim: "Now there's something else there, now at the Germans' there is peace and order." The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) thus gets coded as a space of order that offers an escape from the disorder produced by the bad archaic and displaced modernity/modernism.

The movie's coding mechanism would therefore rely on four fundamental elements: a) a good "Gypsy" archaic as exemplified by Burduš; b) a bad modernity/modernism as exemplified by Belgrade's cultural scene; c) a bad, violent archaic

as exemplified by the tinsmith; d) a space beyond, characterized by order (the FRG). The symbolic negotiation process eliminates the bad archaic, discredits out-of-place modernity/modernism, and celebrates the good archaic that becomes an identity resilient to the lure of German “order”.

#### **7.4 Revisiting the Projection**

If one now returns to the projective identification hypothesis proposed in relation to screen Gypsies, its mechanisms become readily apparent in *Burduš*. Burduš’s identity relies on a non-conformism typical of the musically endowed Gypsy drifter. This identity then takes on the shape of a broader life perspective tied to the eat-love-be-free complex. The danger of losing Burduš’s good archaic mentality is therefore represented as a collective one. Finally, the positive collective identification coded upon Burduš is opposed to an “outside” space represented by Germany. The “Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us” formula is therefore applied almost literally in the film: Burduš the Gypsy becomes the cypher of a positive (“vigorous”, “non-conformist”) collective identity that gets opposed to an “ordered” European Other. If there is a positive identity for Yugoslav culture, the movie would suggest, it is the Burduš-like one.

This process of self-fashioning represents a variation within the broader framework of what has been described as the interplay between the moves 1 and 2 in the game of the archaic. Burduš’s good archaic can prosper and not lose itself to an ordered outside world only if the tinsmith’s bad archaic is eliminated. However, as previously noted, another element plays a significant role in the process of “archaic” self-fashioning: modernity, and perhaps even more importantly, modernism.

The theatre piece that Burduš sees is highly indicative in this respect. The performance is explicitly discredited by Burduš as an element that does not fit the Yugoslav cultural context. At this point, better insight is needed into what is being criticized in the play. In the shots showing the theatre piece, one can see a large group of young performers – some naked to the waist – singing a song with their hands raised as they descend into the applauding audience. The first overt reference is one to the hippie movement: the performers’ attire, hairstyles, jewellery are all exemplary of hippie fashion; the song and collective “reaching for the sky” can also be regarded as elements invoking the hippie culture.<sup>5</sup> The second reference points to theatrical modernism: in the style of 1960s experimental theatre, the performers break the fourth wall and mix with the audience.

The hippie “performance” is therefore regarded by Burduš as a (predominately American) import and a modernist product that is not connected with the Yugoslav historical experience in any organic way. Burduš’s critical stance thus discreetly iterates certain positions voiced already by Miroslav Krleža. As noted previously, Krleža insisted that Yugoslav art should be non-conformist. Through this characteristic, it witnesses to an essential, historical non-conformism of the Yugoslav proletarian peoples who were never ready to follow the models imposed on them by foreign, dominating forces. However, in Krleža’s view, this good non-conformism is always threatened by an imported, decadent non-conformism. When

the renowned Yugoslav painter Edo Murtić entered his abstract phase, according to Krleža, he gave in to an “international taste of international painterly conventions” (1967, 85). In Yugoslavia, this conventionalism could, in the final analysis, lead to a “masquerade” where all participants got their masks from “warehouses abandoned by Western gentlemen” (1967, 89). Not only are the “fashionable”, imported tendencies inauthentic (they are masks), they are also bad imitations, Western leftovers. In other words, they turn good archaic nonconformist vitality back into the bad backwardness of anachronistic imitation.

Burduš the simpleton musician is therefore not only the bearer of an identity but also, he allows for a meditation on aesthetics. Through his critique of the hippie “performance”, an aesthetic program gets traced out: imported modernism should be discarded so that indigenous artistic non-conformism can flourish. And Burduš is by all means a non-conformist. One might even argue that the movie in its entirety seeks to embody this form of non-conformism by blending popular comedy, stream-of-consciousness-like sequences, a metalepsis, and classical dramaturgical elements such as the love triangle. A major problem lies therein that it is perfectly impossible to find any pertinent criteria that would allow for these elements to be defined as appertaining to indigenous non-conformism. Evidently, they are all quite international conventions. Only when paired with the complex semantic interplay between the bad archaic, the good archaic and modernity do these elements become allusions to indigenous artistic vitality.

*Burduš* thus witnesses to the complexity of negotiations within the game of the archaic. Through its Gypsy protagonist, the film articulates a life-style: one that is not burdened with material goods and can satisfy itself with bread, love, and freedom. And Burduš himself associates this life-style with “communism”. In one of his monologues, he explains that communism should be a state in which “everybody is friends, a man doesn’t suffer in winter and isn’t lonely”. Since Burduš is staged as the bearer of a *collective* positive identity, he can be regarded as another symbol of the proletarian peoples’ spontaneous “communism”. This communism has little to do with labour, planned industry, or even modernity. Despite this – or rather because of it – it is imbued with a vigorous vitality. *Burduš* therefore appropriates an anarchoid communism for the proletarian peoples positioned outside the normative framework of progress.

There are two problematic aspects to this spontaneous communism. First, as the tinsmith shows, it is perpetually threatened by the bad, violent archaic. Second, it gets articulated through a double exoticization. First a member of the Roma minority must be exoticized; then this exotic identity needs to be symbolically stretched over the whole of Yugoslavia by means of the formula “the Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us”. The appropriation therefore cannot free itself of exoticizations and Balkanism.

Nonetheless, by thematizing a fear of “importation”, *Burduš* assigns the Gypsy figure a role that cannot be fully subsumed under the projective identification. The Gypsy Burduš is not only the bearer of a positive collective identity but also the symbol of an “authentic” mode of representation – hybrid yet indigenously non-conformist. However, the opposition to imported modernism is problematic

as well. While the “good” non-conformist program can be seen as an attempt to resist cultural domination, it can never establish clear boundaries between itself and “imported” artistic practices. Worse still, Radomir Konstantinović quite rightfully claimed in his *Philosophy of Parochialism* that “the fear of foreign influence” is “a remarkably tribal fear” (2021, 177). Thus, an aesthetic search for good archaic vitality risks turning into bad, tribal backwardness.

In its own way, *Burduš* testifies to an ambiguity constitutive of negotiations with the archaic. The archaic does offer a space for symbolic appropriations and re-evaluations, but these gestures can never be fully detached from mechanisms of discursive domination. *Burduš*’s projective identification is a prime example of this fact. When offering his version of Burduš, Aleksandar Petrović therefore followed a somewhat different trajectory. First, his accent shifted towards the “bad” archaic. Second, Burduš stopped being the cipher for a positive artistic program and started disturbing the very mechanisms of filmic narration.

## 7.5 Apocalypse Soon

The third incarnation of Burduš that this analysis will examine appears in Aleksandar Petrović’s *It Rains in My Village* (*Biće skoro propast sveta*, 1968). “Burduš” never gets called by this (or any other) name in Petrović’s film; his identity was established paratextually. Being a diligent promotor of his own work, in 1988 Petrović published a book entitled *Novi film II (1965–1970): crni film* (*New Film II (1965–1970): Black Film*), which encompasses interviews, reviews, and polemical articles regarding his films produced between 1965 and 1969. In this book, a frame from *It Rains in My Village* was published, which shows a close-up of the Gypsy bass player who appeared in Petrović’s film. The description underneath the photograph reads: “Đoka the bass player... The model for Burduš... Better than Louis Armstrong... He was born in the mud of the village Deronje... Died... Fell asleep drunk on a road... Got run over by a car...” (Petrović 1988, 155)

If one is to believe Žika Lazić (*The Musicians*’ scriptwriter), Petrović was lying when he claimed that he was the one who found the model for Burduš. In an interview, Lazić stated that the model for Burduš was a deceased musician called Vlada Burduš, who had lived in the scriptwriter’s home-village, Lugavčina (G.P. 1969, 13). Questions of factual truth aside, Petrović’s statement can be regarded as a symptom. On a banal level, his remark testifies to the popularity of the Burduš myth: it would seem that the famous director and Cannes laureate wanted a piece of Burduš for himself. Furthermore, Petrović’s very brief description mobilizes a dense set of by-now well-known motifs: Burduš/Đoka is a) incredibly musically talented (the *best* player); b) born in *mud*; and c) the bearer of a non-orthodox and self-destructive lifestyle. In a condensed form, the description of Đoka/Burduš thus combines the Gypsy stereotype with the space of inescapable mud. Nevertheless – and in contrast to the more successful *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* – Petrović ascribed this familiar figure a very complex role.

After the brilliant success of *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Petrović was given a rather abundant budget to direct his following movie, which was to be a coproduction

between Avala Film and Les Productions Artistes Associés (the French branch of United Artists) (Sudar 2013, 161). Another sign of the film's international outlook was the casting of Annie Girardot, a genuine star of French cinema at the time, and Ivan Paluch, a rising star in Czechoslovakia. However, *It Rains in My Village* did not manage to repeat *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*' success; as Sudar notes, "*It Rains in My Village* did not fare as well at festivals [...] and the film was not selected for Oscar nominations, as the previous two films had been. [...] The fact that it won no awards perhaps left it slightly more vulnerable to the string of attacks that were to come." (2013, 180).

The attacks on Petrović's film are central to the debate that developed around the Black Wave. Along with Jovan Živanović's *Cause of Death Not to Be Mentioned*, *It Rains in My Village* was singled out as a prime example of "black" tendencies in Vladimir Jovičić's notorious essay "Black Wave in Our Film", published in 1969. Being the president of the Commission for Ideological Work of the Serbian League of Communists (*Komisija za ideološki rad Saveza komunista Srbije*), Jovičić was an influential ideologue at the time, and his article is considered a decisive denigration of the Black Wave (Tirnanić 2011, 83), so much so that Jovičić is sometimes (wrongly) credited with inventing the "movement's" name (Radosavljević 2019, 24).<sup>6</sup>

To the contemporary viewer, it would probably come as no surprise that Petrović's film came under attack, for it is saturated with explicitly provocative political motifs. It features a grotesque protest in rural Srem, an ignorant encounter with Czecho-Slovak refugees, elections at which an old man with dementia is forced to vote, etc. Vlastimir Sudar therefore describes *It Rains in My Village* as "the most openly politically engaged film that Petrović had made, up to that point" (2013, 161). What might come as a surprise, though, is the fact that in his attack, Jovičić does not insist on any of these elements. The ideologue was revolted with something else.

In Jovičić's opinion, *It Rains in My Village* represents the village in which its plot takes place as a space where "man-like pigs" wallow in the mud. This world of "alcoholism, filth, and narrow-mindedness" is a bestial one, lacking even "the most rudimentary moral reflex". It is, therefore, a fully nihilistic world (Jovičić 1969, 23). And this nihilism permeates the film's very regime of images. Jovičić's argument proceeds as follows: when watching Petrović's film, we have to "drop aside for a moment all claims to the hedonistic as well as the educational sense of art" (1969, 23). *It Rains in My Village* brings no pleasure, as no one can enjoy scenes such as those showing the rape and murder of a mute woman (1969, 23). It also has no positive, educational value because it fails to transcend the bestial world of humanlike pigs.

What we are left with when pleasure and education are set aside is *l'art pour l'art*. Although Jovičić considers *l'art pour l'art* to be a slightly suspicious idea in itself, this is – once again – not the core of the problem. The problem lies therein that Petrović's film *cannot* be considered *l'art pour l'art* either. In *It Rains in My Village*, one cannot "admire *l'art pour l'art*'s refinement" because "what the celluloid tape has recorded about the apocalypse in the Pannonian lowland is too

rough and too spicy for a taste groomed on the principles of harmony and measure” (Jovičić 1969, 23). The film therefore disturbs not only codes of morality (or truth) with regard to what it represents but also the rules of *how* one should fashion representations (the norms of harmony and measure); it has no respect for codes that could sublimate the utterly ugly into the sublimely beautiful.

In Jovičić’s view, *It Rains in My Village* is therefore not unacceptable because of its political provocations, it is unacceptable because *one does not know how to view it*. It brings no enjoyment, it does not communicate a “human” sense, it does not create beauty; it is useless even from the perspective of useless beauty. Slightly simplified, Jovičić’s argument therefore unfolds on two levels. The first is the level of the bad archaic: Petrović’s village world is one steeped in mud, bestiality, narrow-mindedness, and filth. The second is a formal level: it pits the stench of “raw materials” against aesthetic refinement.

Evidently, Jovičić’s critique is not to be taken at face value. Besides it being ideologically charged – or precisely because of this – it leaves aside certain of the film’s aspects which it should consider relevant precisely with regard to its own argumentative structure. First, the bad archaic is not the only form of the archaic that can be found in the film. Second, Petrović’s “raw” materials might not be as raw as they seem. These two aspects of *It Rains in My Village* can only be explored through a detailed analysis of the film’s tissue.

## 7.6 Days of the Pigs

To facilitate easier orientation within the ensuing analysis, I will briefly recount *It Rains in My Village*’s plot. The movie is set in an unnamed village in Srem. Relatively central to its narrative is this village’s swineherd Triša. During a wedding celebration, Triša saves Goca – a mute “village idiot” – from humiliation by the demonic Joška. Thereupon, a romance seems to develop between the two, but during a night of heavy drinking, Joška tells Triša that – since he comes from a deeply pious family – he cannot simply fool around with the girl. Joška also has a solution to this problem: Triša should marry Goca. Dead drunk, Triša agrees, the priest is fetched, and the two get married. Some years later (Triša and Goca already have a toddler son), a teacher named Reza comes to the village. She takes Triša as her errand boy and servant. Being bored, she also decides to have sex with him, after which Triša falls in love with her. But Reza quickly loses interest in the swineherd and starts an affair with the pilot of a dusting plane that had crashed in the village’s vicinity. Triša, in turn, blames his marital status for the rejection and solves this problem by slitting Goca’s throat. This does nothing to help his romantic endeavour, but it does put the police on his tracks. His father then confesses to the murder in order to cover up his son’s crime and dies in prison. Meanwhile, the aircraft has been repaired, and the pilot leaves the village. The schoolteacher is not exactly happy with this development, but she immediately manages to find a new lover. All of Triša’s hopes are thus destroyed, and he starts drinking excessively. But, since the village knows of his crime, he is now widely hated. After another night of excessive drinking, as an act of punishment and revenge, Joška

and two other villagers tie his hands and legs to ropes attached to the village's church's bells; while trying to free himself, Triša is forced to ring the bells incessantly. Attracted by the noise, other villagers come to the improvised belltower and lynch Triša. The film ends with his funeral procession – which Reza does not even notice – passing through the village.

Additional scenes and episodes are woven into this “love story”, which forms the backbone of the film's narrative. After realizing that their village has no airplane of its own, the villagers attempt to get politically organized and form a committee requesting revolutionary change. During his idle wanderings, Joška stumbles upon a group of Czecho-Slovak refugees; as their brief conversation shows, he has no idea that the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia had taken place. The villagers organize a departing ceremony for the pilot.

These manyfold episodes are tied together through juxtaposing the village's bad backwardness against different variants of a flawed modernity. The schoolteacher is exemplary in this respect. She is a typical bearer of enlightenment; in one of her first monologues, she explains to an old villager: “There is no education without culture. I am a teacher, but I will teach your children more than just to read.” She shows several additional marks of emancipation through modernity: she arrives in the village by car, is active as a political worker, her liberal approach to sexuality is in stark contrast to the village's conservativeness.

The teacher is also the one in search of the good archaic. While proffering her ideas on education and culture, she claims: “I'll teach your women how to paint. Those from Dedina grounded a painter's club. They sell their paintings even in America.” The Yugoslav naïve painting craze thus surfaces in Petrović's film. And it is painting that will bring Triša and Reza together. Triša gets hired by Reza to assist her in carrying her materials into a field where she exercises her artistic activities. While painting, she asks Triša, who observes her from underneath a tree, whether he would like to learn to paint as well. He calmly refuses. Her project of finding “spontaneous” artistic talent therefore fails. For the schoolteacher, this is no major setback: during their next session, she decides to supplant her search for indigenous talent with a search for sexual pleasure. During their third rendezvous, however, she is no longer interested in either: she tells Triša that peasants are interesting, but only for a short time. So the teacher – a real “city girl,” as Joška describes her – approaches the swineherd through two different projections: at first, she wants to regard him as the bearer of “natural” artistic talent. When this fails, she uses him as a source of “natural” bodily pleasure. In both cases, she is therefore searching for the good, uncultured Other to her urban civilization.<sup>7</sup>

Her rapid loss of interest presents this projection as a rather worn-out one: she soon renounces her search for the noble savage in Triša and starts an affair with the pilot. The pilot is, in turn, represented as a ridiculous hero. He is the master of the sky, “never touching the earth”, as Reza puts it. Seemingly, he is the opposite of Triša, the one repeatedly shown lying in the dust and the mud with his pigs. But the pilot himself points to the fact that he flies an old airplane and that he keeps crashing. Thus, the bearer of heroic modernization actually witnesses to this modernization's shortcomings: the airplane itself is outdated and in constant need

of repair. If Reza could not find the noble savage in Triša, she also cannot find the real hero of modernity in Milanče, the pilot.

Nevertheless, once his airplane is repaired, a parting ceremony is organized for the pilot, during which the teacher gives a highly symptomatic speech: “With our comrades the pilots, our fields will blossom. And today, when we live in an epoch of progress, when even the heart beating in our chest does not have to be our own, everywhere, even into the village, new ideas breach their way.” The airplane is then sent off by the villagers singing along to a Gypsy orchestra playing the song “Slava Srbinu – Svetozare Miletiću” (“Glory to the Serb – Svetozar Miletić”); this song is dedicated to a 19th-century national revolutionary and major of Novi Sad. It is not difficult to see that the song does not represent the newest ideas. The speech on progress is therefore ridiculed in two steps: first, the heroic narrative does not really apply to the old airplane that keeps breaking down. Second, in the place of new ideas comes a politically outdated song. It would seem that the age of progress cannot stick to the world of man-like pigs.

But the pilot’s departure does stir up the villagers, who suddenly realize that they have no airplane of their own. In response, they organize a meeting and demonstration, which is an explicit allusion to the student protests in Belgrade in 1968 (the chairman of the meeting remarks, “If the students can do it, so can we.”). Although this meeting might be regarded as an awakening of (contemporary, socialist) political consciousness in the village, it is once again rendered fully ridiculous: the peasants meet in the middle of a desolate field so that “everybody can see them” and disband without reaching any positive conclusion or program. The attempt to imitate the protests in the capital is, therefore, yet another failure.

In its entirety, this dense web of relationships explores the conflict between modernity and “backwardness”. The schoolteacher – a successful embodiment of modernity – is unable to conceptualize the space she has entered beyond her dominating and inappropriate projections. Then there is the pilot, representing a flawed version of modernity. Finally, the villagers’ attempt to engage with “new ideas” is portrayed as literally out of place. In *It Rains in My Village*, there is no happy synthesis between centre and periphery, between the world of progress and the world of the archaic.

If one returns to *Burduš* for a brief moment, it also becomes apparent that the two films offer the exact opposite interpretations of an interplay between the modern and the archaic. In *Burduš*, the good archaic was to be protected from the double threat of modernity and modernism. In *It Rains in My Village*, the good archaic is the modernity’s bearer’s projection (i.e. Reza’s passion for “naïve” artists); it is but modernity’s dominating dream. The peculiarity of Petrović’s “Burduš” (Đoka) lies therein that he is positioned at the very limit of this projection: while taking part in it, he also becomes a structuring device that calls it into question.

## 7.7 Object Attraction

Up to this point, *It Rains in My Village*’s take on the modernity/backwardness complex has been the main object of analysis. The reason why “Burduš” and his fellow

Gypsy musicians were left out of the picture so far is simple: they are not exactly part of the film's narrative structure.

The band led by Đoka is a peculiar element in the film: one that offers a lasting musical commentary, while sliding in and out of the cinematic diegetic world. The band's ambiguous status is accentuated already during the film's opening credits. The credits begin with the producer's, then Petrović's and Girardot's names being written over a background in the style of naïve painting. They then cut to a shot showing Đoka and his violinist in close-up, staring directly into the camera, while singing the movie's (original) title: "The world is about to end, to end soon; let it end, let it end, it's no pity!"<sup>8</sup> The credits continue over a shot showing a road and some village houses. Towards the end of this long shot (once the credits have finished), the Gypsy band will be shown again, entering the village where the narrative will take place. The band arriving in the village is therefore a diegetic element, the musicians belong to the movie's fictional world. But the first shot in which they appear appertains to the film's paratext: the musicians are those proffering the movie's title. In their first incarnation, they therefore occupy an outside position with regard to the movie's narration and belong to its "frame". Different variations of this narrative in-betweenness – between the diegetic and extradiegetic levels, between the plot and a commentary of the plot – will be a lasting trademark of the musicians' many appearances in Petrović's film.

Before scrutinizing its ambiguous narrative status, the semantic value of the Gypsy band merits attention. Here, some of Petrović's remarks are indicative. Petrović claimed that in his film, the Gypsies are bearers of a deep "folk wisdom". Their "wisdom" it is best expressed in the musical form that they sing – the *bećarac* (a two-verse, rhymed, often ironic folksong) (1988, 298). This reflection on "folk wisdom" conveyed through a simple – if not naïve – musical form, was taken over by more than one film critic. Bogdan Kalafatović offered the exact same description (1969, 7), while Milivoj Milošević was impressed by the "magic of folk genius" that unfolds through the band's songs (1969, 11).

Through their songs, the musicians do articulate "eternal wisdoms". To take an example, whenever a betrayal happens in the film's love story, it is accompanied by the Gypsies singing a verse that roughly translates as "It's better to trust a dog than to trust a lover." The Gypsies thus dispose of deep insights into the unavoidable changes of one's heart, which they communicate in vain to their tragically ignorant surroundings. To a certain extent, the band can therefore be regarded as the bearer of the good archaic, that archaic which the schoolteacher searches for and cannot find on the movie's purely diegetic level. In accordance with the stereotype, the golden-toothed, in-rags-dressed Gypsies are the guardians of eternal wisdoms, expressed through the simple form of the *bećarac*.

However, Petrović also accentuated the fact that the Gypsy band is a *structuring* mechanism. In his view, it should be regarded as a chorus (in the sense of classical Greek tragedy) or as a "Brecht-like commentary" (1988, 298). This remark was picked up by critics as well. A review in the journal *Sineast*, signed only by the initial *S*, argued that the apparent "folk-piece with singing and acting" is in fact a "breakthrough into a new, Brechtian field of creation" (1969, 45).

The musicians' narrative in-betweenness can be regarded as a crucial aspect of their "Brechtian" status. By functioning as a diegetic and extradiegetic element at the same time, they disturb the boundaries of the film's fictional world. Petrović systematically creates such disorienting effects in the following way: an exterior scene is accompanied by the musicians' song. Since the characters are on a street, in a field, or in a meadow – with the band nowhere in sight – this soundtrack functions as an extradiegetic element. It is directed at the viewer, while the characters themselves cannot hear it. Petrović then cuts to the musicians performing their song in the local bar without cutting in the soundtrack. The music's diegetic level thus changes abruptly: it now becomes an intradiegetic element within the film's fictional world. Furthermore, although the musicians' presence is narratively motivated – they have been invited by the barkeeper to play in his bar – in most of the scenes showing their performances, they are looking straight into the camera. Đoka puts further emphasis on the camera by moving towards it while playing his solos. Although the musicians are performing for the crowd in the bar, they are thus presented as playing for the film's viewer as well.

The Gypsy performances in *It Rains in My Village* can therefore be described as instances of a "cinema of attractions" in Tom Gunning's sense of the term (1986, 1994). Gunning argues that the logic of "attractions" was fundamental to early cinema, which sought to directly engage the viewer's curiosity and emphasize the act of display rather than creating a coherent narrative space. Since the musicians are, at least in part, performing for the film's audience – and not just for the one in the bar – and since Đoka overtly engages with the camera while performing, this is precisely the gesture they enact. And the musicians' act of display does not necessarily end there. They are the ones who literally open the film and they are the ones who proffer "universal wisdoms". To a certain extent, the plot's individual episodes can, therefore, be viewed as *illustrations* of their songs. When the band repeatedly sings "Rather trust a dog than a lover", all the film's radically unhappy love plots can be seen as specific examples of this general truth, which, being general, holds a higher level of authority than any of its individual exemplifications. In other words, many – if not all – of the film's sequences can be regarded as illustrations of musical numbers. These musical numbers are, in their turn, explicitly presented (rather than represented) to the viewer.

But here another paradox arises: these sequences, which are offered as illustrations of very general "truths", are in their turn constructed in a radically "messy" way. Petrović largely avoids establishing shots (especially when filming interior scenes); he often piles up close-ups combined with camera movements. Obstacles sometimes block part of the scene; characters enter the frame almost randomly, with only part of the body being visible in close-up (thigh, shoulder, belly) before they acquire a logical position within the shot.

This approach to filmmaking was addressed by Petrović himself: he claimed that he sees no essential difference between documentary and fictional film, since in documentary films he uses "dramatic techniques" typical of the fictional film, while in fictional films he makes use of a "scenic texture" typical of documentary film (1988, 182).<sup>9</sup> The "messy" directing that characterizes *It Rains in My Village*

can be seen as an example of the aforementioned documentary “scenic texture”. It gives the impression that the *mise-en-scène*, actors’ movements, etc., were not prearranged but rather “caught” by the camera, as if they were fragments of an ever-escaping reality.

If the Gypsy band is a thoroughly ambiguous element in the film – fleeting between a diegetic and an extradiegetic narrative level, between a logic of attractions and that of narrative homogeneity, between representation and presentation – the same can be said of *all* the film’s sequences. On one hand, they are presented as nothing but illustrations of general truths. But on the other hand, they are represented as fragments of a documentary reality whose singularity – or non-illustrativeness – should therefore be respected.

If one returns to Jovičić’s remark on “raw materials” – which supposedly destroy the possibility of viewer enjoyment – it now becomes apparent that they are not “raw” at all. What creates the disturbing effect is an over-structuring. This over-structuring relies on two contradictory techniques: first, it applies a technique of “showing” that engages the viewer and thereby destroys the mimetic illusion. Second, it applies a mock-documentary technique that seeks to present the film’s scenes as bare, “caught” reality, as something found rather than deliberately presented.

To take possibly the most disturbing example of this kind in the film: after Triša gets refused by the schoolteacher, he blames his marital status for the rejection and slits his wife’s throat in hope that this will make him attractive again. The murder itself is not shown in the film: Petrović cuts directly from a shot of Triša contemplating the act to a shot of Goca’s corpse lying on a bench in a barn. Goca’s corpse is shown in three consecutive shots, with the camera moving closer with each repetition; the third and final shot shows only her face in close-up. During the first, medium shot, a turkey suddenly enters the frame and pecks indifferently around the corpse. The three shots are accompanied by the band singing a song which roughly translates as: “My man, my man, you devil, the cops are now after you!” In all three shots, Goca’s dead eyes stare straight into the camera.

This scene relies on several layers of abjection. On a thematic level, what is shown is profoundly abject: the bloody corpse as such is a prime example of the abject in Julia Kristeva’s (1982) sense of the term. Furthermore, the film’s narrative context intensifies the effect: the murdered person is mute and mentally challenged, and therefore perfectly helpless. The horror of the object gets further accentuated by the mode in which it is re/presented. The turkey enters the scene as a sign for uncontrollable “reality”; it can be regarded as a very successful reality-effect in Barthes’ sense of the term. It therefore accentuates the scene’s “non-stagedness” through its chance appearance. Furthermore, through the three consecutive shots ranging from medium shot to close-up, the camera creates an effect of bringing the corpse closer and closer to the viewer. And then there is the line of Goca’s gaze: it is now the dead woman, not the musicians, who is staring straight into the camera. The viewer’s distance from the abject object is thus obliterated by the way it is filmed: the camera systematically brings it closer, while the dead eyes seem to

compel the viewer, as if the corpse were presenting itself in the same manner that “Burduš” presents his solos.

To this dense cluster of representational strategies, the song is then added. With its banal, almost cheerful rhyme, it stands in stark contrast to the represented object, thus creating yet another layer of malaise. At the same time, it influences the status of the images. Since it is the musician who presents the “folk opera”, they can be regarded as “showing” us the corpse as just another illustration of the “wonderful life” in Srem.<sup>10</sup> The corpse thus gets trivialized on one hand, but on the other hand it once again acquires the status of something *presented*, something that is “on display” for the viewer. Far from pacifying its abject nature, this strategy represents the corpse itself as an *attraction*.

As this thick description shows, Petrović employs filmic “violence” in the double sense Noël Burch had given it (1981, 123–124): the sequence is shocking not only because of its contents but also because the viewer is confronted with contradictory codes that prevent a clear positioning in relation to what is being shown. The corpse compels and draws closer through the camera’s gaze and through its dead gaze. It is rendered inert and irrelevant, but also inherently “real” through the turkey’s intervention. It is ironically presented as another attraction of the good life in Srem by the musicians’ song. The abject effect is not produced by any single code, and certainly not by the “rawness” of Petrović’s materials. It is created through an overabundance of representational strategies. If Julia Kristeva argued that the abject is never simply a content but also a crisis in representational codes (1982, 4), Petrović’s corpse scene can be considered abject in the strong sense of the term. Not only is its subject matter deeply disturbing but also, through an over-coding, the viewer’s position with regard to the disturbing object is rendered radically unstable.

This insecurity regarding interpretative codes reaches its climax in the film’s central attraction: a Gypsy freak show performing at a local fair. In this scene – which appears towards the film’s end and is dramaturgically quite superfluous – the act of showing is strongly accentuated. The band now occupies a small stage, with the show’s manager pulling back an improvised curtain to mark the start of their performance. The band then performs a song for the camera (and the audience in front of the stage), whose main verse goes, “Oh Jolanda, Jolanda, my moustached sweetheart.” Afterward, the show’s manager closes the curtain and addresses the audience, announcing that they are about to witness the “great attraction”: Jolanda and Peter, “who love each other very much”. The curtain is then reopened, revealing two “midgets” – one female and the other male – both sporting large, pointed moustaches. This sight produces an almost hysterical laughter in the audience.

The scene strongly relies on a logic of “attractions”: the tradition of fairground entertainment is explicitly evoked, the “showman-presenter” (Gunning 1994) is present, the audience’s attention is overtly solicited. Furthermore, the freak show might not have been inserted into the film only to serve as an allusion to the tradition of attractions; it has a further, subtler meaning. In her study of the “golden age” of freak shows (1847–1914), Nadja Durbach proposed the following

hypothesis: freaks embody cultural anxieties, they represent deviations that threaten the dominant codes shaping a culture:

The freak was monstrous precisely because of the instability of its body: the freak could be both male and female, white and black, adult and child, and/or human and animal at the same time. Indeed, this ability to inhabit two categories at once, and thus to challenge the distinction between them, was the hallmark of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century freak show performer.

(2010, 3–4)

The two freaks in Petrović's film embody precisely these characteristics: the ambiguity of Jolanda's gender is explicitly highlighted by the Gypsy showman-presenter ("I know that you don't know who's the man and who's the woman here."). Furthermore, the lovers' "too small" statures blur the boundary between adult and childlike bodies.

Petrović's "midgets" therefore signify a mess in the fundamental binary oppositions shaping a culture (male/female, adult/child). It is precisely in this way that Mattijs van de Port reads the freak-show scene, while rearticulating it against the Gypsy projection: "Scenes like these, in which the Gypsy functions literally as the supplier of impossible possibilities, refer unmistakably to the awareness that unambiguous stories are an impossibility." (1998, 165–166) But at this point, van de Port – the author of the projection hypothesis – stumbles upon the limits of his own theoretical insights. Van de Port begins his analysis of Gypsy figures by identifying the stereotypes projected onto them: a free lifestyle, inborn musicality, etc. In its most radical guise, however, this projection becomes the impossibility of any projection at all. In his final figure, the Gypsy is not a bearer of describable properties; instead, s/he belongs to a "pre-story world, a nameless, formless, precultural world" (van de Port 1998, 211). The Gypsy is, in this radical sense, not a bearer of identity; s/he is a sign for the non-signifying, the cypher of a symbolic mess that no ordered story can survive.

And in Petrović's film, this mess is a double one. His scene is ambiguous not only because of the "deviant" bodies it features but also because of its diegetic inconsistency. The performance is a diegetic element directed at a fictional audience, but *at the same time*, it is presented as if it were staged directly for the film's audience. Not only the freaks, but also the Gypsy musicians thus take part in the destruction of tidy stories in Petrović's film. Through their "Brechtian" nature, they systematically unsettle the status of the film's images. These images incessantly fluctuate between illustrations and "found reality", direct address and fictional distance, the abject and the parodic. Furthermore, in van de Port's view, the world of representational mess is right away associated with the archaic: it is a *precultural* world. If the Gypsies in Petrović's film can be regarded as the main agents of ambiguous representation, certain aspects of the love plot might be regarded as pointing towards the "precultural". Goca is literally a character standing outside of discourse; through a complex system of juxtapositions, Triša is associated too closely to his pigs, thus becoming a man-animal character; their wedding turns an established cultural ritual into a charade.

*It Rains in My Village* thus associates a semantics of non-semantics – elements that signify the impossibility of orderly signification – with a thoroughly ambiguous technique of representation. To a certain extent, the film therefore leaves the space of the moves 1 and 2 and approaches the move 3, where the archaic signifies a challenge to signification itself. Petrović's film relies on the “good” archaic (the “folk wisdom” of the Gypsies and the *bećarac*), mocks the good archaic (the schoolteacher's passion for naïve painting), and criticizes the bad archaic of backwardness. What is more, *It Rains in My Village* associates the archaic with an ambiguous regime of images – both presenting and representing, narrating and addressing, illustrating and recording – while pairing them with symbols that signify the breakdown of cultural codes: the man-woman and man-child “freaks”, the man-pig Triša, the mute Goca.

## 7.8 Conclusion

The analysis of Burduš's incarnations attempted to disclose an intricate interplay between the archaic and the screen Gypsy in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. In a first step, it was shown that the screen Gypsy relies on a dynamics of the good and the bad archaic. In *Burduš* the movie, the good simpleton bass-player was able to prosper as soon as the bad archaic of irrational violence and animal-pack-like sexuality was removed. In *It Rains in My Village*, the movie's fictional world was drowned in the bad archaic: extreme backwardness, poverty, animal-like drives leading to atrocities, man-like pigs wallowing in the dust, etc. This bad archaic was then redeemed through the Gypsy musicians, who were – even in the midst of the end of the world – still able to attest to deep, spontaneous “wisdoms”.

As emphasized throughout this study, the archaic cannot fully develop its meanings without at least a trace of modernity in its background. In both films, modernity served as a strong contrapuntal element to the dynamics of the archaic, and in both cases, it was portrayed as a danger. In *Burduš*, it encompassed the world of fancy hotel lobbies and artistic performances that threatened the good simplicity of Gypsy – and, by analogy, Yugoslav – identity. In *It Rains in My Village*, modernity was either flawed (the airplane, the demonstrations) or aggressive, as exemplified by the schoolteacher, on the lookout for the exotic peasant artist and/or sex-toy. The good archaic represented by Burduš and his band was thus facing a double threat in both films: that of the bad archaic and that of modernity.

In the context of modernity's aesthetic and media culture, another aspect of the 1960s screen Gypsy emerged: he served as a vehicle for conceptualizing aesthetic positions. Through its Gypsy protagonist, *Burduš* thus warned against “imported” modernism, as opposed to a presumed good indigenous non-conformism. In *It Rains in My Village*, the Gypsy archaic as an aesthetic concept was radicalized. It switched from the thematic to the structural level: although the film's Gypsy band was still fashioned as the bearer of good indigenous knowledge (the “folk wisdom”), the Gypsies now became the tricksters who actively disrupt the film's regime of images itself. Through the band's diegetic/extradiegetic, presentational/representational position, the very status of the film's narrative sequences got

unsettled. A radicalized form of the bad archaic – the one verging on extra-human, extra-discursive states (the murdered, mute Goca; the swineherd Triša becoming a pig) – was thus represented through images not allowing the viewer to clearly position herself against them, as her attention was actively solicited by Gypsy attractions presenting the beautiful life in Srem.

Although he was never able to fully verbalize this, Jovičić's critique of *It Rains in My Village* as “non-digestible” may have been prompted by the complex disruptions embedded within the movie's structure. Petrović's film was provocative not only because of its political allusions but also because it defied conceptualization through pleasure, sense, or beauty. In a certain way, it was *unviewable*. With *It Rains in My Village*'s Gypsies, we thus leave the space of the moves 1 and 2 and approach that of the move 3 in the game of the archaic: the one fashioning the archaic as a general challenge to representation.

And this challenge does not search for a “pure”, metaphysical existence beyond representation. To the contrary: it attacks representation because representation is invested with power. Already on a thematic level, Petrović's film criticized an exoticizing, dominating projection: most of the film's disasters happen because of the schoolteacher's search for the Yugoslav noble savage. At the same time, Petrović could not escape employing a dominating gaze himself, only his was directed at the Gypsy musicians. As demonstrated previously, the fashioning of a positive identity for Yugoslavia through the screen Gypsy is necessarily a) exoticizing with regard to the Roma and b) Balkanizing with regard to Yugoslavia. As if he had sensed that he had given in to dominating representations, Petrović therefore built another layer into his film: that which makes its very images volatile.

The conceptualization of this strategy will require further theoretical exploration and examples. But already at this point it becomes apparent that Petrović's film unfolds the full triad of “moves” characteristic of the game of the archaic. The backward world of the bad archaic is being criticized (move 2). “Good” indigenous wisdom is being celebrated (move 1). Backwardness slides into muteness and animality, while the regime of images representing these elements grows radically unstable (move 3). From this triad, a final conclusion can be drawn: a shift toward the “move 3” always depends on at least one of the other two moves. The move 3 represents a radicalization of the game of the archaic; it is a limit where the archaic seeks to break into non-signification. In this ultimate form, the archaic almost invariably functions both as an act of aggression against distributions of the sensible and as a meditation on the power inherent in such distributions.

## Notes

- 1 [www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/burdus/](http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/burdus/), accessed on the 06.04.2022.
- 2 After La Campanella had gotten its first regular gig in a bar, Burduš asks the owner whether they can take a day off to attend a friend's funeral. The owner refuses, and Burduš remarks that he is conducting himself as a “rotten capitalist”. The pub owner then replies: “Let me be with that socialism in which nobody does anything, we got rid of that already in 1948.” This definition of Yugoslavia's split with Stalinism is remarkably

ambiguous: it leaves a space open for the interpretation that a strong socialist agenda for workers' rights was abandoned through the split. If this piece of dialogue were to appear in a radically modernist film, it would probably be deemed an exemplary instance of subversiveness. However, the fact of it appearing in a popular TV series and not arousing controversies (to my knowledge, *The Musicians* never stood under ideological attack) points to a high tolerance for political allusions within the Yugoslav media culture of the late 1960s on the one hand and warns against an overestimation of certain "subversive" elements of the Black Wave on the other. Many of the elements which could appear shockingly provocative from a contemporary perspective were quite common within Yugoslav 1960s popular culture.

- 3 Some of the shots that appear in this sequence were taken from Popović's earlier film *The Tough Ones*; in the vein of *auteur* cinema, the director thus discreetly quoted himself.
- 4 A nuance that necessarily gets lost in translation is that Burduš in fact uses the English word "happening"; what is meant is therefore a distinct, and at that time rather new, art-form.
- 5 In 1969, a Yugoslav version of the musical *Hair* appeared on the stage of the Belgrade theatre, Atelje 212. Because of its nude scenes, *Vjesnik u srijedu* described the production as the "most shocking and most commercial" one of the whole Yugoslav theatre season (Sigetić 1969, 15). Due to the brevity of shots showing fragments of the theatre performance in *Burduš*, it is hard to assess whether they were taken exactly out of this production, which is not unlikely.
- 6 For example, Rudolf Sremec was applying the term "black film" in relation to Yugoslav documentaries as early as 1965 (1965, 5).
- 7 The schoolteacher also subverts common-place artistic male-female roles: she has sex with Triša on the pretext of wanting to paint his portrait (which she actually does after the erotic scene). In a certain sense, Triša therefore acquires the role of her "muse": he is both a model for artistic activity and an object of sexual desire. However, this subversion does not go against the schoolteacher's search for the authentic in Triša; in both his roles, he is treated as the corporeal, exotic other.
- 8 The original title *Biće skoro propast sveta* translates as "the world is going to end soon".
- 9 In the early stages of his career, Petrović directed a series of documentaries, with *Flight over the Swamp* (*Let nad močvarom*, 1957) and *Proceedings* (*Zapisnik*, 1964) usually being considered anthological.
- 10 One of the film's leitmotif songs repeats: "Srem, Srem, Srem, it's wonderful to live in it."



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Closing Remarks on Backwardness and Vitality

At this point, a synthesis of the materials analysed thus far can be attempted. On a most general level, the archaic emerges as a crucial element in the teleological machine of grand narratives. Within this framework, it assumes three distinct guises: that of bad backwardness, that of good vitality, and that of a precultural, pre-symbolic state.

On a more specific level, the discourse of Balkanism can be regarded as a derivative of grand narratives, reinforcing the “West” as the symbolic geopolitical centre of world history. This structure, however, is not only geo- but also chronopolitical: it relies on temporal differences projected upon the world map. In this way, the “not-exactly-modern” take on the role of securing the core’s modernity. In other words, the Balkans are Europe’s Other because they are perceived as not participating in the same time. As a consequence, they stand closer to different variants of the archaic.

As Todorova put it, this discursive mechanism creates a “cognitive straitjacket”. However, a close reading of Todorova’s book revealed that she herself could not fully escape the straitjacket: the dominating discourse is a compulsory one, no matter the author’s intentions. A struggle against the straitjacket, therefore, does not take place outside representations of the archaic. Rather, this struggle seeks to appropriate symbolic capital by employing the three “figures” of the archaic. In Todorova’s case, an attempt at reaching the “essential” *hors-texte* of the Balkans was not only thrown back into a thoroughly textual field, but also, it had to rely on a symbolic strategy based in the archaic. The Ottoman legacy had to be reevaluated as a positive alternative to nation-states; in other words, the bad archaic (imperial backwardness) needed to be transformed into the good archaic (a surviving pluralism).

In a next step, Todorova’s re-evaluative gesture was described as the “move 1” in the game of the archaic. I argue that this game permits only three “moves”: the move 1 reevaluates backwardness as preserved vitality. The move 2 criticizes backwardness while relying on representations of modernity. The move 3 pushes the archaic – be it a good or a bad remnant – towards the pre-signifying and the pre-cultural.

On a more specific level still, it has been shown that Miroslav Krleža's program for Yugoslav culture strongly relies on all three moves. In Krleža's view, the grand scheme of the development of spirit – be it Stalinist or liberal – is an imperialist plaything. He thus formulates a hypothesis about the dominating effect of grand narratives, which have consistently portrayed Yugoslavs as primitives sentenced to death. In order to escape this representational straitjacket, he then deploys a complex strategy of re-evaluations. He invents a “proletarian” people, estranged from state apparatuses in its centuries-long struggle for sheer survival. Through endless struggles, the proletarian people preserved its strength and a high propensity for revolutions. This is the move 1: backwardness turned into vitality. Furthermore, in Krleža's view, the “proletarian people” survived because the Balkan bourgeoisie was always “anachronistic”. Its dwellings were market-towns rather than real cities and it could therefore not properly perform its historic role. This is the move 2: a critique of flawed modernity and backwardness. Finally, Krleža ascribes artistic production a radically subversive role: by commemorating the bodily, the instinctual, the “antediluvian”, artistic production opposes all straightjackets and becomes an act of commemorating the precultural, the non-discursive. This is the move 3: the archaic as a challenge to representation.

The game of the archaic was thus extrapolated from grand narratives. It was then studied in relation to a theory of Balkanism and to a fundamental Yugoslav cultural program. Subsequently, its manifestations on the Yugoslav 1960s screen were examined in detail. It was demonstrated that the game of the archaic was widely present in 1960s Yugoslav film culture. Its prevalence was not limited to critical or high modernist Black Wave cinema, nor was it tied to the “sensibility” of any one republic. It also appeared in popular films and series (*The Musicians*, *Poor Mary*, *Burduš*), and its dynamics influenced the mechanisms of two films considered exemplary of different “national sensibilities” (*The Birch Tree* and *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*).

Thus far, a fundamental mechanism of this game was standing in the centre of scrutiny: that of a chiasmic movement that takes place between the moves 1 and 2, between the good and the bad archaic. The chiasm was embodied in the “we were always revolutionary” against “we were never revolutionary” symbolic structure. It was exemplified by the likable as well as threateningly chaotic Gypsy. It was expressed through the authentically popular yet possibly ridiculous naïve painter. A peculiar characteristic of this chiasmic movement is that it is emancipatory and open to domination at the same time. In appropriating symbolic capital for the “proletarian peoples” – or their naïve and Gypsy avatars – it cannot escape exoticizations. However, this does not mean that the emancipatory gesture gets fully erased. Rather, it remains suspended in a structure that can always turn it into its opposite.

*When You Hear the Bells* could therefore deny the system of revolutionary “anticipations” discreetly proposed by *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*. But it needed to do so by relying on the exact same element: a vitalist, almost anarchic peasantry. The possibility of a “proletarian people” was thus not entirely denied. *It Rains in My Village* critiqued naïve art: it represented the “naive” craze as the dominating

projection of a city dweller in search of primitiveness. But at the same time, the film itself relied on the popular – if not “naïve” – form of the *bećarac*. *Burduš* challenged “imported” modernism, but paradoxically, the film was saturated by procedures typical of international *auteur* cinema.

These symbolic struggles bear witness to the intensity of negotiation processes that unfold within the “straitjacket” of the archaic. It would seem that for the “rangers” of Europe, symbolic emancipation is impossible outside the game of the archaic. At the same time, however, it is unattainable within this game. This might be the reason why some Yugoslav filmmakers of the 1960s chose to turn towards a radicalized archaic, to push it towards its third figure. The logic behind this gesture can be summarized as follows: the “straitjacket” is a discursive one and it relies heavily on the archaic. But the archaic contains a further potential: it can be fashioned as a challenge to discursivity. By the same token, it can attack the very discursivity of discourses that rely on the archaic. Paradoxically, in its third figure, the archaic thus dismantles the discursive straitjacket based in the archaic. But in doing so, it runs its own risks. These risks, which round up the game of the archaic, will be further explored in the following chapters.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

### **III**

## **Revenge on Representation**

The “Move 3” in the Game of  
the Archaic on the Yugoslav  
1960s Screen



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## 8 Images, Revolutions (and Their Crusts)

### 8.1 Men and the Animal

What was referred to as the “move 3” within the game of the archaic is possibly its most elusive aspect. For a clear grasp of this final strategy, some further theoretical considerations will be needed. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the third figure of the archaic is associated with pre-symbolic, almost “inhuman”, “animal” phenomena. It should be noted in passing that this analysis does not claim to offer any definitive truth about animals; it merely seeks to reconstruct the logic of a particular discourse. This being said, two mutually intertwined characteristics of the “animal” must be taken into consideration. First, the animal was depicted as incapable of *mimesis*, language, or mediation in general. It disposes of nothing but immediate impulses and produces but “barkings of desire” (Bataille 1955, 28). Second, the animal was opposed to all forms of society. To take an example, in George Bataille’s view (1955), a primary articulation of time, work, and language builds the foundations for social organization while excluding “animality” through the same gesture. The third figure of the archaic is thus coded as an outside to both meaning-production and social organization.<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche makes use of all aforementioned tropes: while language and society are born together, the “animal” remains a radical outsider to this founding event. However, a new aspect is now added to the double birth: that of hierarchy and power. Hierarchy and power are not only fundamental principles of the newly born proto-society, they also infect the very surface of language, which is associated with a lordly right to appropriate the sensible world. In other words: discourse is, from its very birth, invested with power. The mute, animal-like archaic therefore acquires a new dimension. By standing outside of discourse, it evokes the possibility of escaping the power to which one is subjected upon entering any field of signification. In this sense, the third figure of the archaic is a peculiar dream of freedom.

It has further been shown that this dream of freedom entered aesthetic considerations. Miroslav Krleža described the only possible space of speaking for neither Pope nor Party as one commemorating “antediluvian” impulses (1963, 114). Thus, one reaches the semantic content of the third figure of the archaic: it signifies a dream of escaping discursivity and, by the same token, escaping power.

Krleža's considerations introduce yet another element into the system governing the third figure of the archaic. As can be remembered, he claimed that the archaic appoints artistic signifying practices a specific status. Never fully reducible to their symbolic dimension, artistic works needed to carry on their very surface the remnants of an indexicality that does not dissolve into meaning. Although Krleža's concepts remain rather vague in this regard, they do point to an additional demand placed on the third figure of the archaic. *Within* discourse, it should bring forth that which opposes discursivity; it should "stage" the shortcomings of discursivity. Without ever being capable of reaching a pure pre- or extra-discursive state – since it is itself a figure of discourse – in its third guise, the archaic should disturb processes of signification. This would be its performative, rather than semantic dimension.

From this perspective, Jovičić's critique of *It Rains in My Village* acquires higher clarity. Petrović did not only offer images of "man-like pigs" that dangerously conflate the border between the human and the animal (the third figure's semantic dimension); he also presented these images in a way that confuses the very mechanisms of viewing a film, thus making them "indigestible" (the third figure's performative dimension). The third figure of the archaic would thus encompass the following, mutually intertwined elements: a) an anti-social and anti-discursive stance, which also challenges (discursive) power; and b) an array of mechanisms that attempt to short-circuit discursivity while bringing its oppressive aspects to the fore.

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to provide a straightforward systematization of all aesthetic strategies that employ the third figure of the archaic. However, to further define this dangerous figure, the next step will link it to a Rancièrian perspective on the politics of aesthetics. A key dialogue partner in this theoretical exploration will be Živojin Pavlović, whose reflections on "arche-images" on the abject, on revolutions (and their "crusts") form a dense system revolving around the third figure of the archaic.

## 8.2 Raw Image, Arche-Image

The next step in the attempt to theoretically circumscribe the third figure of the archaic is Živojin Pavlović's concept of "raw images". Pavlović was undoubtedly one of the leading figures of Yugoslav *auteur* cinema in the 1960s. He rose to prominence with films such as *The Rats Woke Up* (*Buđenje pacova*, 1967), *When I Am Dead and Gone* (*Kad budem mrtav i beo*, 1968), and *The Ambush* (*Zaseda*, 1969). Already towards the end of the 1950s, Pavlović started publishing essays on film and developing a theory of cinematic images. The positions articulated in these early essays were reaffirmed through later interviews and published in two volumes entitled *Devil's Film* (*Đavolji film*, 1969) and *The Core of Tension* (*Jezgro napetosti*, 1990). It is in these writings that Pavlović insisted, time and again, on articulating the film-image against the archaic.

Pavlović's "aesthetics" is based in a series of apparently negative terms. One of his key essays is entitled "The Poetry of Savageness"; his late collection of

theoretical writings bears the title “On the Disgusting”; he opted for “raw images”, for “drastic images” (1969, 55–56), for a “destructive brutality” (1969, 61) in art. His concept of the “raw” image did receive critical attention, foremost from Pavle Levi. In his *Disintegration in Frames* (2007), Levi articulated Pavlović’s theory against the writings of Sergei Eisenstein on the one hand and against those of André Bazin on the other. Although an exact positioning of Pavlović’s stance within the framework of classical film theory is an interesting endeavour, it would exceed the ambitions of this theoretical development. Another aspect of Levi’s interpretation needs stressing, namely his view on the “raw” image’s function. Levi writes:

His [Pavlović’s] “drastic” images are intended to effect a denaturalization of the viewer’s comprehension of the “logical action,” to obstruct his or her perception of the diegesis. [...] For their function is none other than to outline the limits of legibility of this continuum, of this logic of action. In films made by Živojin Pavlović an attraction marks the ultimate failure [...] of the total comprehensibility of the signified. It permits the impulsive, the irrational, the non-symbolizable, to have its revenge [...] on that “carcinoma of nature” that is the spectatorial cogito.

(2007, 86–87)

Levi’s rather brilliant phrasing thus connects the “raw”, “drastic” image to certain aspects previously associated with the third figure of the archaic: it is a surge of the impulsive, of the irrational into the field of visibility. By the same token, the raw image is anti-diegetic and anti-symbolic, it is a border-figure to the field of signification as such.

What one could add to Levi’s account, however, is the temporal dimension of the “drastic” image. This image has another name – the “*arche-image*” (*pra-slika*) (Pavlović 1969, 92; 2018, 12). In Pavlović’s view, the “raw” image is archaic in a by now well-known sense. It refers to a state which preceded the fatal event of humanity developing a consciousness – that “carcinoma of nature” (Pavlović 1969, 187) to which Levi refers –, which kicked off the teleology of world history. Although a return into the blessed “state in which all living beings except for humans find themselves” (Pavlović 1969, 187) remains constitutively impossible, this state can be hinted at through the destruction of perceptive schemata. This is why Pavlović calls for an aesthetics of destructive brutality.

Pavlović’s theoretical views thus align with the discursive system constructed around the third figure of the archaic. The “*arche-image*” is a radical outside to the teleology of human history. It is associated with non-human – possibly “animal” – forms of life, and it is a challenge to the very possibility of discursivity or signification. However, Pavlović’s “system” does encompass three new elements: a) a stance on the medium of film; b) a cluster of motifs; and c) a peculiar view on political revolutions. To come to terms with these new elements, the analysis now has to answer three slightly simplified questions: What is the *arche-image*? How is the *arche-image* produced? Why is the *arche-image* produced?

If one starts with the “what” of the arch-image, one is once again confronted with a thematic cluster. Based on a wide panorama of artistic works, ranging from Krleža to Faulkner, Pavlović offers a long list of “drastic” images. Some examples include “an old man pissing [...], murders, corpses, mud, the copulation of limp bodies [...], entrails spread upon branches, genital bleeding, [...] detailed descriptions of meningitis [...]. And so on.” (1969, 62–64) All these images are supposed to be “detonators” (*detonatori*), which communicate with “deep layers of human irrationality” (Pavlović 2018, 10). They thus bring the fragility of the rational perceiving subject to the fore.

Pavlović’s views on artistic destruction would, therefore, closely resemble the theory of the “abject” articulated by Julia Kristeva some decades later. To take an example, Kristeva writes: “Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death.” (1982, 71) First, one can notice the high convergence between Pavlović’s and Kristeva’s lists: “old man pissing” approximately equals “excrement”, “corpse” equals “corpse”, “infection, disease” approximately equal the “detailed descriptions of meningitis”, etc. Second, in both cases, these motifs produce the same effect: they undermine the subject’s belief in its unquestionable integrity by blurring the boundary between an inside and an outside, between the subject and its objects. Since it is simultaneously a pure opposition to the I and a reminder on the insides of the I (excrement, intestines spread on branches), the abject short-circuits the normal workings of desire, objectification, and, once again, signification (Kristeva 1982, 1–2).

Although this parallel to psychoanalysis is supported by Pavlović’s own recurring references to Freudian theory, it faces a major difficulty. It does not allow for a differentiation between single representations pre-classified as “abject”. In other words, from this point of view, *any* depiction of a corpse would, in every instance and by its very nature, be shocking and disintegrating for the viewing subject. This is a proposition that Pavlović himself refuses. Furthermore, Kristeva’s, as well as Pavlović’s, is a *discourse* on the ineffable, on the non-discursive. Rather than being a simple given, the ineffable abject-archaic therefore appears as a discursive figure; paradoxically, it is discourse that endows it with its anti-discursive, destructive strength.

Pavlović sought to overcome the first of these difficulties by calling the nature of the film medium to his aid. This brings us to the second of the aforementioned questions, namely how is a destructive arch-image produced? In Pavlović’s view, film is especially prone to producing arche-images due to its very nature, which is – in accordance with a tradition stemming from Benjamin to Bazin and Barthes – defined as predominantly mechanical:

The moment the lens lets the first ray of light touch the turbulent celluloid, a fixation is made of something that is a finished thing, of something that does not allow for a phantasmagorical buildup, and therefore leaves the impression of an absolute of nature itself.

(1969, 66)

So the mechanical process of recording, the lens, light, and celluloid, produce an image endowed with indestructible immanence. Quite in the vein of Bazin's theory of indexicality, the film image will always preserve a material trace of the recorded (abject) object. This is why Pavlović can claim a little further: "The cinematic image is, within the *framework of the technical process*, the closest to the essence of the word naturalism." (1969, 67, emphasis in the original)

The "how" of the abject arche-image thus gets narrowed down: not every representation of a corpse is abject; rather, the medium of film enters a privileged relationship with the disgusting. A verbal representation can never match the power inherent in an image engraved by light. But in this way, the raw image becomes a strange meeting point of two discourses on the non-discursive. On one hand, "abject" motifs themselves oppose meaning-production; on the other hand, by indexically commemorating an object, the cinematic image defies interpretation as well as any "phantasmagorical buildup".

Two elements of this argumentative structure evidently remain problematic. Although the arche-image's scope has been narrowed down – not all representations of corpses are abject, only those recorded on celluloid – this reduction is far from sufficient. It would still seem that all *filmed* corpses are abject. However, in his essay "On the Disgusting", Pavlović himself refers to a photograph of a dead man which has no "destructive" value whatsoever. Being surrounded by mourning women, this corpse fails to capture the viewer's attention; rather, it is perceived as a pacified element within a ritual performed by the living (2018, 9). It therefore does not suffice to simply record an abject motif; this motif must be presented in such a way that the viewer cannot contextualize it through recognizable ritual, social, and narrative sequences. How exactly this is to be obtained, Pavlović does not say.

The second problem touches on the non-symbolic once again. In relation to the arche-image, one discourse on the ineffable (that of the "abject") is now supported by another (that of the "image-index"). This second discourse necessarily suffers the same fate as the first one did. By postulating that there is a (non-discursive) essence to the cinematic image, it creates this essence as a *discursive* product. A theory of the arche-image thus entails a hopeless double struggle against discursivity within discourse. This double struggle cannot be productively resolved at the level of "essences", whether of the abject or of the cinematic image. Rather, it calls for a relational, functional approach, one that will be developed in the final part of this theoretical development. But before this, a final question needs addressing, namely that of the *why* of the arche-image.

This "why" leads towards Pavlović's peculiar views on revolutions. The essence of every revolution has, in Pavlović's opinion, little to do with political programs, class conflicts, and ideological constructs. As long as it truly is a revolution, a revolution is the emptying out of "fundamental surges". Essentially, a revolution is always a "state of destruction developed to its maximum" (1969, 83); it is a "biological necessity" (2018, 34) insofar as it is a pure request for change, and change is the fundamental principle of biological existence (2018, 190). The ideas, ideologies, and reasonings that attempt to channel this fundamental revolutionary momentum are described time and again by Pavlović as simple "crusts" (*oblande*),

a packaging which attempts to subdue and temper the “biological” surge (1990, 34, 95).

In relation to politics, Pavlović’s revolution thus occupies a position strikingly similar to that of the raw image in the field of aesthetics. Despite the attempts to master it through constructs of discourse and reason, the revolution is always a surge of biological, vital, basic instincts. It therefore fulfils the same program of “brutal destruction” that the raw image has to perform within the field of artistic representation. But by the same token, the raw image is at least partially revolutionary. In being a “detonator”, which brings forth “deep layers of human irrationality”, it communicates with the very same elements that lie at the bottom of every revolution true to itself. Raw images and revolutions are therefore strictly complementary in their fundamental principle. And this common principle has its own name: anarchy. Pavlović writes: “Anarchist blows are essential blows, and revolutions, despite all their rational and ideological crusts, are anarchist acts.” (1990, 34)<sup>2</sup>

Excrements, corpses, and disease thus disrupt the order of discourse and, through the very same gesture, produce anarchy. Pavlović’s writings demonstrate that a theory of the radical archaic was present within the musings of at least one of the great Yugoslav *auteurs* of the 1960s. This theory shared in some of the features encountered in both grand narratives and Miroslav Krleža’s program. But Pavlović’s argumentation introduced a new aspect into this structure: in his writings, the arche-image stands in close proximity to the essence of the film medium, which is conceived of as inherently technical, disinterested, and indexical. This final argument proved highly problematic, as it relies on essentialist propositions that discursively assert a capacity for non-discursivity. In a last step of this theoretical trajectory, I will therefore question the ineffable cinematic archaic from a relational, functionalist, rather than essentialist perspective. This functionalist perspective can be articulated with the help of Jacques Rancière’s views on “naked”, “intolerable” images.

### 8.3 Naked Image, Intolerable Image

Throughout his writings on photography and film, Jacques Rancière developed a complex taxonomy, comprising the “naked”, the “intolerable”, and the “ostensive” image. In slightly different ways, all of these images take on the value of pure testimony and therefore resist interpretation; they capture “sheer presence, without signification” (2019, 23). However, a major methodological shift happens in Rancière’s writings. He does not attempt to define the essential properties that turn these images into pure presences; rather, he analyses the discourses that enable them to be perceived in this way. In other words, in Rancière’s view, an “image” itself does not exist “as such”; its modalities and effects are always reliant on the definitions it is given.

To take an example: in Rancière’s view, Roland Barthes offers two opposite definitions of the image. One definition insists on the image’s endless decomposition into signs (this is the Barthes of *Mythologies*); the other insists on the *punctum*

of pure presence (this is the Barthes of *Camera Lucida*). According to Rancière, the problem lies therein that it is virtually impossible to define the essential properties that would allow for a universally valid analytical distinction between the *punctum* and the *studium* in any image (2019, 15). This is not to say that these two properties do not exist at all. In Rancière's view, they echo two fundamental paradigms that were constitutive of modernity's "aesthetic regime". One – the endless semi-osis – regards the artistic image as a hieroglyph that bears the secrets of a given age and society on its pictorial body. The other considers the artistic image as a state of radical muteness that enables the object to *present* itself while avoiding representation. Taken together, these two properties are fundamental to definitions of art in modernity. The artistic object's specific status is granted either by the endless game of collective signage it encompasses or by its privileged position of being the only object that fully escapes this game (2019, 14–15). Both the image's eloquence and its muteness would then be real, not because they have always been part of the image's essence, but because they discursively allow the artistic image to appear, to become visible as artistic image. In other words, what is visible is not defined solely by what is visible. Rather, it acquires its properties within a "particular regime of articulation between the visible and the sayable" (2019, 11).

Rancière further insists that an image's force is always relational. If the *punctum* and the *studium* do exist as discursive constructs shaping a regime of visibility, they exist through a tension (2019, 11). This relational structure brings us back to cinema. With regard to film, Rancière insists on a logic similar but not fully commensurable to the one described above. His entry point for reflections on cinema is a quote by Jean Epstein: "Cinema is true. A story is a lie." (cit. in Rancière 2001, 7) The narrative principle (a story) thus supplants the *studium*, while the "pure" image in motion ("cinema") acquires the truth-value of the *punctum*. As Rancière sees it, Epstein's argument rests on two premises: first, "life" does not tell orderly stories; therefore, every story, being an artificial construct, is a lie. Second, "life" is an endless series of micromovements; the camera's disinterested eye is, in turn, capable of capturing and presenting these micromovements (Rancière 2001, 8). Despite "stories", the camera can therefore render visible the very truth of "life".

Here, one is faced with a belief similar to Pavlović's claim that the cinematic image creates "the impression of an absolute of nature". However, in Rancière's view, this absolute cannot appear on its own. While identifying the little movements of onscreen truth (a wavering curtain, particles of dust, a glass of water), Epstein is in fact describing a scene from Thomas Harper Ince's melodrama *The Honor of His House*, a movie far removed from any kind of "pure" cinema (Rancière 2001, 10).<sup>3</sup> Rancière thus concludes that Epstein's "pure" cinematic truth can emerge only when it is both grafted onto and opposed to the narrative principle. The story's Other can appear only within a relational structure encompassing a story.

This relational-oppositional structure can also be connected to a politics of (moving) images. Rancière writes: "Such is the dialectic inherent in the political montage of images. One of them must play the role of the reality that denounces the other's mirage." (2009, 85) Reality is thus supplanted by the "role" of reality, and this role can be assumed only in opposition to a predefined "mirage". Reality

and mirage, *studium* and *punctum*, narration and *photogénie* are thus always locked within a double structure where the one appears as the other's counterpart and, by the same token, depends on this other to emerge.

Rancière's writings on (moving) images thus hold significant value for a theory of the third figure of the archaic. As can be remembered, this figure was defined by its semantic content (mud, decay, corpses, etc.), its performative function (the decomposition of signifying practices), and its political role (anarchist destruction). Regarding the third figure's semantics, Rancière's writings point towards a de-essentialization. It is impossible to determine whether the third figure's abject power is an essential property, but it is certain that a widespread discourse endows it with such power. Furthermore, in terms of its performative dimension, the third figure of the archaic should be understood as a disruption of narrative codes. This disruption can take on many guises, but it can appear only as an oppositional, grafted structure within another narrative structure. Finally, to acquire its destructive political strength, the third figure of the archaic must engage with one or more discourses whose "mirages" must be refuted. If the third figure needs representational structures to assume the role of their contender, it also needs discursive constructs to fashion itself as their other. In other words, the third figure performatively subverts signifying structures by engaging in a dynamic relation with them. It "destroys" discursivity only insofar as it is presented as its other within the specific context of – in this case – a film. Equipped with a sharpened perspective on the third figure of the archaic, it now becomes possible to interpret some of its manifestations in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s.

## Notes

- 1 As demonstrated in this study's first part, the birth of social structures and that of language are almost without exception conceived of as taking place at the same moment. For Nietzsche, the *bellum omnium contra omnes* ends and social organization begins with a process of *naming*; for Bataille, the "incoherent barkings of desire" get substituted by language as soon as social organization is established through time-partitioning and work; for Rancière, the proto-political (and therefore social) field is established through a distancing from mere expressions of pleasure and pain, etc. Once again, I do not claim that there "truly" was a moment in which language and society were born simultaneously, I simply argue that the two are strongly connected within a widespread discourse.
- 2 A debate that is not essential for the development of the above-sketched argument but which is worth noting as part of contemporary scholarship on the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s is that on the Black Wave's relation to a humanist, critical Marxism of the *Praxis* type. The proposition that the radical *auteurs* of the 1960s were strongly influenced by Praxis-like philosophy was first put forward by Herbert Eagle in relation to Dušan Makavejev's filmmaking (1983, 132). The argument was then applied to the whole of the "movement" by Greg DeCuir Jr. (2011) and heavily criticized by Nebojša Jovanović (2011b) and Gal Kirn (2012). However, it would seem that it has not fully lost its allure: in 2014, Sarah Hamblin interpreted exactly Pavlović's hypothesis on anarchic revolutions as a key common feature of the Black Wave and the humanist Marxism of Praxis, for they both insisted on a "non-instrumentalized nature of revolutionary art" (2014, 33). As the

analysis performed above shows, there is absolutely nothing either humanist or Marxist in Pavlović's views on the revolution. His insistence on anarchy is not an obscure sign for an oppositional Marxist program; whether one likes it or not, it is what it is: a call to anarchy. As for humanism, Pavlović had a more than articulate opinion on it, which he expressed through the elegant sentence: "Humanism is in its foundations a sick thing." (1990, 55)

<sup>3</sup> Rancière wrongly attributes the film, which was directed by William C. de Mille; for the course of his argument, however, this is of no substantial meaning.

## 9 Beauty and the Well

### Dušan Makavejev's *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator*

#### 9.1 Positioning the Interpretation: Makavejev as Master of Montage and Joy

An impressive example of the elusive third figure of the archaic can be found in Dušan Makavejev's feature *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, 1967). The movie's complex narrative structure unfolds around a tension between progressive and regressive time. However, at the centre of this tension now stands an abject image that serves as a blank point around which the film attempts to develop its meanings. *Love Affair* can therefore be regarded as a film that revolves around a raw, naked image. As will be shown, this allows it to probe into various modes of discursive domination.

Before delving into this cluster of problems, the reception of Dušan Makavejev's *oeuvre* requires some attention. Makavejev suffered the good fortune of being depicted as the most – or at least one of the most – important Yugoslav filmmakers of all time. David W. Paul claimed already in 1983 that “Makavejev is the most radical filmmaker to have emerged in Eastern Europe” (1983, 10). The list of superlative descriptions has continued to expand since that moment: Arthur Paul stated that if Makavejev's films were not to exist, “film history would have had to invent them” (2001, 11); for Nina Power, Makavejev was simply the “most important director” and “lost prophet” of Yugoslavia (2010, 44); Dina Iordanova claimed that “his trademark subversive and satirical techniques have set the definitive standards for Balkan critical film-making” (2001, 96). Iordanova's claim was taken over by Lorraine Mortimer in her book-length study entitled *Terror and Joy: The Films of Dušan Makavejev* (2009).

It is usually asserted that the core of Makavejev's *oeuvre* consists of the four feature films he made in Yugoslavia between 1965 and 1971: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, 1965), *Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (*Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT*, 1967), *Innocence Unprotected* (*Nevinost bez zaštite*, 1968), and *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (*WR: Misterije organizma*, 1971). In the aftermath of a campaign led against the Black Wave, Makavejev emigrated from Yugoslavia in 1973. His following feature, *Sweet Movie* (1974), was a Canadian-French-West-German coproduction that triggered

DOI: 10.4324/9781003705208-14

This Chapter has been made available under a CC BY license.

off a scandal of international proportions (Mortimer 2009, 14; Power 2010, 43–44). Notwithstanding *Sweet Movie*'s relatively weak success, Makavejev continued to shoot films, although he partially abandoned the “radical” filmmaking he had been developing thus far.

Makavejev's “radicality” is usually associated with both a technique and a thematic cluster. Critics almost unanimously stress that Makavejev's 1960s and 1970s movies rely on a technique of collage or radicalized Eisensteinian intellectual montage (Cavell 1979, 313; Porton 2010, 133; Stankovic 2005, 389; Paul 2001, 11). Although these films do follow a fictional narrative thread, the diegesis is regularly interrupted by documentary footage, quotes from other films, mock-explanatory sequences, etc. Thematically, Makavejev's films circle around the motifs of permanent revolution, sexuality, and freedom (Mortimer 2009). He was a relentless partisan of the view that a true revolution should be liberatory, joyful, and fun. The tropes of “joy” (Mortimer 2009), “playfulness” (Porton 2010), or “*joie de vivre*” (Robinson 1971) have thus become cornerstones of the critical discourse on Makavejev.

This very crudely described critical discourse entails certain dangers. A predominant tendency in Makavejev scholarship is to rely on the concept of the *auteur*, which carries several implications. The sheer amount of critical attention his single films have attracted points to a discreet narrative of the artist's “development” and “decay”. The uncontested centre of attention was and still is *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*. A good example in this respect is Daniel Goulding's portrait of Makavejev in his study *Five Film-Makers*: Goulding's chapter on *WR* is more than twice as long as all the chapters dedicated to Makavejev's other films combined (Goulding 1994). From the perspective of an artist's personal development, Makavejev's films shot prior to *WR* could be regarded as leading towards the realized masterpiece, while *Sweet Movie* would be a fall into decadence, after which Makavejev had to abandon his technique of collage. Furthermore, the immense success of *WR* might have something to do with the fact that it explicitly addresses political questions, which is to be expected of the “most radical” *auteur* of Eastern Europe. This then leads towards the search for similar tropes in Makavejev's earlier and later films, as thematic consistency is expected of an *auteur*. In other words, *WR*'s motifs threaten to infect the whole of Makavejev's *oeuvre*.

The ensuing interpretation of *Love Affair* will therefore go against the grain of Makavejev scholarship in the sense that the movie will be interpreted fully independently of *WR*. This might lead to certain intentional omissions regarding similarities between the two works, but it is a necessary methodological step if the movie's strategies are to be assessed adequately.

A further consequence of the *auteur* approach is that it often relies on interviews with the author as authoritative sources of interpretation. This discreetly leads back towards the tropes of “joy”, “*joie de vivre*”, “playfulness”, etc. Makavejev is often quoted as charming or as advocating a libertarian discourse (a case in point would be Stanley Cavell's writings on the director), which is then transposed to interpretations of his films. However, the films themselves do not always align seamlessly with such readings.

To return to *WR* one last time, it is symptomatic to what extent critics remained blind to the semantics ascribed to its protagonist Milena. Inspired by the writings of Wilhelm Reich, Milena is a young militant for a revolution whose cornerstone is sexual emancipation. Due to her advocating free love as revolution and revolution as free love, Milena was interpreted as a figure critical of the rigid Stalinist legacy (Parvulescu 2009, 99), as a proponent of non-orthodox Yugoslav socialist self-management (Goulding 1994, 231), of a “revolution in permanent movement” (Power 2010, 49), or as a feminist (Hawkins 2014, 166). It would seem that Milena perfectly unites the call for a revolution with a plea for joy and personal freedom.

Nonetheless – and no matter Makavejev’s personal opinions – the film ascribes her dimensions rather opposite to what is described above. The first two things the viewer learns about Milena are that she has completed a Party course and has, thereupon, stopped having sex with her distinctly proletarian boyfriend. An official (if not dogmatic?) political education thus leads Milena away from “free love”. Furthermore, when Milena starts militating, the movie represents her as a distinctly authoritarian figure. The famous sequence of her delivering a speech from the balcony of her apartment building gradually transforms Milena into a figure shouting revolutionary slogans, accompanied by marching music and the roaring applause of the gathered crowd. In an exceptional interpretation of the scene, Richard Porton thus notes that Milena is being depicted as a “party hack”, while her “authoritarian paeans to sexual freedom pigeonhole her as a peculiarly repressed apostle of emancipatory desires.” (2010, 137) In other words, no matter the content of her speech – circling around the claim that revolution is impossible without free love – Milena is represented by the film exactly as a dogmatic, authoritarian figure.

Milena’s “peculiar repression” is worth further consideration. As has been noted, the peculiarity of this champion of free love lies therein that she does not engage in sex. However, there is one scene in the movie that shows her aroused. This scene depicts another speech, proffered by the Soviet ice skater and Milena’s crush Vladimir Ilyich (the reference to Lenin’s name is obvious). While the two walk along the banks of the Danube, Vladimir starts proffering a discourse that becomes ever more rigid and violent. They then stumble upon a stranded ship, Ilyich climbs the deck, strikes the pose of an agitator, and delivers a speech that ends with the conclusion that people should be mercilessly hit on their heads. A series of counter-shots shows Milena walking towards him as if hypnotized; at the moment when his discourse reaches its violent climax, she reaches him and grabs for his crotch.

Milena is thus quite unambiguously shown to eroticize authoritarianism; she thus takes part exactly in the process that Wilhelm Reich had attempted to unmask in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. But paradoxically, she uses Reich’s writings to construct her authoritarian position. The figure of Milena thus demonstrates that nothing is immune to eroticized authoritarian appropriation. Milena’s use of Reich’s writings – which allow her to position herself as a revolutionary in a post-revolutionary society – turns his theory into an eroticized revolutionary dogmatism. *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is thus a film on the impossibility of “true”, non-dogmatic revolution at least as much as it is a film on the possibility of a revolution based in a “*joie de vivre*”. This is not to say that Makavejev’s film is not

enjoyable, funny, or playful. Nevertheless, an over-accentuation of these aspects risks concealing those layers of meaning in his works which do not fit the image of a benevolent, compassionate freedom fighter.

Milena, the dogmatic anti-dogmatic, leads to a final dangerous tendency of Makavejev scholarship, namely to accentuate paradoxes and partially give up on interpretation. Joan Hawkins, for instance, stresses the “resistance to exegesis” (2014, 167) in Makavejev’s films, while Nevenka Stankovic highlights their perpetual “shifts in meaning” without any “fixed reality” (2005, 390). This view is by all means relevant: as with any film, it would be fully pointless to claim that there is *one* meaning to each of Makavejev’s works. Nevertheless, through regarding the mechanisms of montage as non-interpretable, this approach tends to favour a simple hermeneutics of single motifs or characters (for example, Vladimir Ilyich the ice-skater refers to Lenin and therefore depicts Soviet dogmatism). Consequently, it at least partially neglects those meanings and effects that are created by the collage-structure itself.

Slightly simplified, Makavejev criticism is thus characterized by the following dominant traits: it overtly or discreetly relies on the concept of the *auteur*; it usually regards *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* as Makavejev’s *chef d’oeuvre*; it accentuates three characteristics of Makavejev’s authorship: montage, joy/playfulness, and a strong interest in sexuality and the revolution. These elements now allow for a positioning of the ensuing interpretation of *Love Affair* against dominant Makavejev scholarship. This interpretation will intentionally avoid drawing on parallels with *WR* or interviews with Makavejev, since both approaches tend to lead to reductionist interpretations. Furthermore, the analysis will not only identify the represented temporalities in the film but also, it will show how the third figure of the archaic was used by Makavejev as a prime structural device. The gap between a non-interpretable collage and its interpretable elements should be bridged in this way. Finally, it will show that the revolution and sexuality do play a major role in Makavejev’s film; however, this role cannot be grasped without taking into account the meta-system of commentary the film provides on its own images.

## 9.2 *Love Affair*: The Elements of Its Mechanism

To allow for an orientation within the ensuing analysis, I will begin by describing *Love Affair*’s plot, narrative structure, and non-diegetic elements. The film recounts a rather simple story of love and death: the young switchboard operator Izabela Garodi meets the somewhat older sanitary inspector Ahmed Bušatlija on a Belgrade street. She invites him home, has a drink, then sex with him. This kicks off a relationship which lasts happily until Ahmed has to leave for the city of Niš on a long business trip. Left alone and bored, Izabela has an affair with a postman coworker. When Ahmed returns, Izabela is pregnant, though the movie does not clarify who the child’s father is. Ahmed is pleasantly surprised by this discovery, but Izabela chases him out of the flat while proclaiming that she is not going to be anybody’s slave and servant. Ahmed then goes on a drinking spree, Izabela finds him on the terrace of a local pub and tries to approach him, but he pushes her away. They then

engage in a chase through Belgrade, with Ahmed escaping and Izabela following him. Finally, they reach the “Roman Well” on Kalemegdan. Ahmed tries to jump into the water and commit suicide, Izabela attempts to stop him, falls into the well herself during their struggle and drowns. Some days later, the police find Ahmed sleeping in the bushes of a courtyard and arrest him for murder.

This seemingly simple story is recounted in a non-linear fashion: after an opening sequence that shows Izabela meeting Ahmed for the first time, Makavejev abruptly cuts to a scene showing a female body being retrieved from a well. The narration unfolds linearly from that moment on but is intersected by two scenes of Izabela’s autopsy. The greater part of the plot therefore develops as an investigation into how and why Izabela ended up dead in the well.

This “investigation” narrative is supported by several non-diegetic, “explanatory” sequences. Even before its narrative kicks off, the film opens with a lecture by the historically real Yugoslav sexologist Dr. Aleksandar Kostić. Kostić addresses the camera in a straightforward manner and is in no way connected with the film’s diegetic space; he will appear two more times during the film and interrupt its narrative flow. In addition to the sexologist, the criminologist Živojin Aleksić appears immediately after the well scene and delivers a lecture on modern criminological methods. Since Izabela’s death is, to a certain extent, a crime of passion, the two – addressing sexuality and murder – can be regarded as further modes of explaining the drowned corpse, paralleling the narrative one.

Furthermore, the film encompasses images, engravings, and inserts from other films, the most notorious of which is a sequence from Dziga Vertov’s *Enthusiasm: The Symphony of Donbass* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbasu*, 1931) in which Vertov himself reused footage stemming from Esther Shub’s *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927) (Kernan 1968, 43; Mortimer 2009, 102). Although this quote of a quote might seem quite radical, it in fact fulfils the rather traditional function of the camera “shying away” from sex and is firmly embedded within the film’s narration. Nevertheless, the embedded fragments do build up a code that not only loads diegetic sequences with unexpected meanings but also encompasses instructions on how to watch the film’s moving images.

The film also includes an incipit and a short poem about a rat who got poisoned by an old piece of cheese. Additionally, it constructs a complex system of relationships between sound and image: some narrative sequences are accompanied by a non-diegetic voice-over, others are entirely devoid of dialogue and non-diegetic music, while some suppress diegetic sounds, replacing them with non-diegetic music.

This dense “collage” structure’s semantic layers might be inexhaustible. Nonetheless, a central thread for the film’s interpretation is offered by the dead body in the well. Both the narrative and many of the non-narrative sequences in *Love Affair* seek to explain this central image. As Constantin Parvulescu poignantly argued: “Izabela eventually dies, and the intellectual stakes of the film emerge from the questions as to how and why this death occurs.” (2009, 93). Parvulescu further notes that Makavejev’s use of multiple explicative modes turns the viewer’s

attention towards the “functioning of investigative discourses” themselves (2009, 94–95). This last proposition can be expanded: the film questions not only investigatory discourses but also the (im)possibility of discursively dominating an object image. The ensuing analysis will therefore proceed in two steps: first, *Love Affair*’s explanatory discourses will be scrutinized, especially with regard to their temporal dimensions. After this, it will be demonstrated how on a meta-level the corpse in the well challenges these explanations as instances of discursive violence.

### 9.3 Priapus and the Peepshow

*Love Affair* begins with a prologue that is situated before its opening credits and comprises two elements: an incipit and a lecture by the sexologist Aleksandar Kostić. These two elements create a dense network of relations between time, sexuality, and the possibility of a revolution. The incipit reads: “Is there going to be a reform of man? Will the new man preserve some of his old organs?” The two questions, displayed in white letters against a black background, propose the vision of a radical future, a future whose revolutionary impetus was so strong that it fully remodelled the human being. Then Dr. Kostić gives a brief lecture on organs; from that moment on, it is clear that the implied organs are sexual in nature. Furthermore, there is a strong temporal dimension to Kostić’s lecture. If the incipit offered the dream of a “new man”, Kostić describes sexuality as very old, if not archaic. His lecture pivots around views on sexuality in “ancient times”, when it was celebrated without shame, as is best demonstrated by different phallic cults, such as that of the “phallobates” – priests who climbed 54 meter-high stone phalluses in the valley of the Euphrates.

Three engravings are inserted into Kostić’s lecture. The first shows an eagle that has a phallus in the place of its tale; the second shows a winged phallus; the third shows a woman riding a winged phallus, approximately as if it were a chariot. These engravings serve as illustrations to Kostić’s lecture and were in all probability taken from Richard Payne Knight’s 19th-century study *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and its Connections with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients*. The three engravings appear one after the other in Knight’s book and are described as a Roman sculpture found in Nîmes and “phallic figures, etc., found in England” (Knight 1894, XV).

As for the “phallobates”, Kostić’s (and, by extension, Makavejev’s) source can once again be identified with relative ease. David Frankfurter claims that the only description of these phallus-climbers can be found in Lucian’s text *De Dea Syria* (1990, 169). However, Frankfurter continues, there is no proof that the stone pillars that the Syrian priests climbed were either phallus-shaped or representations of phalluses (the name “phallobates” itself was invented by Lucian, and possibly ironically intoned). Rather, Lucian’s interpretation was influenced by the Roman Dionysian cult, which featured phallus-shaped altars upon which figurines were placed. In the ritual of priests climbing stone pillars, Lucian wanted to see these altars brought to life and monstrous proportions (Frankfurter 1990, 170).

These references firmly situate sexuality within the framework of ancient times, worship, rituals, and the Dionysian. The opening lines of Knight's discreetly quoted book are exemplary of this "archaic" discourse:

Men, considered collectively, are at all times the same animals [...]. Education and science may correct, refrain, and extend; *but neither can annihilate or create*: they may turn and embellish the currents; but can neither stop nor enlarge the springs, which [...] *return to their ancient channels*, when the causes that perverted them are withdrawn.

(1894, 13, my emphasis, AP)

Through the system of references mobilized by Kostić's lecture, a discourse on sexuality – itself old, if not outdated – is constructed, which fashions it as the final watershed against the "new man". Sexuality is a game of "ancient channels", which science and education can neither annihilate nor create. The film's prologue therefore hinges on a fundamental binary opposition between the archaic-sexual-cultic and the new-organless-revolutionary.

One last aspect of this complex opening sequence should be stressed. Kostić's lecture – as well as the illustrations accompanying it – is phallogocentric in the most literal sense imaginable. In Kostić's lecture, women appear only in the guise of pretty girls celebrating a giant phallus. The organ that needs to be preserved thus turns out to be strictly male.

The film's prologue elegantly anticipates the major axes upon which the ensuing narrative will rely: sexuality as temporality as (counter)revolution as phallogocentric perspective. However, by incorporating three forms not typically associated with classical cinema – written language on-screen, lecture-presentation, illustrations – it creates an uncertainty as to how *Love Affair* should be viewed (film-essay, mock-educational film?). To compensate for this uncertainty, *Love Affair*'s opening credits will serve as a brief manual on how the ensuing narrative can be conceived. Before even beginning, the love affair will therefore be defined in its basic semantics and in the modes through which it can be conceptualized.

The opening credits encompass a further series of engravings that intertwine with the cast's names in a regular rhythm. While some of these visual representations are simply scenes of sexual libertinage, others can be regarded as meta-images, tracing the modes through which the other explicit scenes can be interpreted. A recurring engraving depicts a naked Leda with the divine swan, thus once again relegating its sexual content into the sphere of the mythological. Another shows a woman reclining in an armchair with her pubic area exposed while a monk seems to be preaching with his back turned to her. This still image connects representations of nudity with moral outrage. A third engraving shows a man caught with his lover by another woman. Here, sexuality is depicted as the driving force of the basic (melo)dramatic triangular structure. Finally, the possibly most interesting engraving thematizes the male gaze. This engraving depicts a man pushing a large wooden box on wheels. Inside the box, a kneeling woman is shown in profile, naked from her waist down. The viewer can see the inside of the box since its side

was “removed” by the artist. Opposite the man pushing the box is another man who spies through a peephole, allowing him to acquire a view of the woman’s exposed genitalia. The viewer is thus faced with a bizarre, pre-modern peepshow which thematizes the very act of seeing: one observes the represented man observing the female nudity on display.

The opening credits do not only depict sexuality, they also offer ways of interpreting it: as the mythological and the grandiose (Leda); as morally unacceptable (the monk); as a basic melodramatic device (the adultery scene); as an act of male voyeurism (the peepshow). Even before the story begins, Makavejev thus presents several possible ways of viewing it; what is on display is not only nudity, but also ways of conceiving of nudity. The still images thus create a meta-layer with regard to the narrative: they offer ready interpretations of what is going to be seen and recounted in *Love Affair*. By the same token, they turn the rest of the film not only into the investigation of Izabela’s death, but also into an exploration of interpretational patterns.

In a next step, it will be demonstrated how Makavejev’s love story aligns with the interpretative framework outlined in the film’s opening sequences. After this, a close viewing of the central well scene will be attempted in order to show how a raw image can resist interpretative mechanisms. In a last step, it will be sketched out where these interpretative mechanisms fall short.

#### **9.4 Izabela and Ahmed: At the Right Place at the Wrong Time**

Within the film’s love story, four elements form a dense network: sexuality, temporality, ethnicity, and the gaze. The temporal paradoxes of Izabela and Ahmed’s relationship are introduced already in the film’s first narrative sequence, which ends with Izabela running into Ahmed at a crossroads in Belgrade. Before meeting Ahmed, Izabela is shown walking the busy city streets, first with her friend Ruža, then alone. As quite a few critics have noted (Mortimer 2009; Parvulescu 2009), the city and the two women are coded through the optics of a double modernity. Izabela and Ruža are representative of a modern leisure culture: during their walk, they get a pedicure, have their shoes polished, enjoy some food, and gossip about their international lovers (Ruža had an affair with the driver of the Abyssinian Embassy, while Izabela met an athlete during the European Championship in Athletics). These young, emancipated, urban women are supported by the city surroundings themselves: the streets are crowded and bustling with traffic, driving advertisements for toothpaste pass by, shop windows display an array of goods and services.

When the two young women stop by a shop window, this modernity gets contrasted with another. Ruža’s attention is captured by a portrait of Dragan Stojnić, a then-rising chansonnier star of Yugoslavia’s blooming pop-cultural industry. In the adjacent shop window, however, stands a portrait of Mao surrounded by children. The next shot shows Izabela walking past a giant Lenin portrait being hung on the façade of a building. The city is thus depicted as a meeting-space of two modernities: one encompasses leisure, consumption, and popular culture,

while the other is characterized by revolutionary and utopian sternness. The same dynamics of two intertwined modernities will be grafted onto Izabela and Ahmed's relationship.

Before entering this central aspect of the movie's symbolic strategy, a further remark on the opening scene is needed. Already in this first narrative sequence, the male gaze is thematized explicitly. Not only are several passersby shown turning to look provocatively at the two women, but also the spectators themselves get immersed into the interplay of gazes. At one point, a crowd hides Izabela from view, and the spectator strains to find her in the apparently messy shot. When she reappears, she is being given a long look over the shoulder by a young passerby. In this way, a connection is established between the viewer and the young man: both share an interest in not losing sight of Izabela in the crowded street. In other words, the spectator's gaze is being coded as distinctly male. This male gaze will be another cornerstone of the ensuing love affair.

To return to the love affair's multilayered temporality. As has been noted, Izabela, the urban, sexually emancipated woman, embodies a certain modernity. Ahmed explicitly thematizes this after their first night together by claiming that she is the first "modern woman" (*moderna ženska*) he had been with. He, on the other hand, is a prime bearer of the other, stern, revolutionary modernity. He is an orphan, "raised by the army", a sanitary inspector who leads a permanent battle against rats, and a member of the League of Communists. Ahmed's temporal aspect is made explicit in an emblematic scene: one day, he comes home with a gramophone, which he bought in order to play a record that was presented to his company as a present by "comrades from the GDR". He is then shown standing on the apartment balcony next to the gramophone, which plays Hans Eisler's song *Vorwärts die Zeit* (*Time, Advance*); the song's lyrics were taken from a poem by Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Izabela and Ahmed's relationship is thus coded as a convergence between two modernities; it is a meeting between the modern woman and the proponent of a merciless march into the utopian future. At the same time, however, their relationship is coded as a clash between two national stereotypes as well as a clash between the "good" and the "bad" archaic. In almost every scene showing Ahmed and Izabela's love-life, their ethnic backgrounds get accentuated. When they first meet, Ahmed cannot come to grips with Izabela's Hungarian family name, Garodi. After the first time they make love, Izabela stresses that she had been without a man for two months, which is a long time for a *Hungarian* woman. Ahmed refers to himself as "Turk", Izabela calls him Suleiman the Magnificent, etc.

Daniel Goulding did not fail to notice the insistence on this code in Makavejev's film; he interpreted it through a "Balkans" against "West" and "modern" against "traditional" optics:

Isabella [sic] is a member of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia, attempting to adopt a modern, liberated lifestyle free of Balkan male domination. [...] Ahmed is a member of the Moslem Slavic minority, its history rooted in five

centuries of Turkish rule, which represents the most traditional and conservative expression of a male-ordered and -dominated social structure.

(1994, 222)

Izabela the Hungarian and Ahmed the Muslim thus allegedly embody the opposition between modernity and tradition, as well as that between the West and the Balkans. This interpretation is not exactly convincing. Given the Cold War context in which the film was made, it is highly unlikely that Hungary – positioned on the other side of the Iron Curtain – would be seen as a metonymy for modernity or the West in relation to non-aligned Yugoslavia. More importantly, Izabela is not entirely or unequivocally coded as a figure of modernity.

Besides her being a “modern woman”, three threads intertwine in the character of Izabela: a surprisingly conservative concept of femininity, the aforementioned Hungarian ethnicity, and the good archaic. Through the interplay of these elements, the Hungarian woman is ascribed a role similar to that of the positive Gypsy stereotype. Far from representing the “West”, she is fashioned through the projection of a good vitality upon a minority identity. This projection will now be scrutinized more closely.

The mythical, archaic dimension of sexuality – thematized already by the film’s non-narrative opening – gets grafted on Izabela explicitly. This is strongly accentuated when Ahmed suddenly calls her Eve after they have made love in his apartment.<sup>1</sup> The parallel gets developed even further: Izabela/Eve is shown eating grapes, which she then feeds to Ahmed. Although the fruit is not exactly an apple, the scene’s connotations are clear: Izabela is associated with the first, mythological, tempting, and naked woman. But even besides this overt mythological allusion, Izabela is systematically fashioned as the representative of basic bodily principles, of a good vital mess.

This is best visible from Izabela’s relation to foods other than the aforementioned grapes. Izabela is represented eating in most of the scenes in which she appears, and her relation to nourishment is overtly associated with sexuality and reproduction. After the first night they spend together, Ahmed and Izabela get disturbed in the morning by the milkman. Somewhat reluctantly, Izabela goes to get the milk, dressed only in her knickers, with her breasts naked. She then carries two triangle-shaped cartons of milk back inside while covering her breasts with them; through this rather vulgar visual parallel, the cartons filled with milk “become” her breasts. She then (still mostly naked) feeds her black cat with some milk and has a drink herself.

Another sequence, rather uncritically celebrated by Mortimer (2009, 110), shows Izabela baking blueberry strudel. The baking process begins with an extreme close-up of two eggs standing next to each other. Visually, the eggs are explicitly associated with Izabela’s buttocks: the sequence preceding the two-eggs shot ended with a shot of her lying naked on a bed, belly down, with a black cat resting on her thighs. The shot provides a clear view of Izabela’s behind, which, in both form and framing, bears a striking visual resemblance to the arrangement of the eggs. The

strudel-baking sequence is then followed by the sexologist's second lecture, which shows him in front of a henhouse while holding an egg and describing it as the "perfect unit of reproduction".

Food is thus systematically related to reproduction: milk and breasts, buttocks and eggs, both establish connections between Izabela's feeding process and her capacity to serve as a "perfect unit of reproduction". Izabela is therefore depicted as a "primeval" woman in at least two senses. She is not only overtly associated with Eve, the first woman, but the symbolic links between her and her foods also fashion her as predominantly corporeal – almost like a combustion engine, incessantly turning milk and eggs into another kind of milk and eggs. It is no wonder that Izabela gets pregnant in the end, or, as her friend puts it, "visited by the stork".

At the contemporary state of development of feminist criticism, it is almost superfluous to point out that this depiction aligns perfectly with the ideologically charged, patriarchal semantics of the man/woman dichotomy, which fashions the female principle as corporeal, material, irrational, reproductive, as opposed to the male principle, which is one of reason, spirit, form, etc. Izabela is thus fashioned as the prime bearer of a "female" vitalism, which is firmly associated with the archaic through the reference to Eve, the first woman. And this "good" archaic is represented as a glorious affair. This is stressed by the fact that the strudel-baking sequence is accompanied by a march from Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, a musical number that is absurdly pompous for the occasion if it is regarded as a simple scene of domesticity. *Aida* is a fully appropriate accompaniment, however, if the scene is regarded as a celebration of the good, vital, female archaic.

Quite symptomatically, in opposition to Izabela's sexual and feeding frenzy, Ahmed is shown spending his free time installing a modern shower in her bathroom. The man is thus fashioned as a proponent of progress and hygiene. But the gender-constructs in *Love Affair* do not only define the properties of its characters, they also fashion a viewer's position. It was mentioned already with regard to the film's city-sequence that Makavejev coded the viewer's gaze as distinctly male by associating it with the young man's voyeurism. Furthermore, the motif of men observing female nudity was introduced into the film explicitly with the pre-modern peepshow engraving. Each of the three sex scenes further accentuates the dynamics of this gaze. After having sex with Ahmed for the first time, Izabela leaves the bed and overly flirts with the viewer by looking straight into the camera while exposing her nakedness. After their second sexual encounter, a close-up rests on Izabela's naked breast and is then associated with Ahmed's gaze through a counter-shot. When Izabela engages in sex with the postman<sup>2</sup> in a chair in her office, she is shown staring directly into the camera, thus confronting the spectator's gaze. However, Makavejev does not show the actual intercourse; instead, he cuts to a sequence taken from the early silent film *Nude-Sculptures – A Study-Film for Visual Artists (Akt-Skulpturen – Studienfilm für bildende Künstler, Oskar Messter, 1903)*.

*Love Affair* could thus be regarded as a prime example of a technique famously described by Laura Mulvey (1975): the film codes the camera as distinctly male through objectifying a woman's body as object of desire. The viewer is not only encouraged to identify with Ahmed's gaze (and desire) through the classical shot/

counter-shot structure, but also *he* is being overtly seduced by Izabela, who exposes her nakedness while flirting with the camera itself. However, the short silent film introduces a certain insecurity into this viewer's position. It shows two naked figures, a man and a woman, standing still in pre-arranged poses while being rotated on a crude pedestal in front of a black background. These poses are intercepted by titles suggesting what they represent. The first pose depicts Adam and Eve, thus further developing the film's archaic-mythical-sexual semantics. Adam and Eve are then followed by "Dance", "Rape of the Sabine Women", "Ariadne", and "Night".

To acquire an understanding of what this little piece of silent cinema is, a short detour through the history of cinematic nudeness is required. Valentine Robert claims that in the earliest days of cinema, nudity entered the screen in the following way: in the late 19th century, a prominent genre of cabaret entertainment were so-called *tableaux vivants*. A *tableau vivant* attempts to reconstruct onstage, as fatefully as possible, a famous painting: *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli, to take an example. Since nudes figure quite prominently in Western academic painting, *tableaux vivants* allowed for the exhibition of naked, primarily female bodies onstage, shrouded in the safety of the original artwork's cultural authority. What the spectator sees is not pornography; rather, it is refined entertainment for art-lovers and *connoisseurs* (Robert 2018). This technique was adopted by cinema: for instance, an 1899 Pathé catalogue entails the rubric "saucy scenes with a hot quality" featuring a "live" rendition of *The Birth of Venus* by William Bouguereau, as well as other "saucy" *tableaux vivants* (Robert 2018, 159). With his *Akt-Skulpturen*, Messter followed a slightly different but analogous path. His alibi for introducing full frontal nudity into the seventh art was not based in the representation of a renowned painting. Rather, the film was intended as a pedagogical tool, providing painters with poses and postures that would help them in the creation of future artworks.

This short insert therefore connotes not only the history of cinematic nudity but also a general history of nudity in the European visual arts, from film to painting and back. And film was not the first art-form in this tradition to code the viewer's gaze as male, nor was Laura Mulvey the first one to theorize on this process. Already in his seminal book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger articulated the somewhat generalized claim that the entire Western tradition of representing nudes (starting with the story of Adam and Eve!) resulted in women being systematically constructed as "objects of sight", continually "accompanied by their own image" (1972, 46–47). Further still, the image of the naked, preferably dead, woman became a prime stake in defining the very operations and capabilities of artistic expression.

It is this tradition that the corpse in the well subverts. Before examining this central image, I will briefly summarize the analysis undertaken thus far. It was shown that *Love Affair* unfolds a complex temporal structure. Already its prologue introduced a tension between the radically new (the man without organs) and the radically old (reproductive organs). This tension then developed within the film's narrative part into an interplay between two modernities and the first two figures of the archaic. Izabela was coded as the bearer of a modernity based

in leisure culture and sexual emancipation (*moderna ženska*), but this modernity turned out to be firmly intertwined with the “good” archaic of the mythical, corporeal, vital feminine. Ahmed, in his turn, was the proponent of another, stern, revolutionary modernity, but also the bearer of the bad, patriarchal archaic, which cannot cope with the liberation and temptations of “Eve”. However, Ahmed does not perform his role as representative of the bad archaic very well; the well will therefore have to assume this function. Finally, the good archaic of the Hungarian woman is presented in the film for a gaze that is coded as strictly male: she is the object of Ahmed’s desire, she presents herself for the camera, she is the focal point of the game of looks in the film. This coding, in its turn, was commented on by the film’s devices, starting with the meta-image of the peepshow and ending with the short silent film. The motif of “Eve” thus becomes a meeting place of two elements within the film: it is a) the symbol of a stereotypical, “primordial” femininity, and b) the meta-textual cipher for a genre and an artistic tradition of representing nudes (“Adam and Eve” of the silent film).

*Love Affair’s* central strategy resides in neither an affirmation of the good archaic, nor in a demonstration that the good archaic must perish at the hands of the bad archaic. Rather, the film develops on three different levels: on a first level, the love story works with the above-described codes and system of gazes. On a second level, these codes are exposed *as codes* through discreet commentary (the engraving, the silent film, but also the sexologist’s third lecture, in which he explicitly addresses the erotic-pornographic penchants of the European artistic tradition). On a third and final level, the movie introduces a central archaic image into its structure, an image that the applied and commented-on codes cannot appropriate: this is the corpse in the well.

### 9.5 Into the Well

As has been noted previously, in *Love Affair* the modernity/archaic complex was grafted upon Ahmed and Izabela. Izabela was the proponent of modernity as sexual emancipation, leisure culture, etc. She was also the bearer of an archaic based in good female vitality. Ahmed was, in turn, fashioned as the proponent of a stern revolutionary modernity (*Vorwärts die Zeit*) and of a bad, patriarchal, archaic social order. However, it has also been noted that Ahmed does not perform this second function the way he should. Although he is at certain points shown to be threatened by Izabela’s “modernity”, he never attempts to establish patriarchal authority. He is not jealous or suspicious upon returning from his business trip, and, most importantly, he does not really murder Izabela. Rather, he tries to escape from her and jump into the well himself; during their struggle, he pushes her into the water by accident. When Goulding describes him as a representative of “the most traditional and conservative expression of a male-ordered and -dominated social structure” in the Balkans, he in fact offers little to support his claim, besides the fact that Ahmed is a Muslim.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the argument is largely based in stereotypes which the film does not fully support.

One might argue that Makavejev anticipated this stereotypical viewer's perspective on Ahmed (in this respect, Goulding is not fully wrong), even more so because the film does work with an operative ethnic stereotype on Izabela's side of the equation. If Izabela is the passionate Hungarian, her Other must be the conservative, inhibited Muslim. But the film encompasses an ironic commentary on this interpretative perspective. By accusing Ahmed of being a proponent of the most traditional, male-dominated social model, the viewer makes the same mistake that the police make at the film's end: it is more than clear that the arrested Ahmed will never be able to prove that Izabela's death was an accident. For the police, the state of fact is clear: the jealous, patriarchal Muslim killed his woman. Makavejev thus at the same time hints at an interpretation (Ahmed is conservative, cannot handle Izabela and finally kills her) and inscribes this interpretation into his film as an – at least partially – wrong one. But more importantly, in *Love Affair*, the well itself, rather than Ahmed, becomes the bearer of the bad archaic, which surges as an accident or fate, as a sign of doomed love, or a return to the dark realm of chthonic spaces.

The semantics of Makavejev's well scene is extremely dense. There is nothing particularly archaic about Kalemegdan's "Roman Well" as such, besides the fact that it was already quite old at the time when the movie was shot. Probably constructed in the 18th century, the well got its name from an urban legend, ascribing its genesis to the Roman military settlement which was situated at the same location. Rather than being a simple archaic element, the well into which Izabela falls therefore symbolizes a longstanding urban tradition of Belgrade. However, the motif of a corpse in a well carries semantic layers that are quite at odds with urbanity. To take a somewhat anachronistic example, in Slobodan Šijan's cult film *The Marathon-Runners Run Their Lap of Honor* (*Maratonci trče počasni krug*, 1982), after an accidental murder, the protagonists try to dispose of the victim's corpse in a well by a village road. With the corpse already hanging off the well's edge, the group is suddenly confronted by an old, toothless peasant, who is not at all disturbed by the dead body but is terrified by the possibility of it landing in his well; as he explains, everyone in the area throws corpses into the well, and he no longer has the strength to clean it.

The throwing of a murder victim's corpse into a well is thus fashioned as a prime way of hiding crime in a *rural* environment, and quite logically so, since the modern city normally lacks wells. If the well itself represents a long urban tradition, the corpse in the well – a distinct motif of "village" criminality – could therefore be regarded as representative of "rurbanization", of a bad neither-nor state between city and village. The corpse thus pollutes the urban tradition of the (Roman) well and is in itself a prime representative of the bad archaic. But the well is a *topos* that mobilizes further archaic connotations. Dejan Ajdačić (2007) notes that in the framework of South Slavic folklore, it is a highly symbolically charged, distinctly chthonic motif, often a passage into the underworld, where time stands still.

Makavejev's scene plays on this multiple semantics of the well. The sequence begins with a handheld following shot of an old man who is lighting his way through

a dark, damp underground passage with a torch. He then throws the torch into the well, and the camera lingers on its descent and slowly extinguishing flames. During this rather long shot, the man is shown crossing paths with a smiling boy wearing a white shirt and what seems to be an ivy wreath on his head. Then the setting suddenly changes: the old man, the torch, and the boy are gone, and the well's opening is now illuminated by a spotlight, while a diver under full equipment is descending it, helped by several police officers. The diver retrieves Izabela's corpse from the black water and carries it laboriously up the well. Until this point, the sequence develops in perfect silence; all one can hear is the flickering of the torch and the rustling of modern equipment, echoing in the hollow, stony space.

The sequence is thus at least partially narratively incoherent. It is not at all clear how the old man, the boy, and the torch were suddenly supplanted by the fully equipped forces of law and order. If one were to consider this change an ellipsis, it would remain a fact that the temporal jump is introduced with extreme discretion, even illogically. What is evident, however, is that the two sources of light temporally contrast each other: the distinctly premodern flickering of the torch stands in stark contrast to the spotlight's electric buzz. The first two parts of the well sequence can therefore be regarded almost as a repetition, a variation on the ways in which the well can be illuminated. The well is, quite literally, shown first in a pre-modern and then in a modern light. From the very beginning, the well is therefore represented as a space of ambiguous, overlapping temporal orders.

A final element of the well sequence's first part remains enigmatic: the boy with the wreath. The camera catches a view of him almost as if he had appeared in the shot by accident; his curious and satisfied smile is in stark contrast with the scene's content; it is not at all clear what a child would be doing at the sight of a murder investigation. The wreath on the boy's head might be the only clue to a possible interpretation: the ivy wreath was usually worn during festivities dedicated to Dionysus, it is a sign of Bacchus. This reference is supported by the fact that Dionysus did make his first, discreet appearance in the film through the sexologist's mention of the phallobates. Furthermore, it would conform to the film's penchant to mythologize both sexuality and the space of the well. Izabela, Eve, the bodily, vital element, must ultimately pay the due for her Dionysian, sexually insatiable nature and lose her life within the well's chthonic space. The little god smiles at this development.

The well thus intervenes into the film's archaic/modern complex in several ways. It becomes a surrogate for Ahmed's unsuccessful appertaining to the bad archaic by taking the modern woman's life. But if Izabela's modernity was to a large extent a front behind which her mythical sexual vitalism was concealed, the well intervenes into this semantic layer as well: it turns the good mythical, chthonic, Dionysian element into a space of death.

This intervention touches on the film's depiction of modernity in a by now well-known way. On the one hand, it suggests that Izabela's modernity must regress into the archaic, mythical game of vitality and death. On the other hand, it fully discredits revolutionary, organless modernity by drawing its now crazed, drunk representative, Ahmed, into the chthonic space of the well. Pop-cultural modernity

is thus fashioned as a façade that conceals Izabela's true archaic nature, while revolutionary modernity cannot mould or control this overpowering chthonic force; rather, it gets drawn into its game and finally has to destroy it by renouncing rationality and entering the underworld (Ahmed is the first one to descend the well's long spiral staircase). In other words, there is no fully emancipated modernity in *Love Affair*; neither leisure nor revolution can suppress a surge of the archaic into the love story's modern context.

In previously used terms, Makavejev's film would thus be a strange balancing act between the moves 1 and 2. Through the same gesture, it fashions the archaic layer underpinning its modernity as good female vitality and as an inherently destructive force. Not only can Belgrade's seeming modernity never suppress the undercurrent of the archaic, but also, this undercurrent is both glorious and monstrous. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that this symbolic structure is based on a stereotyped projection. It is the Hungarian woman, too close to sex, reproduction, feeding, and matter, who draws the utopian revolutionary into the underworld. Also, the projection is offered to a male gaze: the intended viewer perceiving the chaos of female matter is a man.

Then Izabela's corpse emerges out of the water. The corpse is shown in two complex following shots, first carried in the arms of a police officer, then on a stretcher. The viewer first sees Izabela's head, hanging upside-down from the policeman's shoulder, her hair wet and her face covered in mud. Then the officer's body hides her almost fully from view as he changes the pose in which he is carrying her. Izabela becomes visible once again when her body is being arranged on the stretcher; however, the arms of police officers performing this task once again hide a clear view of her. Finally, one can see her being carried on the stretcher, her face in close-up, still dirty, with wide-open dead eyes.

As soon as the corpse emerges, the scene's silence is broken by the criminologist's lecture. After a brief elaboration on possible methods of hiding corpses, his voice-over describes techniques by means of which a body can be embellished posthumously. Živojin Aleksić, the criminologist, explains: "The head is cleaned of layers of mud and seaweed, the hair is combed, the wounds stitched together, the face covered with make-up. The eyelids are opened, and the eyes are injected with glycerine to acquire a natural glow." This little elaboration is in stark contrast with what can be seen on-screen: Izabela is neither combed nor cleaned, her eyes are devoid of all glow. The brutal truth of the image thus strongly contradicts the proffered embellishing discourse.

From this description of the drowned corpse, it becomes evident that it meets all three criteria required of the third figure of the archaic, as defined in the previous chapter: it is a) abject in its content; b) shown in a way that disturbs pregnant narration (due to the handheld, shaky following shots, the darkness in the well's staircase, the obstacles which come in the camera's way, the dirt on Izabela's face, the viewer has difficulty discerning the sequence's main narrative information, namely who the dead person is); and c) contrasted to a discourse of mirage or masking (the corpse is the ugly visual truth opposed to the beautiful illusion created by the verbally articulated techniques).

This small visual truth of the abject, female, dead body – opposed to an acousmatic, male voice offering ways that could render her beautiful – mobilizes an extremely wide discursive field and leads straight back to the film’s male gaze. As can be remembered, Makavejev’s film made use of the male gaze while simultaneously addressing it as a (meta)topic. Furthermore, this gaze was the carrier of the mythical projection that encompassed the feminine, bodily, material, sexual, etc. Izabela’s corpse’s opposition to an embellishing discourse can be fully understood only when this set of relations is scrutinized in all its nuances.

In a ground-breaking study on nudity in Western art, entitled *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, Lynda Nead put forth the following proposition:

The female nude is not simply one subject among a whole range of subjects that artists have chosen to depict within the history of art [...]. The representation of the female body within the forms and frames of high art is a metaphor for the value and significance of art generally. It symbolizes the transformation of the base matter of nature into the elevated forms of culture and the spirit.

(1992, 2)

Since women are stereotypically perceived as primarily bodily beings – a case in point for Izabela, as described above – and since their bodies are, within a patriarchal tradition of thought, regarded as “unformed, undifferentiated matter” (Nead 1992, 2), the depiction of a nude woman becomes a privileged subject, for it connotes the very power of art – that of sublating materiality into the realms of form. The woman is thus not only accompanied by an image of herself – as claimed by Berger and exemplified by Izabela, who must repeatedly expose herself and flirt with the camera – but also, the translation of female nudity into an image is a fundamental meeting point between a gendered discourse, a gaze, and aesthetics.

Furthermore, if the nude female body is understood as materiality that needs to be translated into form, this materiality becomes even more pronounced when the woman in question is dead, thus entirely stripped of reason or spirit. While analysing poeticizations of the female body in Mallarmé’s poetry, Barbara Johnson observed: “Beauty is a female body: naked, immobile and mute. Indeed, the beauty of female muteness and reification reaches its highest pitch when the woman in question is dead.” (1985, 273) Elisabeth Bronfen pushed this argument further by articulating it against the gaze. As a “pure body”, the dead woman becomes an “empty, endless projection screen, fully a mirror” (2015, 91). On the surface of this projection-screen, cultural norms can be negotiated. More importantly, it becomes entirely available to the male gaze, which asserts its power by projecting beauty onto it (Bronfen 2015, 105). The dead woman is “the most poetic subject” – as E.A. Poe claimed – because she poses the greatest challenge to the operations of (male) art, thus also proving its supreme power.

If one revisits Makavejev’s corpse and love story equipped with these optics, not only the film’s system but also the dead woman’s intervention appear in a new light. First, on the film’s narrative level, the living and often naked Izabela is used as a stereotypical projection screen, which can be described perfectly in Bronfen’s

terms: “chaotic [...], seductive [...], Eve” (2015, 91). This projection is decisively shaped by gender, but it also works with an ethnic stereotype (the Hungarian) and a temporal construct – the vitalism of the good archaic. In order to develop its full strength, the projection thus combines gender with a chrono-geo-politics. Further still, the projection is a function of the dominating, male gaze: only if it fashions its object as messy, material, and corporeal can this gaze prove its power by rendering it a beautiful and desirable image. The projection and the gaze are therefore strictly interdependent.

On a meta-level, however, this gaze was made into the film’s topic. From the archaic peepshow to the silent *Akt-Figuren*, Makavejev left clues exactly to the tradition of nudes to which Nead refers: a tradition in which the male gaze dominates female nudity, either by enclosing it in a box or by shaping it into an immobile posture. Makavejev’s meta-images thus actively inscribe *Love Affair* into a tradition of gendered looking: the dominating male gaze is at the same time a device and a topic in the film.

The corpse, in its turn, does not only thematize the projection and its mechanisms but also, it challenges them. The projection is advocated in the well sequence by the criminologist’s voice: it is a man’s voice instructing us how to turn a dead woman into a desirable, beautiful object of display. But this time, the projection breaks down: the corpse stubbornly refuses to become beautiful. The moment when the projection should reach its apotheosis – it finally disposes of a dead female body – is thus radically lacking. Not only is the body on the stretcher represented as dirty and repulsive, but also, the whole sequence is shot in a distinctly disorderly way. As was noted, the camera trembles, one keeps losing sight of the shot’s main object, this object never forms a coherent body but is a fragmentary display of details (hair, face, leg, hands). In the well sequence, there is no sublation of the female corpse into formal purity.

The abject corpse thus challenges discursivity by becoming the Other of a phallogentric gaze. In opposition to the voice-over’s projection, but also to the very broad cultural operations that this voice metonymically represents – and which are traced out in the rest of the film – it is fashioned as a true image that stands in opposition to mirages. And this is not one moment among others in *Love Affair*. As was noted previously, the main intellectual stake of the whole film is to solve the mystery of the corpse in the well. Further still, from its very beginning – with the phallobates and the proto-peepshow – the whole film was fashioned exactly as a phallogentric projection. When Izabela’s corpse refuses to become orderly and beautiful, it therefore discreetly refutes the entire film’s logic. In this oppositional sense, it stands in for the real, the true, and the non-discursive, as opposed to projective constructs.

*Love Affair* thus applies a system of projections associated with the male gaze, comments on this system (the peepshow, the silent film, the voice-over), and exposes it as inefficient: the corpse refuses to become a screen upon which beauty or poeticity can be projected. This central refusal is supported by the fact that the film’s narrative discreetly falters as well. The love affair itself does not perform its role particularly efficiently: Izabela’s unfaithfulness remains undiscovered, it does

not produce the fit of jealous rage that would be expected of it. The stereotypical melodramatic plot – which usually relies on the seductive, sexually emancipated woman and the tempted man who kills her in the end (the plot of Mérimée’s *Carmen*, for example) – is thus hinted at in the film, but it never acquires its “correct” resolution.

The film’s central, raw image thus systematically defies successful discursivization: it refuses both to serve as a projection screen and to be explained narratively. Through this gesture, the whole system of the film’s projections starts to crumble: the woman as eternal bodily mess (Izabela) and the man as progress and order (Ahmed) are but part of the dysfunctional *dispositif* of the imaginary male gaze. By the same token, the game of the archaic in *Love Affair* gets displaced. This game would approximately suggest that behind the facets of Yugoslav modernity, there always lurks stern traditionalism or the eternal Eve, under modern Belgrade, the corpse in the well. This system is now being exposed as part of a projective mechanism which cannot appropriate its own central image.

Nevertheless, this subversive gesture should not be overestimated. In order to become the little piece of abject reality that challenges projections, Izabela must still die at the hands of the “chthonic” powers to which the projection had bound her. Furthermore, the corpse is in no simple way “real” (Eva Ras most certainly did not die in the well). Rather, it remains a projection screen, but a paradoxical one – one upon which the very inappropriateness of the film’s projective mechanisms is being projected. In other words, it becomes a *sign* of resistance to the game of gazes, gender identities, and the archaic.

## 9.6 Conclusions

Dušan Makavejev’s *Love Affair* employs many of the symbolic strategies identified in other Yugoslav films of the 1960s that engage with the archaic. To take an example, the Hungarian woman plays a role similar to that of the Gypsy musician. In both cases, a minority identity serves as the projection-screen for a dream of uninhibited sensuality. What distinguishes Makavejev’s film, however, is that it encompasses a meta-level which makes this complex projection into its explicit topic. From *Love Affair*’s very beginning, the male gaze and the phallogocentric perspective are presented as the central components of a complex mechanism. This mechanism invents the eternally female, connects it to an ethnic stereotype, ascribes it a temporality, turns this temporality into a means of demonstrating that full modernity is impossible even in Yugoslavia’s capital, and disciplines “Eve” by turning her into an image accessible to desire.

The film thus comments on a dense network of discursive and representational domination that interlocks gender constructs, ethnic constructs, and temporal constructs. Further still, it constructs a central abject image and uses it to demonstrate that the above-sketched mechanism is flawed on multiple levels. The corpse refuses the criminologist’s projection, it does not even become a visually coherent object; neither the investigation nor the love affair can fully and correctly explain its appearance. The film thus traces a complex mechanism of discursive

domination, comments on this mechanism, and establishes a border to its validity through the “reality” of the bloated, muddy, seaweed-covered corpse.

If the moves 1 and 2 of the archaic participate in the discursive game of domination, the move 3 seeks to expose and undermine this game by constructing an intolerable image that marks its borders. This is not to say that the intolerable image stands outside representation as a simple given. Rather, it is structurally positioned in such a way that it becomes a projection-screen for the shortcomings of dominating projections. In the following chapter, it will be further demonstrated that a tension between this conditional “real” and the mechanisms of power-laden semiotization is a crucial stake in the game of the archaic.

## Notes

- 1 The name Eve (Eva) denotes the mythological first woman, but it also introduces a meta-fictional game into the film: Izabela is played by the actress Eva Ras. Eve therefore really is the actress’s name (in the opening city-scene, this game is accentuated by a little joke: Izabela – Eva Ras – is shown walking past a billboard advertising a show featuring Eva Ras).
- 2 Once again, there is a distinctly mythological ring to the postman lover; being a deliverer of telegrams, he describes himself as a messenger of “joy and death”, and, to a certain extent, he delivers both to Izabela.
- 3 Ahmed is never shown practicing his faith and would, as someone raised by the JNA (Yugoslav People’s Army: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija), probably be an atheist.

# 10 Yet Another Effort Yugoslavs, If You Would Become Communists

## Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works*

### 10.1 Introduction

Želimir Žilnik's film *Early Works* (*Rani radovi*) is a rich repository of "raw" images. Released in 1969, the film was a major international success: it won the "Golden Bear" at the Berlinale of the same year. Despite this accomplishment, *Early Works* faced significant difficulties at home. The film was banned and Žilnik – a lawyer by vocation – defended it in court himself. Although he managed to overturn the verdict, he was expelled from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and he never attained widespread distribution for his work. In order to continue his filmmaking career, Žilnik had to emigrate a few years later; he left Yugoslavia for West Germany, where he once again ran into trouble with the authorities. Upon directing *Paradise. An Imperialist Tragicomedy* (*Paradies. Eine imperialistische Tragikomödie*, 1976) – a film alluding to the faked kidnapping of right-wing politician Peter Lorenz by an anarchist terrorist group, which Lorenz used in an electoral campaign (Mazierska 2013, 142) – Žilnik was visited by the police, his apartment was searched, and though he could not be linked to terrorism, he was accused of tax fraud. Alexander Kluge negotiated that the charges against Žilnik be dropped on the condition that he leave the country (Ćurlin, Dević, and Ilić 2020, 68). Upon returning to Yugoslavia, Žilnik first worked for television and then returned to directing cinefilms.

The long time span of Žilnik's career, his incessant insistence on social critique and representations of the marginalized, his fragmentary style combining *cinéma vérité* with Brechtian dramaturgy, his merciless political stance that stirred spirits both "East" and "West", all made him into a model *auteur* of both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinema. It therefore comes as no surprise that his first feature attracted wide critical attention. Before analysing how the film connects raw images to the revolution, I will therefore first provide a brief summary of its structure and the critical discourse surrounding it.

Set in then-contemporary Yugoslavia, the film tells the story of Jugoslava, a young woman, and her three companions – Marko, Dragiša, and Kruno – who take on the role of communist agitators on a mission to enlighten the population. After Jugoslava's father comes home drunk one day and starts beating her, she decides to leave, picks up her comrades, and their quest kicks off. They first travel to the

countryside, where they preach on the idiocy of village life, on culture in the sign of the hammer and the sickle, on birth control and women's emancipation. But their efforts fail miserably when the peasants respond by beating them, dragging them through mud, and gang-raping Jugoslava. The group then decides to share the fate of workers: they find employment in a cement factory. But the workers seem uninterested in their revolutionary rhetoric, Jugoslava cannot handle the hard work, and their housing conditions are intolerable. Disappointed, the group disbands, and Jugoslava returns to her parents' home. However, her three frustrated companions find her, shoot her, and burn her body with a Molotov cocktail.

This plot is often regarded as reflecting the student demonstrations that took place in Belgrade in June 1968 (DeCuir 2011; Vuković 2022a). The students rose against a "red bourgeoisie" and a betrayal of communism, and the protests were depicted by Žilnik himself as a "call to restore socialism to its roots" (2018, 186). *Early Works'* protagonists, who set out to raise revolutionary consciousness in an allegedly post-revolutionary society, are at least partially reminiscent of the revolted students, calling for a return to core socialist values. Furthermore, Žilnik himself was present at the protests and shot a documentary on them, entitled *June Turmoil (Lipanjska gibanja, 1968)*. This documentary was occasionally screened as a double bill with *Early Works* (Vuković 2022a, 250), thus further accentuating the link between the student youth and the feature's fictional protagonists.

Another reference to the protests can be found in the film's very title: *Early Works* was also the title of a Yugoslav edition of Marx and Engels' early writings, which comprised – among others – Marx's letters to Ruge, *On the Jewish Question*, and *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, as well as Engels' *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*. Quite in accordance with the "back to roots" pathos of the student movement (largely inspired by the then prominent "Praxis" group of Yugoslav Marxist philosophers), the book had somewhat of a cult status in the framework of this oppositional intellectual scene. A return to the "roots" of socialism was to be a return to the roots of Marxism as well, to Marx and Engels' first, earliest insights.

Žilnik's political allusions do not stop here. The leader of the film's revolutionary group is not named Jugoslava by accident: as numerous critics have noted (Aleksić 2013; Mazierska 2013; Beard 2019; DeCuir 2011; Vuković 2022a), her name turns the film's protagonist into a metonym for Yugoslavia itself. The young revolutionary's failure to revive the lost Yugoslav revolutionary spirit thus allegorically turns into a death verdict not only for her but also for Yugoslav society at large.

This failure is related to yet another major axis of Žilnik's film, which is often described by critics as a clash between revolutionary rhetoric and a disobedient reality (Buden 2010; Dimitrijević 2010). To return to Marx and Engels' *Early Works*: Žilnik did not only use fragments from the book as speeches delivered by his young protagonists (along with fragments of *The Communist Manifesto* and of *Capital*), but also, he presented the two philosophers as "co-authors" of the film's dialogues in its opening credits. But even when they are not overtly citing Marx or Engels, Žilnik's revolutionaries almost fully rely on a rhetoric of revolutionary slogans, often delivered in a rather theatrical acting style, which accentuates their

artificiality and, in many cases, their inappropriateness to the given situation. To take the most blatant example, while driving through a village, Jugoslava proclaims through a bullhorn that peasants, stuck in the idiocy of their traditional life, will necessarily die out in socialism. As was mentioned before, the peasants do not take this diagnosis particularly well. *Early Works* would thus suggest that the revolution fails because it is an inappropriate attempt at a pre-defined, discursive domination over a reality that in no way intends to comply with the revolutionaries' verbal wishes.

The ways in which “reality” resists discourse in Žilnik’s film will be examined in detail later. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the film’s protagonists should be regarded as sheer bearers of revolutionary discourse, rather than psychological individuals. Their actions and decisions are fully motivated by this discourse, one learns almost nothing about their personal backgrounds or feelings; to a certain extent, this group of youths could be regarded as a caricature of the maxim that “the private is political”.

A substitution of psychology with overaccentuated rhetoric points towards yet another well-documented aspect of *Early Works*: its “Brechtian” structure (Mazierska 2013; Beard 2019). As Angelos Koutsourakis pointed out, “Brechtian” cinema was – especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s – firmly associated with a set of formal practices. The three most common such practices were “direct address to the camera, non-psychological acting, and non-linear narrative” (2018, 5). All three figure prominently in *Early Works*. Already in the film’s opening sequence, first Jugoslava, then her little sister, address the camera directly. The film’s narrative is linear with regard to the temporal succession of its episodes, but these episodes are only loosely linked together, which makes it hard for the viewer to comprehensively reconstruct the film’s diegetic spatial-temporal structure. As was noted previously, revolutionary slogans and formulas – the film’s main means of verbal expression – distance the actors from a Stanislavskian model of psychological realism. Furthermore, the film is at several points interrupted by intertitles, the first of which reads “Political Theatre”. On the one hand, this intertitle can be regarded as an overt allusion to Brecht, the master of political theatre; on the other hand, the procedure itself is “Brechtian”. Brecht claimed that the forgoing of intertitles was a “deplorable habit” of sound film. In his view, subtitles should continue to be used not only as a means of segmenting a film into chapters but also as a mechanism for interrupting dramatic continuity and thus establishing “epic flow” (Brecht 2000, 132).

Apparently in contrast to its “Brechtian” devices, the film also relies on mock-documentary techniques. As Danijela Beard put it, *Early Works* “draws heavily on a documentary aesthetic, using handheld camerawork, natural lighting, real locations, and non-professional actors, [...] evocative of *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema.” (2019, 102) The fact that many of the film’s scenes look messy, partially or fully improvised, reliant on elements and characters “found” during the group’s journey, stands in contrast to the rigid rhetoric of its protagonists. Žilnik’s mock-documentary techniques represent the film’s images – its “reality” – as a series of chance events and encounters that unfold in front of the watchful camera and stand

in stark opposition to the pre-defined verbal, ideological constructs by means of which the revolutionary group attempts to introduce order into chaos. The conflict between revolutionary rhetoric (or ideology) and reality is thus reflected by the film's formal aspects, its clashes between words and images.

*Early Works* thus draws significantly on two elements that do not appear for the first time in this study. First, it poses the question of the (im)possibility of revolution in Yugoslavia. In a very different manner, this question was posed already by *When You Hear the Bells* and *Macedonian Bloody Wedding*. Second, the film once again poses the question of discursive domination over a reality represented by "raw", "naked" images, as was the case with *Love Affair*. In the ensuing analysis, the temporal aspects of *Early Works*' failed revolution will be scrutinized. Upon this, a dynamics of "raw" images is going to be articulated against revolutionary rhetoric.

## 10.2 The Phantom Revolution

Jugoslava's, Kruno's, Dragiša's, and Marko's revolutionary efforts introduce a double temporality into *Early Works*. Although the film is set in late 1960s Yugoslavia, its temporal structure largely relies on a tension between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary time. Two brief remarks that Žilnik himself made in an interview with Nenad Prelog, published in *Omladinski tjednik* in 1969, are indicative in this regard. When asked about the goals of *Early Works*, Žilnik answered that the film "pleads for a preparation of the people for a possible all-encompassing people's war (*opštenarodni rat*)" (1969, 69). Furthermore, when asked who the target audience is, Žilnik replied: "The film is intended for the youth, as well as old fighters (*stari borci*), since it addresses the experiences of both" (1969, 69).

The plea to prepare for an all-encompassing people's war can, of course, be related to fears sparked by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Nevertheless, it also overtly references the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle of the Second World War, which was usually described exactly as an all-encompassing people's war. The appeal to prepare for another such war therefore implied that, at least to a certain extent, the revolution had not succeeded, that one was still stuck in a state that is going to require wide revolutionary efforts. The reference to old fighters' experiences (in the period's jargon, "old fighter" was synonymous with "partisan") can be read in a similar light. As noted above, *Early Works*' young protagonists are reminiscent of the revolted students of 1968. But if their experience is commensurable with that of Second World War partisans ("old fighters"), this would once again imply that the film's protagonists move through a space in which the revolution still needs to happen, a space that has remained essentially unchanged.

If one now turns to the film itself, it becomes evident that it relies on this pre-revolutionary/post-revolutionary paradox. As mentioned earlier, in the film's opening sequence, Jugoslava and her little sister address the camera directly. The little sister offers the following diagnosis: "We live as hard as our people in old Yugoslavia. Before the war, our dad used to live like this." From its very beginning,

the film therefore implies that, at least for some, no revolutionary change had taken place. To this, Jugoslava adds one single sentence: “As if I don’t want all of us to live better.” What she wants to fight is therefore a bad past, the bad life of “old Yugoslavia”, which refuses to disappear, despite the efforts of revolutionaries who had fought it already some two and a half decades previously. Jugoslava’s fight is fashioned as one with her contemporary surroundings only insofar as these surroundings are *not* contemporary, as they appertain to a bad, backward past.

In the opening sequence, this bad past is accentuated in yet another way: intersected with the two sisters’ diagnoses are shots showing their father digging a cesspit, presumably in their house’s courtyard. Not only are these shots abject in nature – the father is covered in a combination of mud and faeces – but they also accentuate the absence of modern living conditions. Plumbing is evidently a luxury Jugoslava’s family does not have; the father is helped in his work by a horse, not machinery.

These unbearable, backward living conditions then prompt Jugoslava to act: she leaves home, assembles her group, and starts her revolutionary mission. From the very beginning, this mission is coded as being temporally at odds with its surroundings. The group uses a car, a Citroën 2CV, as their means of revolutionary transport. Although one of the men protests that one should “go among the people on foot”, the young revolutionaries’ fear that driving a car will alienate them from “the people” proves unfounded: in most scenes where it appears, the car is completely incapable of driving.

Initially, the car is shown being transported over an overflowing river on a wooden raft, operated by the group by means of oars. When it appears again, the gang is pushing the car up a hill: the motor cannot cope with the slant. When their own efforts fail, they find a pair of horses and use them to drag the car to the hill’s top as if it were a cart or a chariot. The car – the revolution’s vehicle – must systematically rely on fully premodern forces (wooden raft, muscle power, oars, and horses) in order to move. Finally, the car manages to drive into a village, where the group will start their enlightenment activities. However, almost instantly, it gets stuck in ankle-deep mud. The group is then shown in a long series of shots, trying to get it to move again, while the wheels, which turn in vain, spray mud all over them.

The car thus enables an interplay between modernity and the (bad) archaic, coded through a “Balkan” landscape of untamed, overflowing water, seemingly hostile hills, and deep, sticky mud. The car either gets stuck in these surroundings, where modern infrastructure is lacking, or it must be transported itself by premodern means (horses, carts, ferries, oars). In other words, the car’s inability to move accentuates that the protagonists have entered not only a premodern, pre-revolutionary space but also a space with a distinctly “Balkan” ring to it, with its endless, all-prevailing mud.

Furthermore, Greg DeCuir claimed that in *Early Works*, the car becomes a symbol of the revolution itself (2011, 116). It is, therefore, no surprise that the inhabitants of the space where the car repeatedly breaks down do not align with the group’s revolutionary ideals. First, Jugoslava holds a lecture on birth control

and women's emancipation, which pivots around the claim that even socialist revolutions did not manage to destroy a patriarchy where the woman takes on herself the painful role of the proletariat. Jugoslava finishes in a hopeful tone: a third, technological revolution, towards which society is presently heading, will definitely liberate women and make them rule in a decade or two. Jugoslava's hopes therefore lie in a future that is radical but reachable from the perspective of a post-revolutionary socialist society. Her audience, in turn, does not look as if it were particularly close to this wished-for temporal plane. Jugoslava is being stared at by a group of village women, their heads wrapped in scarves, their clothes ragged and chaste, their shoulders bent, their arms uniformly folded in their laps, their faces showing traces of confusion and fear; these women are ridiculously far from the "third, technological" revolution and rather firmly in the grip of a rural patriarchy. Jugoslava's lecture therefore seems radically out of place.

In the following sequence, Jugoslava is shown standing in a niche of the exterior wall of a building that seems to be a decaying church. Fist in the air, she denounces all "self-proclaimed, unintelligible art", calls for a cultural revolution, and demands the submission of all culture to the rule of the hammer and sickle. The shots that follow mock-illustrate this request. They show three performances by the village's inhabitants: first a toothless young man imitates animal sounds, then a local "strongman" lifts a large log, finally a boy in rags performs a peculiar step-dance. On the one hand, this "culture from below", reminiscent of circus attractions, has little to do with an ideological program of the hammer and the sickle. On the other hand, it is reminiscent of a pre-modern, pre-mediatised, pre-commodified popular culture based in little attractions performed by the closed-off village community for its own enjoyment. Once again, the surroundings are temporally at odds with Jugoslava's revolutionary program, and the time-lag discloses her slogans as ridiculous in the given, backward context.

After this, the young revolutionaries are shown driving through the village in their car (which has finally been made functional, although Dragiša still needs to push it a little bit), with Jugoslava proclaiming through its window by means of a bullhorn:

Comrades peasants, aware of the resistances we will encounter, we feel obliged to point out to you that you are going to go under and that your ruin is impossible to stop. All vital forces struggle against the idiocy of rural life, and you are stuck in it up to your throats. Although the classics claim that you are a class that is going to die out through the development of productive forces [...] in this transitional period we opt for an alliance between poor peasants and workers. We are with you; be with us!

Besides the obviously absurd contrast between Jugoslava's diagnosis and call for unity, her revolutionary discourse relies on two temporal markers. First, there is the highly industrialized future, in which peasants are bound to die out. Second, although this future is mercilessly and unstopably approaching, it is not yet at hand, thus the "transitional" period. However, the next shot accentuates that not

even this transitional “alliance” is at hand: it shows the group beaten and Jugoslava raped by peasants. This scene once again unfolds in deep mud, that almost conventional signifier of idiotic, Balkan, rural life, caricatured already in Lazić’s *Poor Mary*.

Instead of a march towards the radical, industrial future, the two juxtaposed scenes thus connote a regression even with regard to the “transitional” period. The peasants are not at all inclined to enter the proposed alliance; rather, they respond with savage (sexual) violence. Jugoslava’s efforts in the village are thus doomed to fail due to a temporal rift: while her discourse incessantly traces out a radical future (the third, technological revolution, the dying out of peasants), her surroundings attest to a quite radical past, one of narrowmindedness, poverty, decay, mud, and violence. If the car could not cope with the Balkan landscape, Jugoslava’s futuristic visions cannot cope with a Balkan backwardness.

*Early Works*’ temporal paradox thus acquires the following contours: in a post-revolutionary society, Jugoslava is crying out for a further revolution, for yet another revolutionary effort. But this society – at least in its rural aspect – shows no signs of being post-revolutionary; in fact, it exhibits very few signs of general modernity (one encompassing asphalted roads, cleanliness, the taming of overflowing rivers, etc.). For this reason, the *post*-revolutionary effort must assume the position of a revolutionary effort taking place in a *pre*-revolutionary society. The inability to realize that she is operating in an inappropriate (post-revolutionary) timeframe dooms Jugoslava to fail ridiculously. Furthermore, the bad time-lag ascribes the gang of four a position similar to that of pre-Second World War communists, since the surroundings in which they operate do not show the slightest sign of being touched by a socialist revolution. In other words, while presuming that their revolutionary activity is taking them into a future, the four companions are in fact travelling into the past.<sup>1</sup>

Since an alliance with the peasants fails utterly, the group must take a break. After this, the second part of their quest begins: they decide to share the fate of workers, the proletariat, the prime revolutionary force. However, the working conditions they are confronted with are terrible: the sequence representing the work experience in a cement factory is drowned in the noise of heavy machinery, dust and dirt are ever-present, Jugoslava faints due to the too harsh conditions. Additionally, the workers are fully uninterested in the group’s revolutionary efforts: upon their shift’s end, Kruno tries to address the workers and rouse their revolutionary spirits, but to no avail. Marko therefore concludes at one point: “Whoever suffers this deserves everything that is thrown upon him!” Quite evidently, the revolution has changed neither the working conditions nor the passive consciousness of the Yugoslav proletariat.

In a later sequence, the gang of four is shown sharing lodgings with the factory workers; here, another game of the present, past, and future emerges. The workers are lodged in an old castle, which Jugoslava describes as a count’s abode (*grofovski dvorac*). Surely enough, workers sleeping in a castle is an exemplary sign of the expropriation of the ruling classes and of a successful revolution. However, the building is in terrible condition, numerous workers sleep on crude beds in one room,

not even undressing or taking their dirty boots off. Žilnik accentuates the misery of the castle's inhabitants through long, hand-held close-ups lingering on their dirty, torn clothes, crude, ragged beds, and tired faces. To this, he contrasts shots depicting a grandiose architecture in decay: a half destroyed, monumental entry staircase, windows with rosettes, richly carved stone balustrades, tiles representing an idyllic feudal life in a toilet, a winter garden with smashed windows.

It would thus seem that the revolution destroyed an oppressive order but also an order that was capable of producing (architectural) beauty. As a result, the castle was transformed into a peculiar kind of pigsty, as the revolted Jugoslava puts it while walking along the castle's balustrade: "In a count's castle, you live like pigs. As if the revolution resided therein that workers clog the plumbing and enjoy their own smell." Instead of introducing progress, the (failed) revolution is therefore depicted as regressive even with regard to a feudal order. While this order knew how to produce splendour at least for some, the post-revolutionary society turned this splendour into an abode for animal-like worker-pigs. In its practical effects, what seemed to be the progressive movement into a socialist future – the workers occupying the castle – turns out to be a regression into an animal-like state, inferior even to a feudal order.

The temporal ambiguity of the (Yugoslav) revolution is explicitly addressed in two shots preceding the castle sequence. These shots show Jugoslava riding on the side of a locomotive, once again striking a revolutionary pose, with her fist in the air. In the first shot, over the image, one can read in white letters: "Revolutions are the locomotives of history." However, in this shot, the locomotive is shown moving backwards. Only in the second shot is it shown moving forwards and towards the camera. The locomotive's movement – combined with a quote by Karl Marx, and Jugoslava, the symbol of Yugoslavia – thus explicitly addresses the temporal paradox of Yugoslav revolutionary time. It is both a movement backwards, into the past, and a movement forwards, into the future.

A true post-revolutionary time is therefore systematically contested in *Early Works*' vision of Yugoslav society: the key representatives of this society are either endless mud, violence, and rape or pig-like workers who make use of no plumbing (just like Jugoslava's father in "old Yugoslavia"). In *Early Works*, a progressive time is either fully absent (the village adventure) or discreetly regressive (the castle adventure). In light of the terminology used thus far, *Early Works* thus firmly relies on a logic of the "move 2": the film depicts an allegedly post-revolutionary society as thoroughly backward and stuck in a bad past. This deviant temporality systematically breaks the spirits of those who act on the premise that they are introducing yet another revolutionary effort into an already post-revolutionary society.

To outline its temporal diagnosis, the film employs motifs that have recurred throughout the course of this study: the lack of roads, endless mud, sexual violence, man-like pigs. It would be almost superfluous to point out once again that these tropes strongly communicate with a Balkanist discourse. *Early Works* is thus, at least to a certain extent, Balkanist in demonstrating that a truly progressive, revolutionary time necessarily gets stuck in Yugoslavia's thick mud. Nonetheless, the movie explicitly opposes representations of backwardness to attempts at

discursive, “ideological” domination. This confrontation is embodied in the previously described clash between the protagonists’ rhetoric and their surroundings. The bad, backward archaic does not serve the sole function of demonstrating that a revolution has failed in Yugoslavia, but also, it probes into the possibility of dominating “reality” through words. It is systematically opposed to the protagonists’ discourse; or, as Pavle Levi put it, the bad archaic forces “reality as discursively constructed” to acknowledge its own limitations (2010, 118). Thus, the move 2 gives way to the move 3 in the game of the archaic.

### 10.3 Yet Another Gang-Rape: Revolution and the Real

*Early Works*’ master of revolutionary slogans is Jugoslava, the young, emancipated, molested, and finally murdered heroine. Jugoslava has attracted critical attention in recent years: she is a rare example of a female protagonist in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s; moreover, she is not only endowed with agency but also actively advocates for an explicitly feminist stance. Although Vesi Vuković criticizes Žilnik for sexually objectifying his heroine and for having her raped and murdered, she acknowledges that he successfully portrayed a “strong-minded, independent, modern woman” (2022a, 268). Tatjana Aleksić goes a step further and describes Jugoslava as “the feminine embodiment of a liberating life principle” (2013, 112).

Jugoslava is without any doubt the group’s most fervent revolutionary; she is sexually emancipated and sleeps with all three of her companions, thus connoting the 1960s sexual revolution; as was noted, her activism explicitly addresses issues of patriarchy and the struggle for women’s rights. At the same time, however, she serves as the primary representative of ideological, revolutionary dogmatism, which is systematically ridiculed through its contrast with the surrounding reality. This contrast is accentuated both thematically and through the film’s formal procedures.

If one briefly revisits the scenes analysed with regard to the film’s temporal structure, this technique becomes apparent. Quite a few critics claimed that Jugoslava’s efforts at emancipating the village’s women fail due to them being too firmly within patriarchy’s grip. Ewa Mazierska notes that “the women, brought up in a patriarchal society, come across as suspicious or unreceptive to pro-choice indoctrination.” (2013, 129) Whereas the women’s visual staging supports this claim, the scene’s verbal aspects discreetly subvert it. In a mock-documentary fashion, the women pose Jugoslava a series of questions. Vesi Vuković notes that the questions were probably prepared for the women by Žilnik himself (2022a, 261) and elegantly enumerates the main points of interest: the women want to know “whether the pill or coil is a better contraceptive, how many times a woman can have abortion and remain healthy, how old should a woman be when she gives birth and whether health is affected if the couple controls reproduction with coitus interruptus.” (2022a) Jugoslava, in turn, starts her presentation by identifying two fundamental modes of contraception: the unmarried (including herself) should not engage in intercourse; and the married should apply “different means” (“razna sredstva”). She then goes on to contextualize her claims within the framework of leftist political movements and finally offers her solution: the third, technological revolution.

A paradox thus appears: the questions posed by the assembled village women are not exactly ridiculous. Their concerns about birth control and abortion are, in fact, less conservative than Jugoslava's recommendation of premarital chastity. It would therefore be wrong to take Žilnik's visual cues at face value and dismiss the village women as plagued by a rampant ignorance. Furthermore, their questions render Jugoslava's answer ridiculous: instead of answering any of their practical concerns, she puts all her hope in the foggy notion of a "third revolution".

The scene thus unfolds through a series of contradictions. In a first step, the fierce, emancipated Jugoslava is contrasted to the stuttering village women wrapped in their scarves. This initial opposition creates the expectation that Jugoslava will preach in vain to an audience that cannot understand her. But in a second step, the scene's verbal content contests this interpretative framework: the women, stuck in the idiocy of rural life, have quite practical, not exactly naïve concerns, while Jugoslava is incapable of responding to these concerns with anything but a vague utopia. Finally, this verbal utopia is also contested by the mock-documentary technique in which the scene was shot. Through being represented in a documentary manner, the village women acquire the status of an inherently real, non-staged, by-chance-encountered element.<sup>2</sup> It is this encounter with "reality" that hollows out the hypertrophied revolutionary discourse.

A similar set of contradictions appears in relation to Jugoslava's call for a cultural revolution. First, on a meta-level, her wish to abolish "all self-proclaimed unintelligible art" is explicitly ironic; the film in which she appears certainly risked being associated with the "self-proclaimed, unintelligible art" label. Jugoslava is therefore fully oblivious to her meta-filmic surroundings. Second, her approach is overtly dogmatic; this is stressed by her insistence that culture should be held in the firm grasp of the hammer and the sickle. Contrasted with this dogmatism is the previously described series of small village performances. While Jugoslava's speech is depicted as unnatural and staged – she is shown by a low-angle shot, framed by a niche in the building's wall, striking a pose, staring into the distance, shouting out slogans – the sequence of village attractions is once again depicted in a mock-documentary manner. The performers stare into the camera and overtly perform for it; through a series of counter-shots, their audience is shown cheering, the first performer interrupts his act and addresses somebody outside the frame. The mode in which these performances are represented once again creates the impression that they are elements of a "spontaneous" village life, encountered by chance; in other words, they are the "real" that the revolutionary discourse fails to master.

Thus, one approaches the film's central raw image, the one that destroys Jugoslava's attempt to form an alliance with the peasants. As previously demonstrated, the muddy violence and rape serve as a juxtaposition to Jugoslava's dogmatic discourse. Consequently, they once again acquire the role of "truth" as opposed to the illusions of rhetoric, as if the film would suggest that *this* is what you *really* get when you go out into the countryside and preach on an alliance between dying-out peasants and workers.

The beating-up and rape sequence can, therefore, be regarded almost as a revenge of reality over discourse (one should not forget that Jugoslava is not

exactly fashioned as a psychological individual; as noted in the chapter's introduction, she is much closer to illustrating a principle of pure revolutionary rhetoric). And once again, in order to be traced out, this pure "reality" needs to acquire abject contours. The four revolutionaries are savagely molested, their bodies are almost ritualistically smeared with mud in the middle of the village's central street, as if in a gesture of public humiliation. The scene's soundtrack is stripped of all human sounds: both perpetrators and victims are fully devoid of voice; all one can hear is the squelching of the sticky, deep mud. Finally, the scene was shot with a hand-held camera and its shots leave the impression of being radically messy: characters drop in and out of the frame; as the fight progresses, the camera's movements become ever more rapid, switching from one beaten revolutionary to another, at times at a pace that hardly allows the viewer to discern the shot's content.

The film's central, violent image thus complies with all three previously defined characteristics of "raw" images. As "reality", it is opposed to discourse (that of Jugoslava's diagnosis and cry for alliance). It is abject in content: in it, violence and sexual assault combine with a desecration in mud. Finally, the way it was shot disturbs tidy narration: the viewer can only hardly orient herself in the hand-held shots, the sequence is unfunctionally long. These formal properties further suggest that the fight was not staged, that it happened spontaneously, with the camera being so bewildered by it that it could not decide which violent aspect to follow (thus the rapid hand-held movements).

But in *Early Works*, reality's revenge does not end on the village road. Jugoslava's death itself can be viewed as the final fulfilment of this code. After the factory and castle experience, a disappointed Jugoslava abandons her companions and returns to her parental home, only to be found there and murdered. This last violent outburst can be interpreted in two obvious ways: on one hand, the men must get rid of the emancipated woman who threatens their masculinity. On the other hand, Jugoslava's death can be considered a prophetic diagnosis of the failure of the Yugoslav experiment. This second semantic layer is supported by the film's last intertitle, a quote by Saint-Just, saying, "Those who make revolutions only halfway only dig their own graves." Combined with the symbolic value of Jugoslava's name, the quote would suggest not only that the film's heroine had to die because her revolution failed midway, but also that Yugoslavia will suffer the same fate.

However, the quote introduces an ambiguity into the film's last scene: Saint-Just was, and still is, largely perceived as the "archangel of Terror", as the exemplary dogmatic revolutionary. Besides his view on unfinished revolutions, Saint-Just is also famous for his definition of the Republic: "What constitutes a Republic is the total destruction of all that opposes it." (1908, 231) In *Early Works*, the quote might therefore bemoan Jugoslava's, and by extension, Yugoslavia's failed revolution. Nevertheless, it once again ties Jugoslava to a revolutionary dogmatism, and one that can quite easily descend into a murderous frenzy. It is thus not at all clear whether the demise of this principle is worth bemoaning.

Furthermore, it might not be irrelevant that Jugoslava is shot dead by only one of the three frustrated men: Marko. Although the three men are extremely bleak characters and function as a homogenous group throughout the film, Marko

is at least somewhat differentiated from Dragiša and Kruno. He is the only one who is unambiguously characterized as a worker: before their adventure begins, Jugoslava and Dragiša pick him up at his workplace in a factory.<sup>3</sup> He is also the last one with whom Jugoslava has sex. Before they engage in intercourse in the cement factory's dressing room's shower, Marko reproaches Jugoslava that they never talk and that he does not see such major differences between them. The remark indicates that he feels looked down upon by Jugoslava. When she finally engages in sex with him, she makes her motives unmistakably clear: she is doing it only because Engels claimed that "sincere carnal love still exists only among the proletariat".

This claim triggers a dense set of issues. First, Jugoslava is evidently exoticizing the working class, stereotypically regarded as less sexually inhibited than the bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup> Marko's insistence on being Jugoslava's equal before they engage in sex suggests that he is aware of her patronizing gaze. Second, Jugoslava's rhetoric introduces a paradoxical logic into the scene: it characterizes the shower intercourse as an example of spontaneous, proletarian, and uninhibited carnal love. But *at the same time*, it turns this "spontaneity" into part of a pre-established programme. There can be spontaneity only because "the classics" insisted that there must be spontaneity. Foreshadowing *WR*'s Milena – who turned Reichian, non-dogmatic, revolutionary sexuality into dogma – Jugoslava can attain "sincere carnal love" only because this was ordered by Engels.

The proletariat and spontaneity are thus dominated by discourse. "Sincere carnal love" must appear because the revolutionary discourse demands it. The proletariat is a pig but also a good lover, uninhibited in his physical presence. Through a double gesture, Jugoslava, the representative of Yugoslavia and of the revolution, both exoticizes the worker and forces "reality" – the spontaneous game of desire in the shower – to obey discourse. When Marko kills her at the film's end, this last violent act can at least partially be regarded as a revenge of the proletariat, whom the rigid revolutionary could not approach except through stereotypes. At the same time, it is the final revenge of a reality that was incessantly forced to comply with discursive constructs.

#### **10.4 The Revolution's Crust**

At this point, a brief summary of the analysis carried out so far might prove helpful. Žilnik's attempt to graft the experience of "old fighters" onto that of the 1968 student protesters introduced a curious temporal structure into his film. This temporality can at least partially be explained contextually: in the aftermath of 1968, across international leftist movements, the question of how to proceed was being actively debated. The film was thus made at a point characterized not only by concerns about how to mobilize for a successful revolution but also by a questioning of the social utopia that is to be produced by this revolution. And to a large extent, this questioning movement failed. The protests in France lost their momentum, Czechoslovakia was occupied by Warsaw Pact troops, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution culminated in a major historical disaster.

The topic of radical young revolutionaries whose efforts utterly fail was therefore not specifically Yugoslav in 1969. However, the Yugoslav context was relatively specific in two regards. On the one hand, it was a socialist context, a context where the revolution had already taken place. On the other hand, it was an overtly anti-Stalinist context, ever since 1948. The two major axes of struggle were therefore at least partially absent: neither capitalism nor Stalinist dogmatism was exactly at hand as an enemy. What *Early Works* attests to is a different fear: a fear that one is actually still stuck in “old” Yugoslavia, that living conditions have not changed, that not only the revolution but also a broader modernization has not managed to truly transform or even touch upon society. For this reason, the young revolutionaries, striving for a revision of the socialist project, must take on themselves the role of pre-revolutionary agitators, roaming a pre-socialist and partially pre-modern world. The fear of “socialism gone wrong” is thus primarily presented as an anxiety about one’s own modernity and the very feasibility of revolution in the backward, Balkan context of Yugoslavia.

*Early Works* thus strongly relies on the move 2 of the archaic: it exposes the fact that in Yugoslavia, the “old centuries” have not disappeared at all, that they still permeate every phenomenon and break all revolutionary efforts. Since it replaces a post-revolutionary revolution with a hopeless struggle against a bad stasis, *Early Works* can be regarded as a prime example of what Zoran Samardzija described as “negative aesthetics”, one that is “sceptical of historical change and the idea of formulating a historical conscience” (2025, 17). However, *Early Works*’ “negativity” does not exhaust itself on this level. Žilnik’s film poses another fundamental question regarding the revolution. How can the revolution avoid sliding towards pre-established (discursive) constructs that make it lose touch with singular reality? This conflictual relationship was accentuated by the film’s formal procedures, by the conflicts it staged between its quasi-documentary, “found” images and a discourse largely based in quotes. To a certain extent, the conflict between revolution and reality was coded by Žilnik as one between discourse and images, with discourse representing the revolutionary illusion and images representing naked truth.

This dichotomy is reminiscent of Živojin Pavlović’s views on revolutions and the anarchic potential of “arche-images”. As can be remembered, Pavlović claimed that revolutions are essentially “anarchist” acts, based on a “biological necessity”: through striving for pure change, they mirror life’s fundamental principle. Pavlović also argued that these anarchic, instinctual surges almost instantly get moulded into “crusts”, into ideological and discursive constructs. The anarchic, savage surge thus rapidly disappears beneath its crusts.

The arche-image, in its turn, was assigned the political function of destroying crusts; it should shock the viewer in ways that will not allow her to retreat into the safety of discursive constructs. This is, in Pavlović’s view, the arche-image’s truly revolutionary potential. The logic of revolutions as “crusts”, and of raw images enacting their revenge on these crusts, is a central concern of *Early Works*. In a first step, the film poses the question of how a revolution can regain impetus within a post-revolutionary society. In a second step, it exposes this new effort as already petrified into discursive crusts – the young revolutionaries’ slogans. In a third step,

it lets “reality” have its revenge on the revolution’s crusts. Paradoxically, the rapid camera movements depicting the savage village violence would thus be more “revolutionary” than Jugoslava’s lectures. In both form and content, they attempt to destroy the tidy “crusts” dominating fundamental, “biological” surges. This is how the move 2 (anxiety over one’s modernity) slides towards the move 3 in *Early Works*. Not only is the backward village world one where “crusts” are relatively weak and where a raw combination of violence and sexuality can easily make its appearance, but also, this primordial cruelty is – within the film’s structure – explicitly directed against discourse. To tackle the revolution freezing into crusts, the backward world must be radicalized into a world of naked surges, of full social disintegration; Boris Buden was, therefore, quite to the point when he claimed that Žilnik’s “blackness” resides in an “ontological” fear of society’s “total absence” (2010, 43–44).

At this point, the fundamental logic, but also the inherent shortcomings of a politics based in the “move 3” of the game of the archaic become apparent. The move 3 makes use of the same elements applied by the moves 1 and 2: mud, violence, and sexual assault are recurring tropes in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s and are not unique to *Early Works*. However, in films that rely on the logic of move 3, these elements are positioned as discourse’s Other, as “raw” reality. In other words, although the motifs remain the same, their *function* changes. Makavejev’s corpse stands in opposition to a dominating, embellishing male discourse; Žilnik’s mud and violence exercise their revenge on revolutionary “crusts”. It is this oppositional potential that is of essential importance for a politics of aesthetics based in the move 3. Furthermore, this change in function is without exception accentuated by formal devices: the hand-held, fragmented shots of Izabela’s body, Žilnik’s rapid, aggressive camera movements, etc.

In all aforementioned cases, discursive mechanisms and techniques of visibility were represented as *dispositifs* of power. The violence of the move 3 is therefore directed at the films’ characters, but at the same time, it is also directed against mechanisms of representation complicit with power. Here, the rape of Jugoslava is exemplary: within *Early Works*’ system, this is not only an act of violence against a young, beautiful woman but also an act of violence against discursive domination and the formal procedures that govern orderly filmic representation. The move 3 in the game of the archaic is therefore political in the sense that it challenges the violence inherent in mechanisms of representation by employing its own radicalized, “real” violence. Somewhat simplified, the move 3 is without exception a violent revenge of “reality” over representation. This gesture is quite radical and can in no way be reduced to a struggle with Yugoslav censorship or daily politics. It has been shown regarding *Love Affair* that some of the contested, violent mechanisms of representation had nothing to do with a specifically Yugoslav context (a male coding of the viewer’s gaze, to take an example). This partially holds true for *Early Works* as well: its questioning of a revolution freezing into “crusts” is articulated in a Yugoslav context but can be regarded as a rather universal concern.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the archaic “reality” that is supposed to execute the revenge points to certain weaknesses of move 3. As was repeatedly emphasized, archaic “reality”

is endowed with its non-symbolic, subversive potential *by* and *within* a discursive formation. It therefore comes as no surprise that Pavlović's theory – as well as Žilnik's practice – can readily be translated into Nietzschean terms, as analysed in the first chapter of this study. As can be remembered, Nietzsche insisted on a double articulation of the visible: first, there is the pre-conceptual flow of images; then, this flow is dominated by concepts, which tame the raw visual magma. The arche-image would almost perfectly translate into Nietzsche's "original flow": although remaining an image, it would destroy the conceptual framework (the "crusts") governing its perception. And since this conceptual framework is tied to the birth of social hierarchy, its destruction would be a subversive, anarchist act.

However, the destructive potential that the third figure of the archaic acquires in this way ties it closely to a specific set of images, predominantly those of sexuality, death, and violence (the "fundamental", anti-social drives). In other words, the singularly "real" becomes another paradigm of motifs. And this paradigm stands in dangerous proximity to Balkanist representations. Violent clashes between Eros and Thanatos, between the frenzy of weddings and funerals, were shown to be typical elements of the seductively uninhibited, yet dangerously uncivilized, Yugoslav Balkans. On top of that, in its insistence on violence and sexuality, the third figure of the archaic easily slides into radically misogynist representations. To return to Jugoslava, the equation can always be reversed: even though her rape symbolizes reality taking revenge on the revolution's "crusts", what is depicted is still the rape of an emancipated woman, seemingly the most likely fate she can suffer within the framework of Yugoslav 1960s cinema.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the fact that *these* images connote the "real" is "programmed" by the discursive formation of the archaic. But this programming forces individual instances of the third figure into a uniform paradigm, whose elements begin to resemble Balkanist *clichés* and misogynist fantasies.

To formulate this problem in yet another way: what sets the third figure of the archaic apart from the first and second figures is its function within a film, its opposition to signifying practices. But at the same time, the third figure must be expressed through similar, if not identical, motifs. The endless mud in *Early Works* thus takes on a function different from that of the mud in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* or *The Birch Tree*. In Žilnik's film, it does not simply characterize a backward, exotic world; rather, it is the element in which an aggressive rhetoric gets stuck. However, when regarded as part of the broader paradigm of mud – so characteristic of cinematic depictions of 1960s Yugoslavia – it inevitably slips back into the *cliché*. It clearly is yet another example of an excessive interest in mud, overtly mocked by *Poor Mary* already in 1968. Within the film's system, Jugoslava's rape is surely enough fashioned as a revenge of reality over discourse, but on an intertextual level, it once again communicates with the overabundance of rape scenes characteristic of the period's cinema.<sup>7</sup> Vuković is therefore certainly right to criticize Žilnik's treatment of his rebellious heroine. In other words, what functions as the move 3 on the level of an individual film (the archaic as the destruction of signification) can easily slide back towards the move 2 on an intertextual level (the archaic as part of a regressive Balkan paradigm of untamed drives, sexual violence, mud, etc.).

By contesting the revolution's crusts through arche-images, Žilnik was thus compelled to approach Balkanism. The socialist society had "really" remained one of

violence and rape in the mud. The only element that could be called upon to resist discursive violence was yet another radical form of violence: that of the destructive, pre-social, instinctual, abject. The tone of some of the reviews of *Early Works* that appeared after the film had won the Golden Bear in 1969 echoed this double-bind of discursive and “real” violence. These reviews characterized the film as based in an “abysmal pessimism” (Kotschenreuther 1969), as “very sad” (Strunz 1969), as “bitter-ironic” (Reitze 1969), as a work exceeding in “roughness and madness” (Niehoff 1969).

### **10.5 *Post Scriptum*: Political Theatre**

*Early Works*’ “abysmal pessimism” resides in the following double bind: a) a revolution inevitably turns into “crusts” that attempt to violently shape reality; b) this violence can only be countered by yet another violence: that of “reality”, traced out as radically destructive and abject. A final question arises at this point: where does this leave the film with regard to political theatre and its master, Bertolt Brecht? The film’s double bind would postulate a certain fatalism: the conflict between a revolution and oppositional, archaic “reality” is one without positive traits; it simply clashes one form of violence against another. Although executed through Brechtian techniques – as described at the beginning of this analysis – this conflict is not exactly in accordance with a Brechtian outlook. In Brechtian “political theatre”, alienation effects acquire a pedagogical role: they suggest that things do not necessarily need to be the way they are.

If there is a “pedagogy” to *Early Works*, it is one that addresses the fundamental relationship between word and image, discourse and “reality”. The film’s main interest lies in a confrontation between arche-images and revolutionary slogans. However, this hardly exhausts the numerous relationships between word and image that *Early Works* encompasses. To take an example: the scene introduced by the intertitle “Political Theatre” begins with Dragiša, Marko, and Jugoslava entering a workshop where Kruno is producing Molotov cocktails. Being an inexperienced revolutionary, Dragiša lights a cigarette. Kruno warns him agitatedly to extinguish it, and Dragiša throws the cigarette butt to the floor, where it makes a puddle of gasoline burst into flame. To this Jugoslava exclaims: “From a spark, a flame will ignite!” The little accident is thus turned into a symbol of the revolution: Jugoslava’s group is the spark that will ignite the revolution’s flame. On this occasion, the process of discursive domination therefore *does work*. Jugoslava’s words successfully turn the little, contingent accident into a symbol. In this scene, the relationship between word and image is the exact opposite of “reality’s revenge”: the sequence shows that it is possible to turn visual contingency into verbal symbols.

The first sexual encounter between Jugoslava and Dragiša offers yet another variation. In order to loosen him up, Jugoslava proposes to read to Dragiša. What she reads is one of Marx’s letters to Ruge, thematizing shame as a first step towards political activity. While Jugoslava reads the paragraph, Dragiša is shown taking his shirt off repeatedly in seven consecutive shots, exemplary of a repetitive narrative procedure in Gerard Genette’s sense of the term. The seven shots connote both Dragiša’s reluctance to get naked and his later promise to make love to Jugoslava seven times during one night; they therefore illustrate both his shame and his loss of shame. What

the images represent is contradictory to what the text states content-wise, namely that one should acquire a sense of shame (as a basis for political activity). But the text does perform its function of loosening Dragiša up. Although the relationship between text and image is one of contradiction, in a sense, the text performs well.

A further, even more complex, example is offered by a scene that depicts the four characters leading an outdoor discussion on revolutionary theory. The discussion concludes with Dragiša declaring that, according to the others, Hegel should be left standing on his head; this is a reference to Marx's well-known proposition that Hegel's dialectics stands on its head. The next shot shows all four gang members attempting a headstand in a meadow. This shot is an almost childish illustration of Dragiša's (and, by extension, Marx's) verbal proposition. But the headstands are shot by a camera turned upside-down itself; it therefore seems that the characters are standing upright. Only when they lose balance and stand on their feet again are the young revolutionaries shown heads down.

The relation between words and images is rendered hopelessly complex in this scene. Through the childish headstand, the sequence implies that images can simply illustrate words. But mathematically speaking, the camera doubles the "negation": an upside-down position shown upside-down is no longer upside-down. The filming procedure, therefore, calls the illustration into question; through the camera's intervention, the characters are visually turned upside-down only when they acquire an upright position. But, despite the inverted shot, the viewer can still easily discern when the characters are standing on their heads and when they are on their feet. In other words, the camera's "negation" does not fully invert the illustration. Retroactively, these relations make the meaning of Marx's quote volatile. It is almost impossible to say whether Hegel is being illustrated standing on his head, or whether the camera should be considered a "Hegel" now turning Marx upside-down. Finally, the persisting discernibility of "being turned upside down", even in an inverted shot, can be interpreted in a truly dialectical manner, as a remnant of Hegel sublated, yet not fully erased through Marx's dialectics. The sequence is fashioned in such a way that these ambiguities cannot possibly be resolved. It connotes precisely the vast range of relations that can be established between images and words. This variety can be subsumed under neither the category of contradiction nor that of illustration.

*Early Works* thus systematically probes into relations between words and images. Although its fundamental strategy is one of opposing the "reality" of "raw" images to discursive domination, the film also encompasses other modalities: that of successful illustration (the spark and the flame); that of a misuse of words (the letter to Ruge); that of at once illustrating *and* contesting words through images (the headstands). If there is a pedagogy to *Early Works*, it is one teaching the viewer that the possible relations between discourse and images are inexhaustible. In this way, the "raw" image gets "estranged"; it is exposed as one variation within a mechanism capable of producing many more. On a meta-level, *Early Works* discreetly teaches the viewer not to trust its mock-documentary techniques, fashioning arche-images as "found" fragments of reality. By deploying a wide array of strategies that combine images and words, it shows that its central strategy is only one among many.

## Notes

- 1 This paradoxical temporality is beautifully illustrated by the last scene taking place in the village: in it, the revolutionary group burns the wreck of another car (a Fiat 500) in the middle of the village's muddy street, where they were beaten and raped. This car has a white cross painted on its roof, an overt reference to the signage painted on Soviet tanks entering Prague in 1968 (Beard 2019, 105). To this, an old woman's voice poses the question "Kids, have the brothers Russians finally arrived?" The happy excitement in her voice points to the fact that the old woman is not at all unsatisfied with the arrival of these "brothers". Her satisfaction can be interpreted as another case of time-lag: in the context of the Second World War or the pre-*Informbiro* times, an arrival of Soviet troops could in fact have been regarded as a glorious moment of liberation; further still, the "brothers Russians" connote an even older mythology of a Serbian-Russian friendship, stretching at least some hundred years into the past. The woman (represented as voice-over) and the revolutionaries – and by extension viewers – therefore do not share the same historic moment: what is the symbol of Soviet Cold War imperialism for the latter is a moment of pre-Cold War liberation for the former.
- 2 As if in a survey, the assembled women pose their questions straight into the camera. One can hear the camera rolling and a male voice telling each of the women, "Go on!", thus signalling that they can now pose their questions. The scene is therefore staged as an improvisation with "found", randomly encountered village women.
- 3 In a rare, almost singular attempt to articulate distinctions between the three male characters of *Early Works*, Nino Milenković (1969) offered the following typology: Dragiša – the cool boy (*frajer*); Kruno – the intellectual; Marko – the worker. The worker is thus the one who performs the murder.
- 4 Although Jugoslava is grounding her presuppositions on working class sexuality in Engels' insights, Peter Gurney claims that working-class milieus were prone to "become domains where bourgeois sexual phantasies could be played out" (1997, 268). Gurney supports his claim by referring to Peter Stallybrass' and Allon White's hypothesis that "the bourgeois subject continually defined and redefined itself through the exclusion of what is marked out as 'low' – as dirty, repulsive, noisy, contaminating" (1986, 191), the lowly strata of society being characterized by all aforementioned attributes. But, Stallybrass and White continue, "disgust always bears the imprint of desire. These lowly domains, apparently expelled as Other, return as the object of nostalgia, longing and fascination." (1986, 191) Jugoslava's stance on the working class could, from this perspective, be regarded as thoroughly "bourgeois": on the one side stands her disgust with regard to the worker-pigs polluting the castle, while on the other side she is filled by a longing for the exotic "sincere carnal love" this dirty setting might offer her.
- 5 Žilnik and Pavlović were by all means not alone in contesting the revolution's "crusts". A couple of years before *Early Works* made its appearance, Maurice Blanchot was articulating similar propositions on the revolution with regard to the writings of the Marquis de Sade. In Blanchot's opinion, the supreme moment of a revolution is one of "excess, dissolution, and energy", one where old laws do not apply any more while new laws do not apply yet, a moment of "silent frenzy" and of an "infinite power of destruction" (1965, 39–40). The revolution thus truly lives only in the destructive moment, which, at least briefly, creates a space beyond laws and words, one would be tempted to say, beyond crusts.
- 6 This stereotypical, gendered violence was mocked already during the period itself as a cliché. *Vjesnik u srijedu* (27.8.1969) thus brought a caricature representing a Black Wave film-set, on which one can see a very hairy, corpulent man with tusks reminiscent of a wild

boar, holding a very long knife in his hand. The man is surrounded by six naked women, of which four have further knives sticking out of their bodies. The caricature testifies to the fact that already during the 1960s, the Black Wave's insistence on sexualized violence was regarded as a clear, and rather ridiculous, case of Balkanism. A further issue – 22.7.1970 – brought a caricature entitled “The Sexual Revolution in a Yugoslav Way”. The caricature fashions a ridiculously muscular man, a cigarette stuck between his teeth – of which the front one is missing – with an alcoholic's swollen nose, holding a naked woman on his lap. The caricature further mocks the then-contemporary articulation of “Sexual Revolution” against a stereotypical “Balkan” masculinity, an articulation that was quite present within the cinema of the period.

- 7 In the two films taken as exemplary of the third figure of the archaic, a woman had to be molested and killed in order for the “real” to appear. This is probably based in the fact that sexualized violence and representations of the woman's body form an extremely dense discursive crossroads. They mobilize: a) a patriarchal discourse on the woman's body as matter, nature, etc. (in opposition to the orderly field of culture); b) stereotypes on a violent, male, “Balkan” sexuality (this is probably why the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s excels in representations of rape); c) a fundamental procedure of coding the camera's gaze as male; d) a broad discourse on sexuality and violence as interconnected and presenting a major threat to any form of social organization (for an exemplary representative of this discourse, perfectly unrelated to Yugoslav cinema, see the writings of René Girard). A thorough critique of this discursive cluster – as related to the murdered and raped woman on the Yugoslav screen – would merit an independent study (recently, Vesi Vuković (2019) made a major step in this direction). The previous analyses showed that on the Yugoslav 1960s screen, the woman needs to die even when resisting objectification, as was the case with Izabela. However, this does not fully erase Makavejev's subversive gesture: paradoxically, in becoming “pure matter”, Izabela refuses the very discourse that regards her as matter in need of being sublated into form. The molested woman therefore triggers negotiations within a phallogocentric discourse at least as complex as those encompassed by the game of the archaic. This process of negotiation is not fully subsumable under the game of the archaic, but, as was hopefully shown, it does communicate with it. In other words: although not subsumable under the game of the archaic, representations of gender regimes are its indispensable part. And *vice versa*: the archaic is an indispensable part of gendered representations in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s. Finally, for an in-depth study of female characters on the Yugoslav 1960s screen, see Vesi Vuković's (2022b) doctoral dissertation, *Women in the Wave: Representation of Female Characters in Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave*; for further considerations on violence, sexuality, and the revolution, see Patrycjusz Pająk: “Violence and Sex and Violence Again: The Sexual Revolution in the Films of the Yugoslav Black Wave” (2022).

## Concluding Remarks on the Game of the Archaic

The game of the archaic introduces several displacements into the history of Yugoslav cinema. A shift of perspective towards the archaic makes the “barricades” model of this history crumble; the apparently unbridgeable trench separating high modernist *auteurs* from their popular cultural surroundings becomes porous. On the one hand, authors quite often changed camps; Mića Popović, the notorious *provocateur*, directing a popular comedy is the best example of this process. On the other hand, tropes and *milieus* associated with the archaic and the notorious Black Wave were quite capable of acquiring high popularity, as Lazić’s *The Musicians* and *Poor Mary* demonstrate.

Furthermore, the archaic establishes complex connections between cinema and the broader field of Yugoslav cultural self-fashioning. It communicates with a historical perspective based in “revolutionary anticipations”; it questions the Yugoslav “naïve wonder”; it both challenges and supports Balkanism. The archaic connects Miroslav Krleža’s famous 1952 programme with cinematic developments on a level which widely exceeds any simple notion of resistance to “socialist realism”. Finally, the archaic serves as a bridge between the period’s cinema and philosophical discourse, as exemplified in connection with Radomir Konstantinović’s seminal *Philosophy of Parochialism*.

On a broader level still, the archaic engages discourses that extend beyond the confines of a narrow Yugoslav context. The archaic acquires its significations only in dialogue with phenomena ranging from Freud’s writings on culture to Nietzschean aesthetics. Conversely, while the archaic is often used as a means of subversion, this subversion should not be conceptualized as directed solely against Yugoslav politics. The archaic can challenge a phallogocentric gaze, utopian modernity, revolutionary “crusts”. Although this study remained within the framework of a single “national” cinema, it therefore sought to challenge what Nicole Kandioler describes as a widespread approach in scholarship on “Eastern European” cinema. As Kandioler argues, scholarship on Eastern European film still tends to focus on identifying the specific characteristics of individual national “schools”. (2021, 10). In a further reductionist gesture, this tendency systematically privileges the “local” references of its object of research. Thus, the almost hopeless effort of scholars to reduce Pavlović’s theoretical writings to an echo of Yugoslav “Praxis”

philosophy. Since the Praxis school is an “authentic” Yugoslav phenomenon of the period, Pavlović *must have been* influenced by it, even though his texts explicitly refuse such connections. Conversely, Pavlović cannot engage in a dialogue with Nietzsche or present ideas paralleling those of Julia Kristeva, since these are not “specific” Yugoslav phenomena.

The archaic blows up this narrow field of references and begs for a reading that relates it to a wide range of aesthetic-political discourses, which cannot be confined to a purely Yugoslav context. It is my claim that this widening of the field of references – which the archaic calls forth – is, in itself, a political gesture. As I have argued throughout this study, the archaic is almost always a response to discursive domination, and it is the archaic itself that refuses an interpretative discourse reducing it to “authentic”, local phenomena. Through its (ab)uses of the archaic, the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s enters a sovereign dialogue with an extremely broad range of discourses characteristic of global modernity. A focus on the archaic thus draws the study of Yugoslav cinema out of the constraints of “specificity” and shows that it was capable of engaging with almost “universal” concerns.

One thus approaches the most significant displacement introduced by the archaic: that which concerns the politics of Yugoslav cinema. The archaic produces a shift away from a perspective that views this politics as a set of implicitly or explicitly provocative messages aimed at an immediate, local political context. This is not to say that such messages are absent from the period’s films; rather, it implies that an important aspect of their politics takes place on a different level. One can, for example, engage with the gaze of the revolution’s father, Karl Marx, and his verdicts on cowardly rangers who must be trampled without mercy. In other words, neither the Yugoslav filmmaker nor Yugoslav cultural politics is free from a (latent) dialogue with grand, authoritative discursive formations. As was shown with regard to Krleža’s programme, these formations have quite peculiar pleasures and pains in stock for them.

The main neuralgic point of these negotiations can be summarized by the following question: how can one attain the symbolic capital of being an avant-garde while navigating discursive positions that continuously push the 22nd century back into backwardness? And once again, an interpretation suggesting that the cinema of the period is subversive merely because it critiques a monolithic state ideology of progress by highlighting its shortcomings would be reductionist. Both Yugoslav cinema and Yugoslav cultural politics had to negotiate their way through the same temporal impasse: how does one re-evaluate discursively ascribed backwardness as a symbol of revolutionary strength? This impasse of the “bad” and the “good” archaic then called for a third perspective, one that contests the power-representation nexus by pushing the archaic towards its third figure. Far from fully exiting the structure of dominating discourses, a strategy based in the third figure of the archaic challenged the power inherent in representation by confronting it with its outside, an outside that was, in turn, constructed by the very same dominating discourses.

Each of these strategies comes with its own advantages and shortcomings. A strategy of re-evaluation – the rangers are the proletarian peoples anticipating revolutions – not only communicates with Balkanist self-exoticizations, but also, it can always be inverted and turn into the bad stasis of the “old centuries’” stubborn presence. A similar point can be raised regarding a critique of backwardness through the archaic. As best demonstrated by Žilnik’s *Early Works*, an apparently merciless critique can easily lapse into an essentialist fatalism that, once again, relies on Balkanist tropes. The third figure of the archaic runs into its own problems. It can oppose discursive domination only through images of an even more radical violence, since it is these images that were defined by dominating discourses as the outside of discursivity. Although these images are presented as the “real”, opposing falsifying discourses within individual films, on an intertextual level, they not only establish a paradigm but also strongly communicate with the stereotypical set of representations parodied in *Poor Mary*.

However, all these strategies have their advantages as well. The “good” archaic does challenge a “semi-colonial” narrative of backwardness and irrelevance for world history. The “bad” archaic does pose valid critical questions. The archaic as Other of discourse does challenge representational mechanisms that exercise discreet or overt violence. Rather than being simply critical and subversive or merely conformist and conservative, the three “moves” in the game of the archaic negotiate on different fronts of the double bind between modernity and its “others”. One would thus be tempted to say that it is the game of the archaic in its entirety that opens an extremely rich space for symbolic appropriations and contestations.

At the very end, I will permit myself a bit of speculation; I will therefore finish this conclusion with two hypotheses. Although this study’s main focus was cinema, I believe that the game of the archaic might open a wider perspective on Yugoslav cultural self-fashioning, as was hinted at through the analyses of Konstantinović’s and Krleža’s writings. This perspective pushes the debate far beyond schematized oppositions such as “dissident vs. regime”, “socialist realism vs. modernism”, or even “socialist modernism vs. ‘real’ modernism”. On a broader level still, the diversity of its moves and the effects they produce suggest that the game of the archaic could be applicable beyond the Yugoslav context. The Yugoslav 1960s context is by all means a specific one, with the country’s “third way” socialism, blossoming popular culture, avant-garde artistic scene and latent ballast of Balkanism. However, one could speculate on the following possibility: whenever a political, cultural or artistic movement emerges, that seeks to present itself as avant-garde in a context contaminated by a discourse appointing it time-lag, a variant of the game of the archaic will not be far away.

# Bibliography

- Ajdačić, Dejan. 2007. "Demoniski hronotopi u usmenoj književnosti." *Projekt Rastko*. www.rastko.rs/rastko/delo/10038, accessed on 10.11.2022.
- Aleksić, Tatjana. 2013. *The Sacrificed Body: Balkan Community Building and the Fear of Freedom*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Aleksov, Bojan. 2007. "Habsburg's 'Colonial Experiment' in Bosnia and Hercegovina Revisited." In *Schnittstellen: Gesellschaft, Nation, Konflikt und Erinnerung in Südosteuropa*, edited by U. Brunnbauer and H. Sundhaussen. Oldenbourg Verlag.
- Andrew, Dudley. 2009. "Time Zones and Jetlag: The Flows and Phases of World Cinema." In *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, edited by N. Durovicová and K. E. Newman. Routledge.
- Baker, Catherine. 2018. *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* Manchester University Press.
- Bakić-Hayden, Milica. 2006. *Varijacije na temu "Balkan"*. Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju I.P. "Filip Višnjić".
- Bataille, Georges. 1955. *Lascaux or the Birth of Art*. Skira.
- Batori, Anna. 2024. *The Extreme Cinema of Eastern Europe : Rape, Art, (S)Exploitation*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Bauman, Richard, and Briggs, Charles. 2003. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beard, Danijela. 2019. "Soft Socialism, Hard Realism: Partisan Song, Parody, and Intertextual Listening in Yugoslav Black Wave Film." *Twentieth-Century Music* 1 (1): 95–121.
- Beganović, Davor. 2012. "Changing Fates: The Role of the Hero in Yugoslav Cinema in the Early and Late Sixties." In *Retracing Images: Visual Culture After Yugoslavia*, edited by D. Šuber and S. Karamanić. Brill.
- Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.
- Berghahn, Daniela. 2024. *Exotic Cinema: Encounters with Cultural Difference in Contemporary Transnational Film*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Bihalji-Merin, Oto. 1961. *Modern Primitives: Masters of Naïve Painting*. Harry N. Abrams Publishers.
- Bihalji-Merin, Oto. 1973. *Die Naiven der Welt*. Kohlhammer Verlag.
- Bjelić, Dušan. 2002. "Introduction: Blowing Up the Bridge." In *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Fragmentation and Globalization*, edited by D. Bjelić and O. Savić. MIT Press.
- Bjelić, Dušan, and Savić, Obrad, eds. 2005. *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*. MIT Press.

- Blackburn, Simon. 2005. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Blanchot, Maurice. 1965. *L'Inconvenance majeure*. Éditions Pauvert.
- Blanchot, Maurice. 1986. "Marx's Three Voices." *New Political Science* 7 (1): 17–20.
- Blok, Anton. 1998. "The Narcissism of Minor Differences." *European Journal of Social Theory* 1 (1): 33–56.
- Boglič, Mira. 1968. "Početak ravnodušnosti?" *Filmska kultura* 63–64: 44–49.
- Boglič, Mira. 1988. *Film kao sudbina*. Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske.
- Bošnjak, Mirko. 1968. "Činjenice i fikcije." *Filmska kultura* 63–64: 5–9.
- Brebanović, Predrag. 2016. *Avangarda Krležiana. Pismo ne o avangardi*. Jesenski i Turk and Arkzin.
- Brecht, Bertolt. 2000. *Brecht on Film and Radio*. Edited by M. Silberman. Bloomsbury.
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. 2015. "Die schöne Leiche: Weiblicher Tod als motivische Konstante von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis in die Moderne." In *Weiblichkeit und Tod in der Literatur*, edited by E. Bronfen, R. Berger, and I. Stephan. Böhlau Verlag.
- Brown, Keith. 2003. *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation*. Princeton University Press.
- Brown, Keith. 2013. *Loyal Unto Death: Trust and Terror in Revolutionary Macedonia*. Indiana University Press.
- Brozović, Domagoj. 2015. "Sukob na književnoj ljevici u novohistorističkom ključu." *Umjetnost riječi* 59 (1–2): 113–153.
- Buden, Boris. 2010. "Shoot it Black! an Introduction to Želimir Žilnik." *Afterall* 25: 38–47.
- Burch, Noël. 1981. *Theory of Film Practice*. Princeton University Press.
- Calic, Marie-Janine. 2011. "The Beginning of the End: The 1970s as a Historical Turning Point in Yugoslavia." In *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s*, edited by M. J. Calic, D. Neutatz, and J. Obertreis. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Cavell, Stanley. 1979. "On Makavejev on Bergman." *Critical Inquiry* 6 (2): 305–330.
- Černodirinski, Vojdan. 1928. *Makedonska krvava svadba*. Vitoša.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton University Press.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2002. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago University Press.
- Chow, Rey. 1995. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Columbia University Press.
- Čolić, Milutin. 1964. "Čovek iz hrastove šume." *Filmska kultura* 40–41: 78–82.
- Čolić, Milutin. 1967. "Cannes 1967: trijumf jugoslovenskog filma." *Filmska kultura* 55–56: 137–152.
- Čolić, Milutin. 1984. *Jugoslovenski ratni film, knjiga druga*. Institut za film Beograd, Vesti.
- Cox, John. 2017. "Radomir Konstantinović and Provincial Philosophy. Binaries and Borders." *Colloquia Humanistica* 6 (6): 60–74.
- Čurlin, Ivet, Dević, Ana, and Ilić, Nataša. 2020. *Želimir Žilnik: Shadow Citizens*. Kunsthalle Wien.
- Daković, Nevena. 2003. "Shadows of the Ancestors." *Framework* 44 (2): 103–107.
- DeCuir, Greg, Jr. 2011. *Yugoslav Black Wave: Polemical Cinema from 1963–1972 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. Filmski centar Srbije.
- Denegri, Ješa. 2003. "Inside or Outside 'Socialist Modernism'? Radical Views on the Yugoslav Art Scene, 1950–1970." In *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-Gardes, Neo-Avant-Gardes and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, edited by D. Đurić and M. Šuvaković. MIT Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1972. *Marges de la philosophie*. Éditions de minuit.

- Derrida, Jacques. 1993. *Spectres de Marx. L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*. Galilée.
- Dimitrijević, Branislav. 2010. "Concrete Analysis of Concrete Situations: Marxist Education According to Želimir Žilnik." *Afterall* 25: 48–55.
- Dix, Hywel. 2015. "On Balkanism and Orientalism: Undifferentiated Patterns of Perception in Literary and Critical Representations of Eastern Europe." *Textual Practice* 29 (5): 973–991.
- Duda, Igor. 2016. "When Capitalism and Socialism Get Along Best: Tourism, Consumer Culture and the Idea of Progress in Malo Misto." In *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, edited by R. Archer, I. Duda, and P. Stubbs. Routledge.
- Durbach, Nadja. 2010. *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture*. University of California Press.
- Eagle, Herbert. 1983. "Yugoslav Marxist Humanism and the Films of Dušan Makavejev." In *Politics, Art and Commitment in the East European Cinema*, edited by D. W. Paul. Macmillan Press.
- Engels, Friedrich. 1990a. "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. In the Light of the Researches by Lewis H. Morgan." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 26*. Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, International Publishers.
- Engels, Friedrich. 1990b. "Afterword (1894) to 'On Social Relations in Russia'." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 27*. Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, International Publishers.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1991. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Groove Press.
- Fleming, Katherine E. 2000. "Orientalism, the Balkans and Balkan Historiography." *The American Historical Review* 105 (4): 1218–1233.
- Foucault, Michel. 1969. *L'Archéologie du savoir*. Éditions Gallimard.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978–1979*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frankfurter, David T. M. 1990. "Stylites and Phallobates: Pillar Religions in Late Antique Syria." *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (2): 168–198.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1949. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The Hogarth Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1962. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Norton & Co.
- Freud, Sigmund. 2001. *Totem and Taboo*. Routledge.
- G.P. 1969. "Postoje i 'pravi' Muzikanti!" *Vjesnik u srijedu* 912: 13.
- Gay y Blasco, Paloma. 2008. "Picturing 'Gypsies'." *Third Text* 22 (3): 297–303.
- Gilić, Nikica. 2011. *Uvod u povijest hrvatskog igranog filma*. Leykam International.
- Gilić, Nikica. 2015. "Narrative and Genre Influences of the International Classical Cinema in the Partisan Films of Živorad-Žika Mitrović." In *Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture*, edited by M. Jakiša and N. Gilić. transcript Verlag.
- Goldsworthy, Vesna. 1998. *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of Imagination*. Yale University Press.
- Goulding, Daniel. 1994. *Five Filmmakers: Tarkovsky, Forman, Polanski, Szabó, Makavejev*. Indiana University Press.
- Goulding, Daniel. 2002. *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945–2001*. Indiana University Press.
- Guneratne, Anthony. 2003. "Introduction. Rethinking Third Cinema." In *Rethinking Third Cinema*, edited by A. Guneratne and W. Dissanayake. Routledge.
- Gunning, Tom. 1986. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." *Wide Angle* 8 (3–4): 63–70.

- Gunning, Tom. 1994. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator." In *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, edited by L. Williams. Rutgers University Press.
- Gurney, Peter. 1997. "'Intersex' and 'Dirty Girls': Mass Observation and Working Class Sexuality in England in the 1930s." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8 (2): 256–290.
- Hamblin, Sarah. 2014. "A Cinema of Revolt: Black Wave Revolution and Dušan Makavejev's Politics of Disgust." *Cinema Journal* 53 (4): 28–52.
- Hatherley, Owen. 2012. "Marxism and Mud: Landscape, Urbanism and Socialist Space in the Black Wave." In *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and its Transgressive Moments*, edited by G. Kirn, D. Sekulić and Ž. Testen. Jan van Eyck Academie.
- Haucke, Lutz. 2009. *Nouvelle Vague in Osteuropa? Zur ostmittel- und südosteuropäischen Filmgeschichte 1960 – 1970*. Rhombos-Verlag.
- Hawkesworth, Celia. 2016. "Images of the West in Serbian and Croatian Prose Fiction." In *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other 1945–2003*, edited by A. Hammond. Routledge.
- Hawkins, Joan. 2014. "Let the Sweet Juices Flow: WR and Midnight Movie Culture." In *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, edited by E. Schaefer. Duke University Press.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1975. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1986. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Suhrkamp.
- Heraclides, Alexis. 2020. *The Macedonian Question and the Macedonians: A History*. Routledge.
- Homer, Sean. 2006. "'Roma Do Not Exist': The Roma as an Object of Cinematic Representation and the Question of Authenticity." *Gamma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* 14 (1): 183–197.
- Ignatieff, Michael. 1999. "Nationalism and the Narcissism of Minor Differences." In *Theorizing Nationalism*, edited by R. Beiner. State University of New York Press.
- Imre, Anikó. 2003. "Screen Gypsies." *Framework* 44 (2): 15–33.
- Imre, Anikó. 2012. "East European Cinema from *No End* to the End (As We Know It)." In *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, edited by A. Imre. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Iordanova, Dina. 2001. *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*. British Film Institute.
- Iordanova, Dina. 2003. "Images of Romanies in Cinema: A Rough Sketch?" *Framework* 44 (2): 5–14.
- Jay, Martin. 1994. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. University of California Press.
- Jergović, Miljenko. 2006. "Ne moći prešutjeti." *Kolo* XVI (4). [www.matica.hr/kolo/301/ne-moci-presutjeti-20377/](http://www.matica.hr/kolo/301/ne-moci-presutjeti-20377/), accessed on 24.01.2022.
- Johnson, Barbara. 1985. "Les Fleurs du Mal Armé: Some Reflexions on Intertextuality." In *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, edited by C. Hošek and P. Parker. Cornell University Press.
- Jonas, Hans. 1954. "The Nobility of Sight." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14 (4): 507–519.
- Jovanović, Nebojša. 2011a. "Fadil Hadžić u optici totalitarne paradigme." *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis* 65–66: 47–60.
- Jovanović, Nebojša. 2011b. "Breaking the Wave: A Commentary on 'Black Wave Polemics: Rhetoric as Aesthetic' by Greg DeCuir." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 2 (2): 161–171.

- Jovanović, Nebojša. 2015. "We Need to Talk About Walter: Partisan Film and the Anti-Leftist Odium." In *Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture*, edited by M. Jakiša and N. Gilić. transcript Verlag.
- Jovanović, Nebojša. 2016. *Gender and Sexuality in the Classical Yugoslav Cinema*. Doctoral Diss., Central European University.
- Jovičić, Vladimir. 1969. "Crni talas u našem filmu." *Borba* (section *Borba reflektor*): 3 August: 21–28.
- Jusdanis, Gregory. 1998. "Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16 (2): 375–377.
- Kalafatović, Bogdan. 1967. "Pulski odgovori." *Književne novine* 307: 6.
- Kalafatović, Bogdan. 1968. "U krugovima istorije: povodom filma *Makedonska krvava svadba* Trajče Popova." *Književne novine* 329: 6.
- Kalafatović, Bogdan. 1969. "Uslikani bečarac." *Književne novine* 349: 7.
- Kalezić, Vasilije. 1982. *U Krležinom sazvežđu*. August Cesarec.
- Kandioler, Nicole. 2021. *Widerständige Nostalgie. Osteuropäische Film- und Fernsehkulturen, 1965–2013*. transcript Verlag.
- Kelemen, Boris, and Vrkljan-Križić, Nada. 1991. *Naivna umjetnost*. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti.
- Kernan, Margot S. 1968. "Love Affair: Or, The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator by Dušan Makavejev." *Film Quarterly* 31 (3): 41–44.
- Kirn, Gal. 2012. "New Yugoslav Cinema – a Humanist Cinema? Not Really." In *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Transgressive Moments*, edited by G. Kirn, D. Sekulić and Ž. Testen. Jan van Eyck Academie.
- Knight, Richard Payne. 1894. *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus and Its Connections with the Mystic Theology of the Ancients*. Privately Printed.
- Kolar, Slavko. 1971. *Breza i druge pripovijetke*. Zora.
- Kolstø, Pål. 2007. "The 'Narcissism of Minor Differences' – Theory. Can It Explain Genocide and Ethnic Conflict?" *Filozofija i društvo* 18 (2): 153–171.
- Konstantinović, Radomir. 1981. *Filosofija palanke*. Nolit.
- Konstantinović, Radomir. 2021. *The Philosophy of Parochialism*. University of Michigan Press.
- Kotschenreuther, Hellmut. 1969. "Zynische Komödie: Goldener Bär für *Frühe Werke*." *Abendzeitung* (07.07.1969). <https://zilnikzelimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Koutsourakis, Angelos. 2018. *Rethinking Brechtian Film Theory and Cinema*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Kragić, Bruno. 2006. "Vrdoljakovi filmski obzori." *Kolo* XVI (4). [www.matica.hr/kolo/301/vrdoljakovi-filmski-obzori-20378/](http://www.matica.hr/kolo/301/vrdoljakovi-filmski-obzori-20378/), accessed on 24.01.2022.
- Krauss, Friedrich. 1904. "Von der Befriedigung des Geschlechtstriebes durch die Macht der Einbildung." *Anthropophyteia, Jahrbücher für folkloristische Erhebungen und Forschungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der geschlechtlichen Moral* 1: 224–316.
- Krelja, Petar. 2010. "Breza – Film za sva vremena." *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis* 62: 13–21.
- Kristensen, Lars, Mazierska, Ewa, and Naripea, Eva, eds. 2019. *Postcolonial Approaches to Eastern European Cinema: Portraying Neighbours On-Screen*. I.B. Tauris.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia University Press.
- Krleža, Miroslav. 1919. "Hrvatska književna laž." *Plamen* 1: 32–40.
- Krleža, Miroslav. 1963. *Eseji, knjiga treća*. Zora.
- Krleža, Miroslav. 1967. *Eseji, knjiga šesta*. Zora.
- Krleža, Miroslav. 1983. *Dijalektički antibarbarus*. Oslobodenje and Mladost.
- Laclau, Ernesto. 1997. "The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology." *Modern Language Notes* 112 (3): 297–321.

- Laclau, Ernesto. 2007. "Discourse." In *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, edited by R. E. Gordon and P. Pettit. Blackwell Publishing.
- Laclau, Ernesto, and Mouffe, Chantal. 2001. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Verso.
- Landwehr, Achim. 2018. *Historische Diskursanalyse*. Campus.
- Lasić, Stanko. 1970. *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*. Liber.
- Levi, Pavle. 2007. *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*. Stanford University Press.
- Levi, Pavle, and Žilnik, Želimir. 2010. "Europe's Internal Exiles: Sound, Image, and Performance of Identity in Želimir Žilnik's Films." In *Ethnic Europe: Mobility, Identity and Conflict in a Globalized World*, edited by R. Hsu. Stanford University Press.
- Liehm, Mira, and Liehm, Antonin. 1977. *The Most Important Art: East European Film After 1945*. University of California Press.
- Longinović, Tomislav. 2011. *Vampire nation*. Duke University Press.
- Lukić, Sveta. 1972. *Contemporary Yugoslav Literature: A Sociological Approach*. University of Illinois Press.
- Liotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minnesota University Press.
- Liotard, Jean-François. 1986. *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants. Correspondance 1982–1986*. Éditions Galilée.
- Marx, Karl. 1976. "The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the *Philosophy of Poverty* by M. Proudhon." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6*. Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl. 1977a. "The Magyar Struggle." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 8*. Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl. 1977b. "Democratic Panslavism." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 8*. International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl. 1983. "Drafts of a Reply (February/March 1881)." In *Late Marx and the Russian Road. Marx and the "Peripheries of Capitalism"*, edited by T. Shanin. Monthly Review Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1986. "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works Vol. 29*. Progress Publishers, Lawrence and Wishart, International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich. 1986. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Progress Publishers.
- Matešić, Marina. 2015. "Gendering Balkanism: Gender, Culture and Class in Nineteenth-Century Women's Travelogues in the Balkans." *Aspasia* 9 (1): 19–43.
- Matešić, Marina, and Slapšak, Svetlana. 2017. *Rod i Balkan*. Durieux.
- Maty Bâ, Saër, and Higbee, Will. 2012. "Introduction. De-Westernizing Film Studies." In *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, edited by S. Maty Bâ, and W. Higbee. Routledge.
- Mauriac, Claude. 1968. "Nedaleko od nas – srednji vek!" *Filmske sveske* 1(6): 383–385.
- Mazierska, Ewa. 2013. "Želimir Žilnik and Eastern European Independent Cinema." *Images* (22): 133–149.
- Mićić, Ljubomir. 1921. "Revolucija u gradu belome, 7777, traži se čovek." *Zenit* 10: 2–6.
- Milenković, Nino. 1969. "Završeno je snimanje *Ranih radova*: Bezmera je sloboda i drskost mladih ovog filma." *Film novosti* (05.12.1968). <https://zilnikzelimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Milošević, Milivoj. 1969. "Demoni. *Biće skoro propast sveta* – novo reprezentativno delo Aleksandra Petrovića." *Borba*: 11.
- Mishkova, Diana. 2018. *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*. Routledge.

- Mitrev, Dimitar. 1966. "Folklore in Macedonian Literature." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 3 (3): 363–375.
- Močnik, Rastko. 2005. "The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms." In *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Fragmentation and Globalization*, edited by D. Bjelić and O. Savić. MIT Press.
- Mortimer, Lorraine. 2009. *Terror and Joy: The Films of Dušan Makavejev*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (3): 6–18.
- Munitić, Ranko. 1967. "Sedam mračnih dana." *Filmska kultura* 57–58: 25–30.
- Munitić, Ranko. 1968a. "Svjetska kretanja modernog filma i mi u njima." *Filmska kultura* 62: 7–16.
- Munitić, Ranko. 1968b. "O stvarnim obalama i lažnim vidicima." *Filmska kultura* 63–64: 101–112.
- Munitić, Ranko. 1968c. "Tri filma za ljubav." *Filmska kultura* 63–64: 62–68.
- Nead, Lydia. 1992. *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*. Routledge.
- Niehoff, Karna. 1969. "Lust zur Liebe, Lust zum Untergang: Filme von Hani, Žilnik und Saura bei den Berliner Filmfestspielen." *Feuilleton* (08.07.1969). <https://zilnikzelimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1989. *On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecce Homo*. Vintage Books.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Novaković, Slobodan. 1967a. "Autori (dramaturške beleške)." *Filmska kultura* 55–56: 99–108.
- Novaković, Slobodan. 1967b. "Kuda posle Pule." *Filmska kultura* 57–58: 1–12.
- Novaković, Slobodan. 1968a. "Različiti vidici sa iste obale." *Filmska kultura* 59–60: 1–12.
- Novaković, Slobodan. 1968b. "Pulski dnevnik." *Filmska kultura* 63/64: 67–90.
- Pająk, Patrycjusz. 2022. "Violence and Sex and Violence again: The Sexual Revolution in the Films of the Yugoslav Black Wave." *Slavia Meridionalis. Studia Linguistica Slavica et Balcanica* 22: 1–23.
- Parvulescu, Constantin. 2009. "Betrayed Promises: Politics and Sexual Revolution in the Films of Márta Mészáros, Miloš Forman, and Dušan Makavejev." *Camera Obscura* 24 (71): 77–105.
- Paul, Arthur. 2001. "Escape From Freedom: The Films of Dušan Makavejev." *Cineaste* 21 (1): 11–15.
- Paul, David W. 1983. "Introduction: Film and Social Commitment." In *Politics, Art and Commitment in the East European Cinema*, edited by D. W. Paul. The Macmillan Press LTD.
- Pavlović, Živojin. 1969. *Đavolji film*. Institut za film Beograd.
- Pavlović, Živojin. 1990. *Jezgro napetosti*. Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod.
- Pavlović, Živojin. 2018. *O odvratnom*. Gradac K.
- Pelc, Adrian. 2024. "'Dreary and Sarcastic Images Under the Marshal's Baton.' The Yugoslav 1960s Cinema, the Canon and the International Gaze: From Subversion to Balkanism and Popular-Cultural Re-Evaluation." *Eastern European Screen Studies* 16 (1): 51–67.
- Perica, Ivana. 2017. "'Socialist Literature Swindlers': The R/evolutionary Controversy in Interwar Yugoslav Literature." *Neohelicon* 45: 249–280.
- Perisic, Alexandra. 2023. "Aimé Césaire's Yugoslav Detour." *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 27 (2): 1–17.
- Petranović, Branko. 1988. *Istorija Jugoslavije 1818.–1988. Knjiga 3*. Nolit.
- Petrović, Aleksandar. 1988. *Novi film II (1965–1970): "Crni film"*. Naučna knjiga Beograd.

- Port, van de Mattijs. 1998. *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Porton, Richard. 2010. "WR: Mysteries of the Organism: Anarchist Realism and Critical Quandaries." *Rouge* 14: 133–142.
- Power, Nina. 2010. "Blood and Sugar: The Films of Dušan Makavejev." *Film Quarterly* 63 (3): 42–51.
- Prelog, Nenad. 1969. "Film i revolucija." *Omladinski tjednik*, 3/1969. <https://zilnikzelimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Radosavljević, Veljko. 2019. *Sjaj crnog. Prilog za bolje razumevanje jednog razdoblja srpske kinematografije*. Filmski centar Srbije.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2001. *La Fable cinématographique*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Continuum.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2009. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Verso.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2019. *The Future of the Image*. Verso.
- Ranković, Milan. 1970. *Društvena kritika u savremenom jugoslovenskom igranom filmu*. Institut za film Beograd.
- Reitze, Elvira. 1969. "Jugoslawien: Frühe Werke." *Der Abend*, 7.7.1969. <https://zilnikzeliimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Rexhepi, Piro. 2022. *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route*. Duke University Press.
- Robert, Valentine. 2018. "Nudity in Early Cinema; or, The Pictorial Transgression." In *Corporeality in Early Cinema: Viscera, Skin and Physical Form*, edited by M. Dahlquist, D. Galili, J. Olsson, V. Robert. Indiana University Press.
- Robertson, James. 2019. "Dispatches From the Appendix of Europe: Miroslav Krleža's Abject Modernism." *Papers on Language and Literature* 55 (3): 227–255.
- Robinson, David. 1971. "Joie de Vivre at the Barricades." *Sight and Sound* 40 (4): 177–180.
- Rosslyn, Felicity. 2017. "Primitivism and the Modern: A Prolonged Misunderstanding." In *The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other 1945–2003*, edited by A. Hammond. Routledge.
- Rucker-Chang, Sunnie. 2018. "Roma Filmic Representation as Postcolonial 'Object'." *Interventions* 20 (3): 853–867.
- S. 1969. "Nek propadne, nije šteta." *Sineast* 8–9: 45.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Saint-Just, Louis Antoine. 1908. *Œuvres Complètes de Saint-Juste, Tome Second*. Éditions Fasquielle.
- Šakić, Tomislav. 2006. "Balkan kao stanje rata: partizanski filmovi Antuna Vrdoljaka." *Kolo* XVI (4). [www.matica.hr/kolo/301/balkan-kao-stanje-rata-partizanski-filmovi-antuna-vrdoljaka-20379/](http://www.matica.hr/kolo/301/balkan-kao-stanje-rata-partizanski-filmovi-antuna-vrdoljaka-20379/), accessed on 24.01.2022.
- Šakić, Tomislav. 2016. *Modernizam u hrvatskom igranom filmu*. Disput.
- Samardžija, Zoran. 2020. *Post-Communist Malaise: Cinematic Responses to European Integration*. Rutgers University Press.
- Samardžija, Zoran. 2025. *Negative Aesthetics and Political Collapse in Eastern European and Balkan Cinema*. Routledge.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1988. *"What Is Literature" and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press.
- Sawyer, Andrew. 2014. "National Museums in Southeast Europe: (En)countering Balkanism." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 27 (1): 115–127.
- Sazdov, Tome, ed. 1988. *Makedonska književnost*. Školska knjiga.
- Sigetić, Milan. 1969. "Karta više za orgiju u kazalištu." *Vjesnik u srijedu* 918: 15.

- Škrabalo, Ivo. 1998. *101 godina filma u Hrvatskoj*. Nakladni zavod Globus.
- Škrabalo, Ivo. 2008. *Hrvatska filmska povijest ukratko*. VBZ.
- Slapšak, Svetlana. 2007. "Representations of Gender as Constructed, Questioned and Subverted in Balkan Films." *Cinéaste* 32 (3): 37–40.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press.
- Sremec, Rudolf. 1965. "Raspored o takozvanom filmu istine." *Filmska kultura* 43–44: 2–7.
- Sremec, Rudolf. 1968. "Film socijalističke Jugoslavije." *Filmska kultura* 62: 1–7.
- Stallybrass, Peter, and White, Allon. 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Cornell University Press.
- Stankovic, Nevenka. 2005. "The Cities of Play and Disclosure. WR: Mysteries of the Organism". *Third Text* 19 (4): 385–398.
- Stojanović, Nikola. 1968. "Kao u zrcalu." *Sineast* 5: 11–22.
- Strunz, Dieter. 1969. "Zorniger junger Mann – Traurige Ballade." *Berliner Morgenpost* (9.7.1969). <https://zilnikzelimir.net/early-works>, accessed on 27.12.2022.
- Stubbs, Paul. 2023. "Introduction: Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement: Contradictions and Contestations." In *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Imaginaries*, edited by Paul Stubbs. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Sudar, Vlastimir. 2013. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Political Dissident: The Life and Work of Aleksandar Petrović*. NBN International.
- Sundhaussen, Holm. 1999. "Europa balcanica. Der Balkan als historischer Raum Europas." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25 (4): 626–653.
- Šuvaković, Miško. 2008. "Umetnost posle socijalističkog realizma." *Republika* 440–441: 125–133.
- Tion, Lucian. 2020. "We Have Never Been Transnational: The Female Condition in Socialist Realism, Postsocialism and Third Cinema." In *Third Cinema, World Cinema and Marxism*, edited by E. Mazierska and L. Kristensen. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Tiranić, Bogdan. 2011. *Crni talas*. Filmski centar Srbije.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1973. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. The Press of Case Western Reserve University.
- Todorova, Maria. 2005. "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism." *Slavic Review* 64 (1): 140–164.
- Todorova, Maria. 2009. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford University Press.
- Tomašević, Nebojša. 1978. "Das jugoslawische Wunder". In *Naive Mahler Jugoslawiens*, edited by K. Rakić. Jugoslovenska revija
- Tomashevsky, Boris. 1985. *Theorie der Literatur. Poetik*. Otto Harrassowitz.
- Tović, Drago. 1969. "Bit će skoro propast filma: crna finansijska bilanca takozvanog crnog vala u našoj kinematografiji." *Vjesnik u srijedu* 905: 3.
- Turković, Hrvoje. 1986. "Crni film." In *Filmska enciklopedija*, edited by A. Peterlić. Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža.
- Velickovic, Vedrana. 2012. "Belated Alliances? Tracing the Intersections Between Postcolonialism and Postcommunism." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2): 164–175.
- Videkanić, Bojana. 2020. *Nonaligned Modernism: Socialist Postcolonial Aesthetics in Yugoslavia, 1945-1985*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Vrkljan-Križić, Nada. 1991. "Naivna likovna umjetnost – autentični stvaralački čin umjetnosti dvadesetog stoljeća." In: *Naivna umjetnost*, edited by N. Vrkljan-Križić, V. Gracin-Čuić, and B. Donat. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti Zagreb.

- Vučetić, Radina. 2018. *Coca-Cola Socialism: Americanization of Yugoslav Culture in the Sixties*. Central European University Press.
- Vuković, Vesni. 2018. "Violated Sex: Rape, Nation and Representation of Female Characters in Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave Cinema." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 9 (2): 132–147.
- Vuković, Vesni. 2019. "Cinematic Suicide: Representations of Working Women in Yugoslav New Film." *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe* (9). [www.apparatusjournal.net/index.php/apparatus/article/view/156/457](http://www.apparatusjournal.net/index.php/apparatus/article/view/156/457).
- Vuković, Vesni. 2022a. "Yugoslav(i)a on the Margins: Sexual Taboos, Representation, Nation and Emancipation in Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works*." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 13 (3): 248–271.
- Vuković, Vesni. 2022b. *Women in the Wave: Representation of Female Characters in Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave*. Doctoral Diss.: University of Antwerpen.
- Vuković, Vesna. 2019. "Poetika politike – Zemlja kroz autopoetičke tekstove." In *Problem umjetnosti kolektiva – slučaj Zemlja*, edited by I. Hanaček, V. Knežević, A. Kutleša, N. Vukobratović, and V. Vuković, 10–23. BLOK.
- Wachtel, Andrew B. 1998. *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*. Stanford University Press.
- Warner, Vessela S. 2020. "Re/Writing a Nation: Symbolic Narratives and Cultural Politics in North Macedonian Postcolonial and Postcommunist Drama." *Slavic and East European Journal* 64 (3): 374–394.
- Wolff, Larry. 1994. *Inventing Eastern Europe*. Stanford University Press.
- Yeğenoğlu, Meyda. 1998. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zdravkova Djeparoska, Sonja. 2020. "Macedonian Cultural Plurality at the Crossroads of the Balkans: Drama, Music and Dance." *Arts* 9 (3): 85–101.
- Žilnik, Želimir. 2018. "Yugoslavia: Down With the Red Bourgeoisie!" In *1968: On the Edge of World Revolution*, edited by P. Gassert. Black Rose Books.
- Zimmermann, Tanja. 2014. *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West: Mediale Bilder und kulturpolitische Prägungen*. Böhlau Verlag.
- Zimmermann, Tanja. 2019. "Primitivism and Naïveté as Categories of Political Aesthetics." In *Rethinking Postwar Europe Artistic Production and Discourses on Art in the late 1940s and 1950s*, edited by B. Lange, D. Hildebrandt, and A. Pietrasik. Böhlau Verlag.
- Zinaić, Rade. 2017. "Twilight of the Proletariat: Reading Critical Balkanology as Liberal Ideology." *New Perspectives* 25 (1): 19–54.
- Zinaić, Rade. 2019. "Confronting Balkanism from a Global Stance." *New Perspectives* 27 (1): 151–158.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 1994. "The Specter of Ideology." In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by S. Žižek. Verso.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 1997. "Multiculturalism, or, The Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism." *New Left Review* 225 (225): 28–52.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 2000. *The Fragile Absolute*. Verso.

# Index

*Note:* Endnotes are indicated by the page number followed by “n” and the note number e.g., 111n5 refers to note 5 on page 111.

- Afrić, V. 31  
allochronism 6, 9–10  
*The Ambush (Zaseda)* 40, 130  
anarchism: aesthetic anarchism 9; anarchist  
act 134, 170, 172; anarchist destruction  
13, 136; anarchic peasantry 124  
*And Love Has Vanished (Dvoje)* 33  
Antić, M. 36, 40  
the archaic 4–16, 18–20, 22–23, 25–29, 32,  
34, 36, 39, 41–42, 47–48, 50, 55–57,  
59–60, 62, 64, 66–68, 70, 83, 85–87,  
89–91, 93, 96–98, 100–01, 109, 111,  
113, 118–20, 123–25, 130, 144, 148,  
152–53, 156–57, 170–72, 176n7,  
177–79; first figure of the archaic 26,  
57n3, 63; game of the archaic 6, 10–11,  
13, 15–16, 27, 55, 57, 68, 70, 76, 86,  
107–08, 120, 123–25, 129, 156–57, 166,  
171, 176n7, 177, 179; second figure of  
the archaic 19, 26, 57n3, 74, 97, 172;  
third figure of the archaic 8–9, 19,  
26–27, 29, 67, 125, 129–31, 136, 138,  
141, 153, 172, 176n7, 178–79; three  
figures of the archaic 5, 20, 27–28, 42,  
55–56, 59, 123; *see also* backwardness,  
vitality  
arche-image 130–34, 170, 172–74; *see also*  
raw image  
authoritative narrative 17, 22, 47, 55;  
*see also* grand narrative
- Babac, M. 36  
backwardness 5, 7–13, 15–20, 22, 24,  
26–27, 29, 36, 42, 48–49, 56–57, 61–62,  
64, 67–68, 76, 83, 86, 97, 100, 108–09,  
112–13, 119–20, 123–24, 164–65,  
178–79
- Babajan, A. 12–13, 36, 68, 87–91, 93–97  
*Ballad of the Wicked One (Balada o  
svirepom)* 34
- Balkanism 6, 9, 12, 14, 18, 27, 41,  
47–52, 55–57, 64, 108, 123–24, 172–3,  
176n6, 177, 179; Balkanist clichés 8,  
172; Balkanist discourse 6, 47, 49,  
165; Balkanist representation 98, 172;  
Balkanist stereotype 38, 48, 50, 55;  
Balkanist trope 27, 61, 75, 179
- The Bet (Opklada)* 36  
*The Birch Tree (Breza)* 12–13, 36, 68,  
87–95, 97–98, 124, 172
- Black Birds (Crne ptice)* 40
- Black Wave 3–4, 8–9, 12, 14n1, 33–34,  
36–38, 40, 92, 102–03, 110, 121n2, 124,  
136n2, 138, 175–76n6, 177
- Breakfast with the Devil (Doručak sa  
đavolom)* 36, 40–41
- Brecht, B. 114, 160, 173; Brechtian  
114–15, 118, 158, 160, 173
- Bulajić, V. 96
- Burduš 12–13, 33, 68, 98, 100–09, 113,  
117, 119, 120n2, 121n3, 121n5, 124–25
- Cause of Death Not to be Mentioned  
(Uzrok smrti ne pominjati)* 40, 110
- chronopolitics 6; *see also* allochronism
- cinema of attractions 115
- The City (Grad)* 36
- Compatriots (Zemljaci)* 40

- the conflict on the literary left 59, 65  
 Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union 7, 13, 57–58  
*The Croatian Literary Lie (Hrvatska književna laž)* 59  
*Crows (Vrane)* 39  
 Černodrinski, V. 71–75
- Days (Dani)* 33  
 desymbolization 27, 29  
*Dialectical Antibarbarus (Dijalektički antibarbarus)* 60, 65  
*Doctor M's Echelon (Ešalon doktora M)* 32  
*Downstream from the Sun (Nizvodno od sunca)* 4, 35–36, 40  
 Dragojević, S. 79  
 Drašković, B. 36, 40, 42n2  
 Đukić, R. L. 34
- The Enemy (Neprijatelj)* 36  
*Enthusiasm: The Symphony of Donbass (Entuzijazm: Simfoniia Donbasu)* 142  
*The Event (Događaj)* 34–36, 39  
 exoticism 11, 92; exoticization 5, 11, 13, 57, 89, 100, 108, 124; exoticized 97–98, 108; exoticizing 120, 169; exoticizing stereotypes 76; self-exoticization 5, 179
- The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty (Padenie dinastii Romanovykh)* 142  
 Filipović, V. 36  
*Foreword to the Podravina Motifs by Krsto Hegedušić (Predgovor Podravskim motivima Krste Hegedušića)* 60, 65  
 Freud, S. 5, 12, 15–16, 20, 22–27, 29, 34, 37, 47–48, 177
- Galić, E. 40  
 Generalić, I. 89  
*The Girl and the Oak (Djevojka i hrast)* 39  
 Golik, K. 39  
 grand narrative 9, 16–18, 20–21, 26–27, 39, 42, 57, 68, 123–24, 134; *see also* authoritative narrative  
*A Gypsy (Ciganka)* 101
- Handcuffs (Lisice)* 34  
*Hanka* 101  
*Hasanaginica* 103  
 Hegedušić, K. 88–89, 98n2  
 Hladnik, B. 3, 33  
*Horoscope (Horoskop)* 36, 40, 42n2  
*Hot Years (Tople godine)* 92
- I Even Met Happy Gypsies (Skupljači perja)* 10, 12, 36, 90–95, 97, 109–10, 124, 172  
 idealism 65–67, 69n3  
 Ilinden Uprising 70, 72–73  
 imperialism 4, 7, 65–67, 175n1; idealist-imperialist matrix 66; imperialist model 62; imperialist plaything 124  
*Innocence Unprotected (Nevinost bez zaštite)* 138  
*In Serbia: A Gypsy Marriage (Ciganska svadba)* 101  
*In the Mountains of Yugoslavia (V Gorakh Jugoslavii)* 31  
*It Rains in My Village (Biće skoro propast sveta)* 4, 12–13, 34–36, 39, 68, 96, 98, 100, 109–11, 113, 115, 119–20, 124, 130
- June Turmoil (Lipanjaska gibanja)* 159
- Kolar, S. 87–88  
 Konstantinović, R. 10, 16, 27–30, 47, 109, 177, 179  
*Kozara* 96–97, 99n7  
 Kozomara, Lj. 39, 92, 97  
 Krleža, M. 7, 10, 13, 26, 32, 34, 51, 57–70, 76, 86, 107–08, 124, 129–30, 132, 134, 177–79  
 Kusturica, E. 102
- Lazić, D. 12–13, 33, 68, 87, 92–93, 97, 102, 164, 177  
 Lazić, Ž. 109  
*Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator (Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT)* 4, 12–13, 138–39, 141–46, 148–51, 153, 155–56, 161
- Macedonian Bloody Wedding (Makedonska krvava svadba)* 12–13, 68, 70–71, 73–77, 79, 85–87, 124, 161  
 Makavejev, D. 3–4, 12–13, 33, 136n2, 138–43, 145–46, 148, 151, 153–56, 171, 176n7  
*The Marathon-Runners Run Their Lap of Honor (Maratonci trče počasni krug)* 151  
 Mayakovsky, V. 146  
*The Man from the Oak Forest (Čovek iz hrastove šume)* 33, 36, 39, 103  
*Man Is Not a Bird (Čovek nije tica)* 138  
 Marx, K. 5, 8, 12, 15–16, 19–23, 26–27, 67–69, 159, 165, 173–74, 178; Marxism

- 8–9, 27, 60, 67–69, 82, 136n2, 159;  
Marxist perspective 48, 74–75; Marxist  
revolution 82
- materialism 64–65, 67
- Messter, O. 148–49
- Micić, Lj. 67
- Mihić, G. 39, 92, 97
- Mimica, V. 34–35
- Miss Stone* 71
- Mitrović, Ž. 32, 71
- Mraz, F. 89
- My Side of the World (Moja strana svijeta)*  
36
- naïve art 5, 35, 89, 98n4, 124; naïve  
painting 10, 13–14, 87–89, 91, 97–98,  
112, 114, 119; naïve visual code 96;  
naïve wonder 177
- Nanović, V. 101
- Nietzsche, F. 12, 15–16, 20, 25–26, 29,  
129, 136n1, 172, 177–78
- The Non-Aligned Movement 7; non-  
aligned world 6, 50; non-aligned  
Yugoslavia 31, 147
- Novaković, R. 101
- Nude-Sculptures – A Study-Film for Visual  
Artists (Akt-Skulpturen – Studienfilm für  
bildende Künstler)* 148–49
- Papić, K. 35–36, 40–41
- Paradise. An Imperialist Tragicomedy  
(Paradies. Eine imperialistische  
Tragikomödie)* 158
- Parajanov, S. 87
- Pavlović, Ž. 9, 13, 26, 33, 36, 39–40, 92,  
130–37, 170, 172, 175n5, 177–78
- People's Liberation Struggle 31, 70, 81,  
161
- Petrović, A. 3–4, 10, 12–13, 33–36, 68,  
90–91, 93–98, 100, 102, 109–21, 130
- phallogocentric 144, 155–56; phallogocentric  
176–77
- The Philosophy of Parochialism (Filosofija  
palanke)* 16, 27–29, 109, 177
- Plastic Jesus (Plastični Isus)* 3, 33
- The Play Hamlet in the Village Mrduša  
Donja (Predstava Hamleta u selu  
Mrduša Donja)* 36
- Poor Mary (Sirota Marija)* 12–13, 33, 68,  
87, 89–90, 92–98, 102, 124, 164, 172,  
177, 179
- Popov, T. 12–13, 68, 70–71
- Popović, M. 12–13, 33, 36, 39, 68, 98, 100,  
103–04, 121n3, 177
- postcolonial perspective 6, 11
- Praxis 8, 136n2, 159, 177–78
- Pretty Village, Pretty Flame (Lepa sela lepogore)* 79
- projective identification 100–02, 105,  
107–09
- Radivojević, M. 42n2
- Rakonjac, K. 34, 36
- The Rats Woke Up (Buđenje pacova)* 39,  
130
- Randić, Z. 36, 40
- raw image 13, 130–31, 133–34, 145, 156,  
158, 161, 167–68, 170, 174; *see also*  
arche-image
- the red bourgeoisie 8, 159
- Room, A. 31
- The Salonika Terrorists (Solunski  
Atentatori)* 71
- A Sand Castle (Peščeni grad)* 33
- screen Gypsy 13, 100–01, 107, 119–20;  
*see also* projective identification
- Shepherd (Ovčar)* 36–38, 40
- Shub, E. 142
- Slavica* 31
- socialist modernism 179; socialist  
modernist 59
- socialist modernity 7–8
- socialist realism 58–60, 86n2, 177, 179
- Sofka* 101
- Stalinism 41, 65, 120n2
- Stanojević, I. 101
- student protests 8, 113, 169
- The Swarm (Roj)* 39, 103
- Sweet Movie* 138–39
- Šijan, S. 151
- Škubonja, F. 4, 35
- Tanović, B. 36, 38
- teleology 18, 20–21, 56, 131; teleological  
machine 123; teleological perspective 61;  
teleological process 17, 26; teleological  
time 101; teleological time-space 20;  
teleological trajectory 29n1
- The Third Way 7, 9, 13–14, 31; third-way  
cultural politics 9–10, 64; third-way  
cultural self-fashioning 57; third-  
wayness 32; third way socialism 179
- This Crazy World of Ours (Bube u glavi)*  
42n2
- The Traitor (Izdajnik)* 33
- The Tough Ones (Delije)* 36, 103,  
121n3

- Vertov, D. 142  
 vitality 5, 7, 12–13, 15, 19–20, 26–27, 29, 42,  
 55–57, 62–64, 68, 70, 73–74, 76–77, 86,  
 97, 100, 108–09, 123–24, 147, 150, 152–53  
 Vorkapić, S. 101  
 Vrdoljak, A. 13, 39, 68, 70, 77, 79–82, 84–85
- When I am Dead and Gone (Kad budem  
 mrtav i beo)* 9, 92, 130  
*When You Hear the Bells (Kad čuješ zvona)* 13,  
 39, 68, 70, 77–79, 81–82, 85–87, 124, 161
- Wild Seed (Divlje seme)* 34, 41  
*WR: Mysteries of the Organism*  
 (*WR: Misterije organizma*) 138–41
- Zemlja*, artistic group 89, 98n1  
 Zenitism (*Zenitizam*) 67  
 Zhdanovism 31, 59, 64–65; *see also*  
 Stalinism  
 Žilnik, Ž. 3–4, 8, 12–13, 34, 36, 158–61,  
 165–67, 169–72, 175n5, 179  
 Živanović, J. 40, 110



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>